

Writing Handout 13 - The 5-Paragraph Structure

After you have learned the important pieces of paragraphs (topic sentences, supporting sentences, conclusions, etc.), you begin writing 5-paragraph essays. These essays will be your first step toward true academic writing.

Here is the basic outline of a 5-paragraph essay:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Paragraph 1 (Introductory ¶) | -- Introduction to the topic
-- Narrowing down to the M.I.S.
-- The Main Idea Sentence |
| Paragraph 2 (Body ¶ 1) | -- Topic sentence #1 (related to the M.I.S.)
-- Specific support |
| Paragraph 3 (Body ¶ 2) | -- Topic sentence #2 (related to the M.I.S.)
-- Specific support |
| Paragraph 4 (Body ¶ 3) | -- Topic sentence #3 (related to the M.I.S.)
-- Specific support |
| Paragraph 5 (Concluding ¶) | -- The M.I.S. reworded
-- Final words that make your reader remember your essay |

What is the **Main Idea Sentence**? The main idea sentence (also called a thesis statement) is just like a topic sentence. However, unlike a topic sentence, which relates only to the paragraph that it is in, the M.I.S. relates to the entire essay. Just like a topic sentence, the M.I.S. contains a topic and a controlling idea. For example, take a look at the following M.I.S.:

Part-time jobs provide several advantages besides just making money.

This M.I.S. is about the good aspects of doing a part-time job. The three body paragraphs (paragraphs 2, 3, and 4) will have their own topic sentences and support why those good aspects are good. Let's try to make a 5-paragraph essay on this topic!

First, on a piece of notebook paper, brainstorm by using a cluster or list about the good aspects of doing a part-time job (besides the money!) and decide three of the best ideas that can be supported. Write those ideas on the lines below (they do not have to be complete sentences yet):

Idea 1: _____

Idea 2: _____

Idea 3: _____

How will you support these ideas? Do you have examples or specific reasons? List them on the lines below (they do not have to be complete sentences yet):

Idea 1 support: → _____

→ _____

→ _____

Idea 2 support: → _____

→ _____

→ _____

Idea 3 support: → _____

→ _____

→ _____

Now, let's put together all the pieces of our essay. Try to use transition words like "First" and "Next" or show sequence like "Another reason is...":

M.I.S: _____

T.S. #1: _____

T.S. #2: _____

T.S. #3: _____

Now that you have all the major pieces, you can begin writing the essay. Your concluding paragraph should include a rephrasing of your M.I.S. and something for your reader to remember. Here is where you can ask a question or put in your own opinion.

NOTE: Writing an essay on this topic is optional. However, because you already have all the pieces, it is a good idea to give it a try!