

Structuring a Paper

Do I have your attention? Hey. Do I have your attention? Hey, hey. Great. Now, let me ease you into this. The introduction is the time to give a brief overview of your topic. Don't jump straight into the deep end of the nuances of your argument. Make sure to provide either some history, background, or brief explanations in order to ease your audience into the paper. We'll learn to swim in the shallow end first. If your audience is struggling to get through your introduction, they are less likely to continue reading past that first paragraph. As your first paragraph winds down, it is time to make a statement. Finish strong with your statement or thesis and the supporting reasons (A, B, C, etc.) that you will address in your paper. This is their road map. They now know the purpose and structure of your essay and that they can reference the thesis if they ever get lost.

First, great job writing a thesis and finishing the introduction. You can transition into your body paragraphs. This first one can serve as either a spot to provide history on the topic or a deeper explanation of the topic. If no such further introduction is necessary, begin with a topic sentence that can contain key transition words, connecting the previous paragraph to this one. Firstly, A is the first key point of evidence. According to Author X in XXXX, A is "quote" (#). In other words, explain your quote and the takeaway you want your writer to have. Then you can go on to why this is evidence in support of your thesis. Let the readers know how it weaves into your argument. You can also include another piece of evidence, and this time you can paraphrase it. Further, Author Y in YYYY states how *paraphrase* (#). Don't forget to explain the statement. Weave it into your argument and wrap up this first body paragraph with a sentence that summarizes the key point of this paragraph and/or leads into the next body paragraph.

Next up is supporting reason B. Once again, address supporting evidence as either direct quotes, paraphrasing, or summaries. Always explain or rephrase the evidence and then why it is significant. This same structure will get you through all the key points and their pieces of evidence that you have found for your paper. C and further points will follow this same path. As you get into the hang of things, feel free to go back and edit previous paragraphs and look at elevating word choices and transitions.

Finally, you can address any opposing views. There are usually two sides to every argument and addressing the opposition is a good way to beef up your paper. You can support your point by acknowledging the opponent and analyzing their argument. Point out any weaknesses and refute their points. You can also agree to one of their points and then explain why what you are saying is more important.

In conclusion, restate your thesis statement. Then devote one to two sentences per main point and summarize each. Remind your audience of all of your great points. In summary, state why it matters and leave your audience with a final statement. It is a good to leave them with something to mull over.