

Abracadabra! Essay Organization Made Easy (or at least easier!)

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The five-paragraph essay format type of organization is one you may have learned in junior high or high school; however, it can be just as easily applied to the essays you write in college. The most valuable aspect of this format is that it ensures a logical organization scheme...especially beneficial for those of you who often have difficulty figuring out what should go where in your papers (and for those of you who may be tired of the not-so-positive remarks in the 'organization' category of the dreaded rubric)! Here's how it works:

Paragraph 1

This is your opening/introductory paragraph. Here you should introduce your topic to your readers and provide any background information necessary to capture their interest. The end of this paragraph is also a logical place for your thesis statement.

Paragraphs 2-4

These three paragraphs are your body paragraphs, where you should argue, explain, describe, etc. your thesis. It's helpful to dedicate one body paragraph to each point you make regarding your thesis; this helps both you and your reader stay focused. For example, if you're writing an essay arguing that music preference isn't the only factor that can influence a teenager's behavior, and you plan to argue other factors such as television viewing, upbringing, and school environment, then do the following: dedicate one body paragraph to T.V. viewing, one body paragraph to upbringing, and one body paragraph to school environment. Don't try to cram all of your points/arguments into one loooooonng paragraph! Besides, breaking your subject matter down into more manageable chunks enhances not only the essay's organization; it makes the whole writing process a lot less daunting!*

Paragraph 5

At last...the end o' the essay! Paragraph 5 is your concluding paragraph. This is the appropriate place to restate your thesis and sum up the main points you made regarding it. Remember to end on a 'strong' note; pick a final sentence or scenario that will stick in your readers' minds and help reinforce your stance on your thesis.

*Depending on the scope/depth of your topic or thesis, more than three body paragraphs may be necessary to accommodate additional points and, oftentimes, counter-arguments. In such cases, your standard five-paragraph essay may become a standard six-, seven-, or eight-paragraph essay, but don't let this discourage you; the premise is still the same...one body paragraph per point, argument, or counter-argument!