

## Directions for Taking Research Notes

When doing research for an essay, it's not enough just to read the articles, books, or other sources. You must have an ordered system for keeping track of the information that you might use later in your essay.

---

### Step 1:

For research purposes, you will need one copy of the second page of this document for each book, article, or other source that you research. Three are already included, but you can print more if needed!

### Step 2:

Write all of the reference information that you can find at the top of page. This may include the name of an author, title, name of a website, publication (or updated) date, book publisher, Bible version, and/or the full web link. Also, write the date that you personally accessed any website to take notes.

### Step 3:

List your 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> thesis prong in the three boxes. Then, read the article or book and look for quotes that directly support one of your three prongs.

COPY EXACTLY (use quotation marks) any statement that might make good evidence for a prong. Include the page number (7) or scripture reference (John 3:16) with the quote when available.

Copying exact quotations will help you avoid plagiarism because you will always be able to look back and identify exactly what the original writer or speaker said.

*Which statements should you copy?*

- Any facts, examples, statistics, or interesting testimony *that directly and specifically support one of your prongs.*
- Copy more quotes than you think you need. It's easier to take abundant, quality notes up front than to go back later, while writing your essay, to locate more information.

\*You can bring these completed forms on Thursday, 2/1 instead of bringing all of your sources in since all of the information should be filled in at the top.

**Source Information**

Author(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Other Contributors: \_\_\_\_\_

Article/Book Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Publisher: \_\_\_\_\_ Publication Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Edition/Version/Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Website: \_\_\_\_\_ Website Accessed Date: \_\_\_\_\_

URL: \_\_\_\_\_

**Possible Supporting Evidence**

Prong 1: _____	Prong 2: _____	Prong 3: _____
Quote: _____	Quote: _____	Quote: _____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
Quote: _____	Quote: _____	Quote: _____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
Quote: _____	Quote: _____	Quote: _____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

**Source Information**

Author(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Other Contributors: \_\_\_\_\_

Article/Book Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Publisher: \_\_\_\_\_ Publication Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Edition/Version/Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Website: \_\_\_\_\_ Website Accessed Date: \_\_\_\_\_

URL: \_\_\_\_\_

**Possible Supporting Evidence**

Prong 1: _____ Quote: _____ _____ _____ _____ Quote: _____ _____ _____ _____ Quote: _____ _____ _____ _____	Prong 2: _____ Quote: _____ _____ _____ _____ Quote: _____ _____ _____ _____ Quote: _____ _____ _____ _____	Prong 3: _____ Quote: _____ _____ _____ _____ Quote: _____ _____ _____ _____ Quote: _____ _____ _____ _____
---	---	---

**Source Information**

Author(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Other Contributors: \_\_\_\_\_

Article/Book Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Publisher: \_\_\_\_\_ Publication Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Edition/Version/Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Website: \_\_\_\_\_ Website Accessed Date: \_\_\_\_\_

URL: \_\_\_\_\_

**Possible Supporting Evidence**

Prong 1: _____ Quote: _____ _____ _____ _____ Quote: _____ _____ _____ _____ Quote: _____ _____ _____ _____	Prong 2: _____ Quote: _____ _____ _____ _____ Quote: _____ _____ _____ _____ Quote: _____ _____ _____ _____	Prong 3: _____ Quote: _____ _____ _____ _____ Quote: _____ _____ _____ _____ Quote: _____ _____ _____ _____
---	---	---

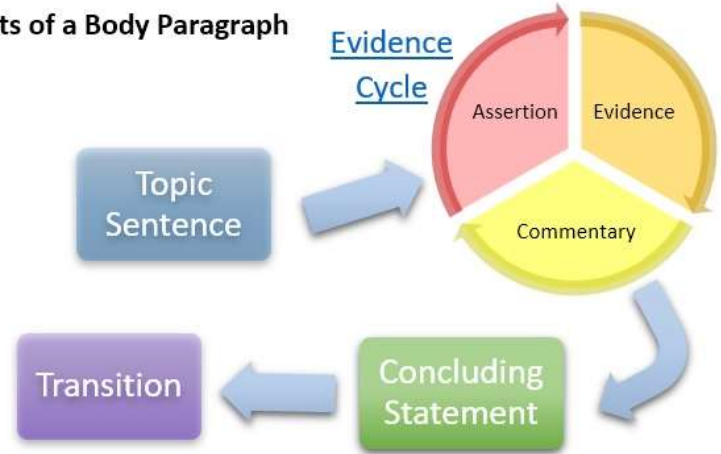
## A-E-C Paragraphs Tutorial

---

A common structure for building a persuasive argument is assertion – evidence – commentary. We call this 3-part structure a “proof” and for this course a body paragraph will contain two such proofs like this:

1. Topic Sentence
2. First Proof
  - a. Assertion
  - b. Evidence
  - c. Commentary (Transition)
3. Second Proof
  - a. Assertion
  - b. Evidence
  - c. Commentary
4. Concluding Sentence (Bridge Transition)

### Basic Parts of a Body Paragraph



As you can tell, there are several “moving parts” to a successful A-E-C body paragraph. However, with a clear understanding of your paper’s purpose and guidelines, you should be able to tackle your content, no problem.

---

### Topic Sentence

The topic sentence gives a general introduction to the main idea of this paragraph. It should both review and remind the reader of the thesis statement and preview the paragraph so the reader is prepared for the proofs to come.

### Assertion: TELL

A persuasive assertion is a statement that makes a claim, expresses an opinion, or offers something to prove about the topic. It should be related to the paragraph’s broader topic but also introduce or provide context for the evidence you are about to give your reader. Think of assertions in one of these ways:

#### Paragraph Topic

- 1<sup>st</sup> Claim or Opinion about the Topic
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Claim or Opinion about the Topic

#### Paragraph Topic

- 1<sup>st</sup> Context leading to the Evidence
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Context leading to the Evidence

If you are struggling to come up with two claims related to your paragraph’s topic, it could be that your topic is too narrow. Try to broaden your paragraph’s topic to a more general idea. Another issue might be that your topic sentence contains too many specifics. Again, make it more general (find a broader category) and save the specific points for your assertions.

### Evidence: SHOW

Evidence provides concrete details or examples that support the claim that you made in the assertion. There are two key sources for persuasive evidence – common knowledge or expert analysis.

- If your evidence is not your own, if it is an idea or opinion created by someone else, then credit must be given to the original thinker/writer. All paraphrased or directly quoted evidence must be cited!
- If your evidence is considered common knowledge, it does not require a citation. But what defines common knowledge?
  - Any fact that is commonly known (names, dates, events) or opinion that is commonly accepted as true are considered common knowledge
    - Neil Armstrong, the first human to walk on the moon, took his “one small step” on July 20, 1969.
    - Despite his popularity, George Washington stepped down from the presidency after only two terms in office.
- But what about your own personal experience?
  - While personal experience or anecdotal evidence can be used in a persuasive proof, it is generally considered weak evidence. Backing up your opinion with your own personal experience doesn't carry much weight in the eyes of your reader; therefore, you should always look for stronger evidence from a reliable source.
  - Personal experience, however, can make for an excellent introduction or conclusion in a persuasive essay because it forms an emotional connection between you and your topic and your reader which is an important part of persuasive writing.

### Commentary: EXPLAIN

With commentary, you explain *in your own words* how the evidence you presented supports the assertion that you made. Commentary answers any one or more of these questions:

1. Why did you use this evidence? What makes it significant?
2. How does the evidence prove your point?
  - a. How does the evidence support your opinion/assertion?
  - b. How does the evidence support the paragraph's topic?
  - c. How does the evidence support the overarching thesis?
3. For which reason(s) should the reader should agree with you?
4. Why should the reader accept your assertion and evidence as valid?

With commentary, you *do not* repeat or summarize the assertion or evidence. You've already said them; you don't need to say them again. You also *do not* add more evidence gained from an outside source.

Instead, you must analyze your evidence and express *your own thoughts* about it in order to prove your argument. In this way, you “complete the proof.” You provide your own information that connects the evidence to the assertion which in turn supports the topic of the paragraph and defends the thesis statement.

### Concluding Statement

Before moving on to the next paragraph, a body paragraph should end with some sort of concluding statement that provides closure to the main idea of that paragraph. This is your chance to wrap up your argument with one, final, impactful statement. With this sentence, the reader fully understands the point of the paragraph and is ready to become more convinced by the information in the next body paragraph.

### Bridge Transition

A bridge transition is a cue to your readers that lets them know that you are shifting the focus from one argument to another argument that defends your thesis. Bridge transitions between paragraphs can be placed either at the end of a body paragraph to preview the next or at the beginning of the next body paragraph to connect it to the previous. The bridge transition can be a separate sentence, but more often, either the concluding statement or the topic sentence will contain the bridge.

---

### Example A-E-C Proof based on a character analysis of the evil queen in "Snow White"

Topic Sentence: The sinful nature of the evil queen determines her choices and actions.

Assertion:

The evil queen has let vanity rule her heart and control her life.

Evidence:

Every day, she approaches her magic mirror with trepidation to ask, "Mirror, Mirror, on the wall, who's the fairest of them all?"

Commentary:

Her daily request of the mirror indicates the queen's constant need to reinforce her own self-love.

## Commentary Trigger Word List

Commentary is the most important and most difficult part of a paragraph to write. The commentary explains your reasoning. It does not simply paraphrase the evidence/quote or restate the assertion.

Stuck on commentary? Consider using one of these “explaining” words to get started.

Argues (that, for)	Establishes	Represents
Asserts	Explains	Reveals
Attests	Exhibits	Shows
Authenticates	Exposes	Substantiates
Claims	Highlights	Suggests
Confirms	Illustrates	Supports
Contends	Implies	Testifies to
Defends	Indicates	Underscores
Demonstrates	Justifies	Upholds
Denotes	Maintains	Validates
Determines	Manifests	Verifies
Displays	Proves	



## Practice Writing Commentary

---

**Topic 1:** *Prove that mankind should not waste time or resources trying to colonize Mars.*

**Assertion:** The severe conditions on the planet's surface would prohibit any quality of life.

**Evidence:** The average temperature on Mars is -81 degrees° F. Dust storms often spread over the planet. And most importantly, there is no liquid water, a substance vital for human life.

*(How does this evidence prove that mankind should not live on Mars? Why should your reader agree?)*

**Commentary:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Topic 2:** *Prove that the octopus is a drastically underappreciated aquatic animal.*

**Assertion:** The cleverness of the octopus extends far beyond most creatures of the sea.

**Evidence:** While on his boat, the French naturalist Jacques Cousteau observed an octopus climb out of a tank, feel its way off a table, crawl over the deck, and finally flee to the freedom of the ocean below.

*(How does this evidence show that the octopus is superior to other aquatic animals in cleverness?)*

**Commentary:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Topic 3:** *Prove that Christians should live a life filled with prayer.*

**Assertion:** Prayer provides believers with a way to let go of their everyday worries.

**Evidence:** "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God" (Phil. 4:6)

*(Why does this scripture matter? How is it a benefit? How does it prove that Christians need to pray?)*

**Commentary:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Topic 4:** *Prove that parents should use more positive reinforcement when training their children.*

**Assertion:** Parents should positively motivate their children to help the family.

**Evidence:** When I turned 7, my parents began giving me an allowance as a positive reinforcement for completing chores. In only a short time, I learned to consistently take responsibility for my own weekly tasks.

*(Why is this personal story significant? How could it benefit all children more broadly? Benefit all parents?)*

**Commentary:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Ways to Show Courage

For each of the following courageous acts, write the initial of each character who displays that type of courage.

Parvana

Father

Mother

Nooria

Mrs. Weera

Shauzia

Face Personal Fear	
Enter a Dangerous Situation	
Try Something New	
Risk Failure/Take on a Difficult Challenge	
Obey Authority	
Resist Authority	
Ask for Help	
Accept Help	
Give Help to Others	
Sacrifice Your Own Wants/Needs	
Be Yourself	
Do the Right Thing	
Resist Temptation	
Defend Your Values/Beliefs	
Tell the Truth	
Keep Your Word/Don't Quit	
Take Responsibility for Your Actions	
Lead Others	
Lift Up Others/Lead from Behind	
Protect the Vulnerable	
Forgive/Let Go of Hurt	
Encourage Others (Give Courage)	

## Review and Edit a Literary Body Paragraph

---

**Thesis:** Salva Dut displays relentless courage when he obeys the authorities in his life, extends kindness to those around him, and boldly moves forward through each dangerous obstacle.

---

Though he encounters many dangers along the way, Salva dares to tackle each new challenge throughout his journey. Salva must make the courageous choice to cross the desert with little water supply. For three days, Salva took, “only tiny sips when his body cried for out for huge gulps of thirst-quenching, life-giving water” (53). Salva’s control over his tremendous thirst shows a courage of character that allows him to survive. When the Ethiopian soldiers force the refugees back into Sudan, Salva must make another courageous choice. Facing a raging river full of crocodiles, “he jumped into the water and began to swim”. Salva’s leap of faith and mighty swim highlight the courage he has. Whether crossing rivers or deserts, Salva courageously faces each life-threatening risk along his journey.

### Topic Sentence:

*Highlight the topic sentence.*

- Connects to the thesis? **Y N** Which prong? \_\_\_\_\_
- *Underline the words in the topic sentence that directly relate to the thesis prong.*
- Is it broad? (no specific evidence) **Y N**

### 1<sup>st</sup> Proof

*Label each sentence of the first proof: "A1" (assertion), "E1" (evidence), "C1" (commentary)*

- Assertion both makes a claim about courage and provides story context? **Y N**
- Quote is properly blended and punctuated? **Y N**
- Quote has in-text citation? **Y N**
- Does the commentary repeat the assertion or quote? Or same something new? \_\_\_\_\_
- Does the commentary prove *why* this is a courageous act? Or why it matters? **Y N**

Transition between 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Proof? **Y N** Circle all transition words.

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Proof

*Label each sentence of the second proof: "A2" (assertion), "E2" (evidence), "C2" (commentary)*

- Assertion both makes a claim about courage and provides story context? **Y N**
- Quote is properly blended and punctuated? **Y N**
- Quote has in-text citation? **Y N**
- Does the commentary repeat the assertion or quote? Or same something new? \_\_\_\_\_
- Does the commentary prove *why* this is a courageous act? Or why it matters? **Y N**

### Concluding Sentence

*Highlight the concluding sentence.*

- Wraps up the entire paragraph and not just the second proof? **Y N**
- *Underline the words in the concluding sentence that wrap up the entire topic.*

How many "be" verbs? \_\_\_\_\_ Edit to remove all of the "be" verbs.

Repetitive Wording? **Y N**

Formal Language/No Contractions? **Y N**

At least 3 Different Sentence Openers? **Y N**