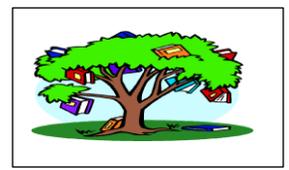


Toward Better Literacy: Reference Outlines



An Overview of Basic Essay Structure

The basic structure of an essay consists of an **Introduction**, **Body**, and **Conclusion**.

Introduction

- The introductory paragraph should have a **hook**: a sentence, question, or quote that gets the audience's attention at the beginning of the essay.
- The next four or five sentences of the introduction should consist of a background/history of what you will be discussing in the essay.
- The last sentence should be your **thesis**, the main claim that you will be supporting/arguing throughout the essay (though note that a thesis can appear anywhere within the document).

Body

- The body of the essay normally consists of three to four paragraphs containing the information you wish to impart to your audience.
- Each paragraph should directly reflect an idea stated in your claim.
- The first sentence, called the **topic sentence**, of each paragraph should relate to your claim and introduce the topic of that paragraph.
- The last sentence should **transition** to the next paragraph by linking the current topic to the next one.

For Example:

“Though society has long used the arguments of human rights and the law against cruel and unusual punishment, many others believe differently.”

In this example, the first phrase of the sentence restates the topic of the paragraph while the second phrase introduces the topic of the next paragraph.

- The four or five sentences within the body paragraph should consist of **evidence** to support your thesis paired with **supporting statements** that you come up with to explain why these quotes, facts, or professional opinions are important to your argument.

Conclusion

- The conclusion of the essay should be a five to six sentence summary of the argument.
- The **topic sentence** of the conclusion should be a restatement of your **thesis**.
- The next three sentences should summarize your argument.
- The last sentence should end with a concluding statement like an interesting quote to leave the reader satisfied.
- This paragraph should **not** introduce any new information.