Library FAQ: Basic Essay Formatting

There are three main parts to an essay:

- Introduction
- Body
- Conclusion

**Introduction**

Helps reader by introducing the topic

- Begins with a hook (ex. a quote, analogy or question)
- Provides some background information – should start general
- Ends with Thesis Statement

**Body**

Supports main points in thesis. Typically 2 or more paragraphs

- Begin each paragraph with topic sentence linked back to thesis
- Support point by answering “how” and “why”
  - Use cited sources, facts, examples, explanations
- Use Transition Sentence to connect to the next paragraph

**Conclusion**

Brings together main points from body

- Return to thesis statement
- Do not repeat what you have already stated
- What do you want the reader to remember?
- Do not introduce new ideas or concepts

**Citations**

If you have used research in your paper, make sure you use in-text citations and provide a Works Cited or Bibliography page.

**General Formatting Tips:**

Unless stated otherwise by your professor, use the following guidelines:

- Size 12pt font
- Times New Roman style font
- Double – spaced
- 1 inch margins
Some Do’s and Don’ts of Essay Writing:

- **Do** use full sentences and thoughts.
- **Don’t** use bullet points in final essay.
- **Do** use a thesaurus for a wider vocabulary in your paper.
- **Don’t** plagiarize.
- **Do** ask your professor if you have any questions or you are struggling.
- **Don’t** use slang or conversational language.
- **Do** be clear and concise.
- **Do** check spelling and grammar.
- **One Sentence ≠ Paragraph**
- **One Paragraph ≠ Essay**

Need help? Go to the Garrett College Tutoring Center!

*Provides short one-on-one sessions with students in regards to written assignments for any class at Garrett College.*

Located in the **Library**!

Writing Tutoring Hours:
- Mon. 10 am – 4 pm
- Tues. 10 am – 5 pm
- Wed. 10 am – 3 pm, 6 pm – 8 pm
- Thurs. 10 am – 1 pm

Still have questions? Check out the following videos in Credo InfoLit Modules:

- [Synthesizing Information](#)
- [Anatomy of a Research Paper](#)
- [Writing Help](#)

Basic Essay Writing Terminology:

**Introduction:** The first paragraph in your essay. Introduces the ideas that will follow in your essay. Includes the thesis statement, which is usually the last sentence.

**Thesis Statement:** Provides a clear map of your essay. A single sentence with a subject and then a detailed commentary on that subject. The reader of your essay should be able to deduce the basic outline of your topics from this sentence.

**Body:** The middle part of your essay. Typically multiple paragraphs. This is where you develop the points you wish to make in support of your thesis statement.

**Topic Sentence:** The first sentence in each body paragraph. It must have a subject and a commentary for that individual paragraph. Must be taken from part of the thesis.

**Supporting Details:** Specific details that will form the core of your body paragraphs. Includes, but is not limited to: facts, specifics, examples, quotations, plot references, etc.

**Transitions:** Sentence which connects one paragraph to the next. Use transition phrases such as “On the other hand” or “In addition,” in the last sentence of each body paragraph.

**Conclusion:** The final paragraph in your essay. Return to the thesis statement and sum up your essay. What do you want the reader to remember or think about? Does not repeat what was in the paper and does not bring up new topics.

**Citations:** If you have incorporated research or outside commentary, make sure to credit these with in-text citations and add a Works Cited or Bibliography.

Terms & definitions taken from Quizlet & Columbia College Writing Center

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Questions about this handout?

Contact the Garrett College Instructional Librarian at 301-387-3022 or reference@garrettcollege.edu