

Writing an Effective Body Paragraph

What is a body paragraph?

A *body paragraph* is a group of sentences that work together to support one main idea. This main idea is often a subtopic of your paper's thesis. Body paragraphs should be as long as they need to be, but they are rarely longer than a page (double-spaced). In academic writing, paragraphs shorter than 3 sentences often indicate that you haven't expanded or provided enough information on the topic. Paragraphs longer than one page often indicate a lack of structure and possibly too many topics in one paragraph.

What should a body paragraph do?

- Support, explain, and/or help prove your thesis
- Make up most of the material in your essay
- Include a main idea, evidence, analysis, and transitions between these components

Parts of a body paragraph (MEAL plan):

- **MAIN IDEA** (topic sentence explaining what the paragraph is about)
- **EVIDENCE** (details, examples, quotes, or statistics from researched sources, personal observations, or other sources)
- **ANALYSIS** (your interpretation of the evidence and explanation of why this information is important to your point, what it indicates)
**Note: The E and A are often intertwined. Depending on the length of your paragraph, you will sometimes give a piece of evidence, analyze it, then follow it with more pieces of evidence and analysis. Sometimes the evidence and analysis happen in the same sentence.*
- **LINK** (relating it back to the main argument/thesis **or** to the other paragraphs/claims in your paper)

***Note:** When you have finished writing your paragraph, read it out loud to ensure that all of your sentences relate to your paragraph's main idea. If a sentence doesn't fit the main idea, then it doesn't belong in the paragraph. Omit the sentence *or* consider moving it to another paragraph in your paper where it is appropriate to the topic.

Example:

¹ Steelman possesses qualities that make him a more effective superhero than Green Muscle. ²As Steelman, Tawny Stork chose the life of a superhero. Stork, a genius engineer and the mastermind behind the steel suit, uses reason and brains to defeat villains. Impulsive as he may be, Steelman uses his intellectual abilities to overcome obstacles. Green Muscle, on the other hand, reached superhero status accidentally. Brace Bunner, the human form of Green Muscle, is an equally intelligent physicist; however, he only reaches superhero status through anger. ³Once Brace Bunner becomes Green Muscle, his intellect ceases to exist. While Green Muscle may possess great strength, his inability to control this strength weakens him. Steelman's intellectual and reasoning skills and the fact that he chooses to protect the world from super villains gives him an advantage over Green Muscle. ⁴However, if both superheroes combined their exceptional qualities, they would make a great team fighting together because Steelman would help balance Green Muscle's lack of control.

(Courtesy of Kennesaw State University Writing Center)



Explanation:

1. The topic sentence expresses the **MAIN IDEA** of the paragraph. The rest of the paragraph should relate to the qualities Steelman possesses that make him a more effective superhero than Green Muscle.
2. The sentences following the topic sentence contain **EVIDENCE** supporting the fact that Steelman possesses qualities that make him a more effective superhero than Green Muscle.
3. These sentences explore *how* and *why* Steelman's qualities make him a more effective superhero than Steelman; therefore, these sentences provide **ANALYSIS** of the evidence that the writer has included in this paragraph.
4. The final sentence of this paragraph explicitly **LINKS** everything that the author has discussed in the paragraph back to the paper's thesis (not shown in this handout).