

Writing with Purpose—Exposition

(some help from "Elements of Style")

“Make the paragraph the unit of composition: one paragraph to each topic”.

“...A subject requires subdivision into topics, each of which should be made the subject of a paragraph. The object of treating each topic in a paragraph by itself is, of course, to aid the reader. The beginning of each paragraph is a signal to her that a new step in the development of the subject has been reached”.

“As a rule, begin each paragraph with a topic sentence; end it in conformity with the beginning”.

...The most generally useful kind of paragraph, particularly in exposition and argument, is that in which:

1. the topic sentence comes at or near the beginning;
2. the succeeding sentences explain or establish or develop the statement made in the topic sentence...in one or more of several different ways:
 - restating it in other forms,
 - defining its terms,
 - giving illustrations or specific instances,
 - denying the converse (“compare and contrast”)

In a long paragraph or essay, you typically carry out several of these processes.

“The final sentence either emphasizes the thought of the topic sentence or states some important consequence. Do not end a paragraph with a digression, or with an unimportant detail.”

Instead, use transitional words or sentences to ‘flow’ from one idea (“step”) to the next. Transitions connect ideas together and connect those ideas to the main idea of your essay (i.e., your thesis).

The purpose of the expository paragraph/essay is to explain. The usual form of the paragraph, therefore, is the statement of a fact as true, followed by an explanation of the way in which it is true, **so that the reader will understand it as the writer understands it.** [The (implied) thesis of an expository paragraph/essay is that the reader SHOULD understand it the way the writer does.] The expository paragraph may be developed by any combination of the following supporting details:

Details/Description

Analysis

(Extended) Definition

Examples

Cause/Effect

Comparison/Contrast

Classification/Division

Process

INTRODUCTION PARAGRAPH

A. Introductory statements about your topic (anecdote, example, overall context of topic, startling fact/statistic, a definition, a non-cliche quotation, summarize a debate, your research question)

B. Thesis statement/main point: Value/Importance, Cause/Effect relationship, Challenging Assumption, Call to Action [i.e., policy change]; the answer for your research question. Include Mapping Elements: concession/counter-statement...

BODY PARAGRAPHS

I. (Sub)Topic:

A. Topic Sentence:

B. The Exposition: (how do you develop the topic?)

Sources of your evidence?

Evidence

Evidence

(how do these pieces of evidence prove, illustrate or demonstrate your thesis?)

C. Conclusion: summary, impact, and/or amplification:

II. (Sub)Topic:

A. Topic Sentence:

B. The Exposition: (how do you develop the topic?)

Sources of your evidence?

Evidence

Evidence

(how do these pieces of evidence prove, illustrate or demonstrate your thesis?)

C. Conclusion: summary, impact, and/or amplification:

III. (Sub)Topic:

A. Topic Sentence:

B. The Exposition: (how do you develop the topic?)

Sources of your evidence?

Evidence

Evidence

(how do these pieces of evidence prove, illustrate or demonstrate your thesis?)

C. Conclusion: summary, impact, and/or amplification:

IV. (Sub)Topic:

A. Topic Sentence:

B. The Exposition: (how do you develop the topic?)

Sources of your evidence?

Evidence

Evidence

(how do these pieces of evidence prove, illustrate or demonstrate your thesis?)

C. Conclusion: summary, impact, and/or amplification:

V. (Sub)Topic:

A. Topic Sentence:

B. The Exposition: (how do you develop the topic?)

Sources of your evidence?

Evidence

Evidence

(how do these pieces of evidence prove, illustrate or demonstrate your thesis?)

C. Conclusion: summary, impact, and/or amplification:

VI. (Sub)Topic:

A. Topic Sentence:

B. The Exposition: (how do you develop the topic?)

Sources of your evidence?

Evidence

Evidence

(how do these pieces of evidence prove, illustrate or demonstrate your thesis?)

C. Conclusion: summary, impact, and/or amplification:

(repeat body paragraphs as necessary)

CONCLUDING PARAGRAPH

(some tips from Harvard College Writing Center)

What (...did I just do)? Reiterate thesis? what do all of your points add up to?

So What? explain significance? Why was this important for the reader to know?

Now What? What can the reader do with this? What are the implications, or new directions (your) research can go in? How might this fit into the larger conversation/context of your topic?

Works Cited Page

(appears on its own page—like this!—and is not counted towards your final word/page count requirement)

Each work that you use and cite (and **no other**: *citations **must** match with your sources*) in your essay contains MLA's 9 Core Elements⁽¹⁻⁹⁾...as many as available for your sources:

Last Name, First name of Author¹. "Title of your Source"². In italics, *Title of Container* (what does the source appear in?)³, other Contributors ⁴ Volume⁵, Number⁶, (or Version/edition), Publisher⁷, Publication Date⁸, Location (page numbers, Library Database, full source URL, or DOI number⁹. (Your professor may also require an 'Accessed Date': when did you find the source?)