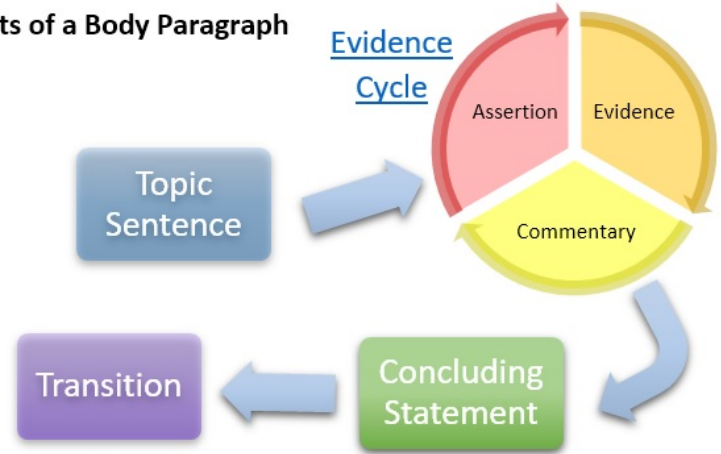


A-E-C Paragraphs Tutorial

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

- 1st Claim or Opinion about the Topic
- 2nd Claim or Opinion about the Topic

Paragraph Topic

- 1st Context leading to the Evidence
- 2nd 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.