

## How to Write a Five-Paragraph Essay

As you have probably noticed, essay writing assignments can pop up in any class.

An essay is a literary composition that expresses a certain idea, claim, or concept and backs it up with supporting statements. It will follow a logical pattern, to include an introductory paragraph (make the claim), a body (support), and a conclusion (summary of statements and support).

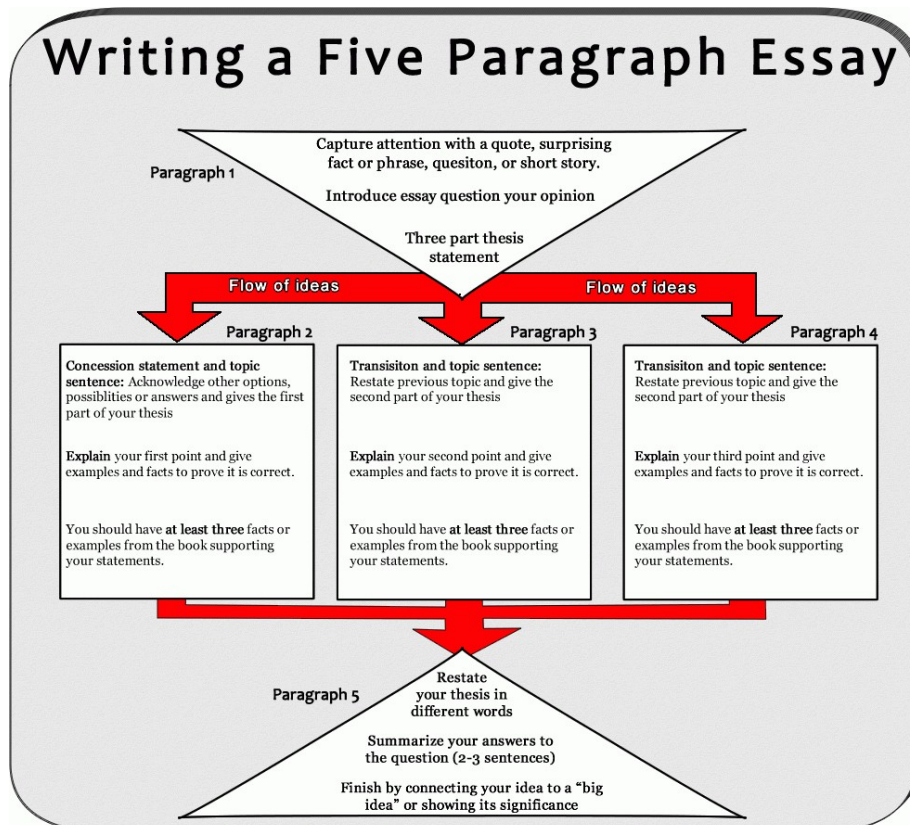
English and literature teachers use them on a regular basis, but essays are required in many other types of classes. Essay exams are also a test tool used commonly in the social sciences, and even in maths and science class. Any time you have to write a timed essay, you should begin with a frame based on the parts below.

Of course, essays play a big role in the college application process, as well. In short, there's just no avoiding essays, as long as you're in school!

Luckily, you can learn to craft a great essay if you can follow the standard pattern and write in a clear and organized manner.

So what is a five-paragraph essay? Well, it is an essay with five (or more – never fewer) paragraphs. The first paragraph is an introduction, where you raise the reader's interest and tell him what you are going to write about in a thesis. Next comes the body of the essay, containing no fewer than three paragraphs where you talk about various parts of your thesis, and lastly there is the conclusion where you show that what you set out to do (as stated in the thesis) has been accomplished.

We will go through all these parts in turn, but here is a diagram that might be helpful to you:



# Introduction

The introduction is the first paragraph in your essay, and it should accomplish a few specific goals.

## 1. Capture the reader's interest.

It's a good idea to start your essay with a really interesting statement, in order to pique the reader's interest.

Avoid starting out with a boring line like this:

"In this essay I will explain why Rosa Parks was an important figure."

Instead, try something with a bit of a surprise factor, like this statement:

"A Michigan museum recently paid \$492,000 for an old, dilapidated bus from Montgomery, Alabama."

The second sentence sounds much more interesting, doesn't it? It would encourage most people to keep on reading.

## 2. Introduce the topic.

The next few sentences should explain your first statement, and prepare the reader for your thesis statement.

"The old yellow bus was reported to be the very one that sparked the civil rights movement, when a young woman named Rosa Parks..."

## 3. Make a claim or express your opinion in a thesis sentence.

At the end of your introductory paragraph, you will place a powerful thesis statement. Your thesis sentence should provide your specific assertion and convey a clear point of view.

"In refusing to surrender her seat to a white man, Rosa Parks inspired a courageous freedom movement that lives on, even today."

Your instructor will be looking for the specific elements above when reviewing your introductory paragraph, so be sure to review your first paragraph to make sure it meets these three goals.

In Outline form there are three things going on here: the hook, the introductory statement or transition, and the thesis.

## Body

The body of the essay will include at least three paragraphs (more if you want to), each limited to one main idea that supports your thesis. In each paragraph you should state your idea in a topic sentence and then back it up with two or three sentences of evidence or examples.

### Example of a main idea:

"It took incredible courage for an African American woman to make such a bold stance in 1955 Alabama."

Offer evidence to support this statement:

"This act took place in an era when African Americans could be arrested and face severe retribution for committing the most trivial acts of defiance."

Include a few more supporting statements with further evidence, then use **transition words** to lead to the paragraph that follows.

In Outline form, all of your body paragraphs should follow the pattern of Statement or Topic Sentence, Supporting Ideas, and Transition Statement.

Words to use as you transition from one paragraph to another:

as a result	by comparison	for this reason	furthermore	in fact
it follows that	likewise	moreover	naturally	on the whole
similarly	simply put	surely	yet	

## Conclusion

The fifth and final paragraph of your five-paragraph essay will be your conclusion. Here you will restate your thesis and summarize your main points to re-assert your main claim. You should point out your main points, but do not repeat specific examples – and you must never introduce new ideas in the conclusion.

In Outline form you Reword the Thesis, State the Conclusion and end the essay with a Closing Statement

From <http://homeworktips.about.com/od/essaywriting/a/fiveparagraph.htm>

## The Outline

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

### Introduction

Hook: \_\_\_\_\_

Introductory Statement (transition): \_\_\_\_\_

Thesis statement: \_\_\_\_\_

### Body

First Topic Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

Second Topic Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

Third Topic Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

### Conclusion

Restate thesis: \_\_\_\_\_

Conclusion: \_\_\_\_\_

Closing Statement: \_\_\_\_\_

## Sample Outline for a Five-Paragraph Essay

Title: The Hazards of Moviegoing

### Introduction

Introductory statement

Thesis statement: I like watching movies but I prefer watching them at home.

### Body

First Topic Sentence: just getting to the theatre presents difficulties  
bad weather long drive and limited parking space long waiting to buy ticket

Second Topic Sentence: facing the problems of the theatre itself  
old theatre's problems: smelly carpet, worn-out seat, etc.  
new theatre's problems: smaller size, noise from next movie theater, etc.  
floors will be rubber-like dirty at the end of the movie

Third Topic Sentence: Some of the patrons are annoying  
bad behaviour such as running, talking loud, etc  
human noise and disturbance

### Conclusion

Restate thesis:

I prefer to watch movies at home where it is comfortable, clean and safe.

Conclusion:

Closing Statement:

## Essay Sample

### The Hazards of Moviegoing

By John Langan

From College Writing Skills with Readings

Introductory paragraph (Thesis)	I am a movie fanatic. When friends want to know what picture won the Oscar in 1980 or who played the police chief in Jaws, they ask me. My friends, though, have stopped asking me if I want to go out to the movies. The problems in getting to the theatre, the theatre itself, and the behaviour of some patrons are all reasons why I often wait for a movie to show up on TV.
First supporting paragraph	First of all, <u>just getting to the theatre presents difficulties</u> . Leaving a home equipped with a TV and a video recorder isn't an attractive idea on a humid, cold, or rainy night. Even if the weather cooperates, there is still a thirty-minute drive to the theatre down a congested highway, followed by the hassle of looking for a parking space. And then there are the lines. After hooking yourself to the end of a human chain, you worry about whether there will be enough tickets, whether you will get seats together, and whether many people will sneak into the line ahead of you.
Second supporting paragraph	Once you have made it to the box office and gotten your tickets, <u>you are confronted with the problems of the theatre itself</u> . If you are in one of the run-down older theatres, you must adjust to the musty smell of seldom-cleaned carpets. Escaped springs lurk in the faded plush or cracked leather seats, and half the seats you sit in seem loose or tilted so that you sit at a strange angle. The newer twin and quad theatres offer their own problems. Sitting in an area only one-quarter the size of a regular theatre, moviegoers often have to put up with the sound of the movie next door. This is especially jarring when the other movie involves racing cars or a karate war and you are trying to enjoy a quiet love story. And whether the theatre is old or new, it will have floors that seem to be coated with rubber cement. By the end of a movie, shoes almost have to be pried off the floor because they have become sealed to a deadly compound of spilled soda, hardening bubble gum, and crushed Ju-Jubes.
Third supporting paragraph	<u>Some of the patrons are even more of a problem than the theatre itself</u> . Little kids race up and down the aisles, usually in giggling packs. Teenagers try to impress their friends by talking back to the screen, whistling, and making what they consider to be hilarious noises. Adults act as if they were at home in their own living rooms and comment loudly on the ages of the stars or why movies aren't as good any more. And people of all ages crinkle candy wrappers, stick gum on their seats, and drop popcorn tubs or cups of crushed ice and soda

	on the floor. They also cough and burp, squirm endlessly in their seats, file out for repeated trips to the rest rooms or concession stand, and elbow you out of the armrest on either side of your seat.
Concluding paragraph	<u>After arriving home from the movies one night, I decided that I was not going to be a moviegoer anymore.</u> I was tired of the problems involved in getting to the movies and dealing with the theatre itself and some of the patrons. The next day I arranged to have cable TV service installed in my home. I may now see movies a bit later than other people, but I'll be more relaxed watching box office hits in the comfort of my own living room.

## Your Assignment:

1. Pick a subject to write a **descriptive essay** and begin by filling out the Outline Table. Pay close attention to the thesis statement and try and make it so that you can split it into three distinct parts, one for each supportive paragraph. Hand in your Outline separately.
2. Write the essay using your outline. Fill in the paragraphs using ideas generated by your Thesis Statement. Use transitional words where possible. Hand in you Essay.