

Writing Effective Body Paragraphs

Effective body paragraphs usually have some common characteristics:

- **Explain one main point.** The main point developed in a body paragraph is clearly stated in a sentence, often called the *topic sentence*. The first sentence of a body paragraph is often the topic sentence. The remaining sentences make supporting points to explain or illustrate the main point.
- **Provide information to support the main point.** Supporting points are presented in an order that leads readers to the main point. You should present enough information to convince your audience of each supporting point. You may want to include some specific facts, data, or quotes. The paragraph's main point should be the logical conclusion that readers reach at the end of the sequence of supporting points. Remember to use your outline of main points and supporting points to structure each body paragraph.
- **Present main points in a logical order.** The main points are presented in an order that leads readers to a logical conclusion. You may have foreshadowed your conclusion in your introductory paragraph. You should present enough information to convince your audience of each main point. A well-structured persuasive essay moves your audience closer to the conclusion with each body paragraph.
- **Follow your outline to structure your essay.** The main and supporting points are organized in your outline and can be used to develop your body paragraphs. You may want to copy and paste the outline of your main points into your essay. You can then develop one or more complete sentences based on the label for each main and supporting point. An outline provides structure for your information and helps you determine where facts, data, and quotes should appear in your essay.
- **Connect main points with smooth transitions.** Effective body paragraphs are connected so that the logical order flows smoothly from one main point to another. Transitions are important in persuasive writing because they help readers follow your argument. Transitions connect your paragraphs and ideas to one another. Without them, your writing would not flow smoothly. Transitions hold your persuasive essay together.
- **Balance the structure of the essay.** Effective body paragraphs maintain balance in the structure of an essay. Most body paragraphs typically include about three to five sentences, but this is just a guideline. If some paragraphs are very long and others are very short, the essay may feel unbalanced to the reader. An unbalanced essay often indicates that some of your main points may not be fully developed or others may be overdeveloped with unnecessary or repetitive details. You may also find that two or more very short paragraphs are really part of one main point. When that occurs, you should combine the paragraphs and revise the sentences to explain the new main point. You can always revise your outline if you find that your essay is unbalanced.