

The Basics – How to Write a Proper Formal Paragraph

Purpose of a Formal Paragraph

- to offer a concise and structured argument that proves a **thesis** which is **supported by evidence** and **explanations** of said evidence

Ok, but what is an argument??

Think of it this way...you are persuading your reader to believe something (that 'something' is your argument)

- You tell your reader what they are to believe in your thesis statement
- You then support your thesis using proof and explanations
- This all comes together into an overall argument

Style and Structure Notes

No "You" As you can see, in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Romeo's actions make him most responsible for the tragedy that occurs.

Take the 'you' out entirely

In Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Romeo's actions make him most responsible for the tragedy that occurs.

OR

Ask yourself who the 'you' is that you are referring to (the reader? the audience?) and use that instead of 'you'

The audience can see that Romeo's actions make him most responsible for the tragedy that occurs.

No "I" I think that in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Romeo's actions make him most responsible for the tragedy that occurs.

Simply do not include "I" in formal writing

In Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Romeo's actions make him most responsible for the tragedy that occurs.

Use transition words

- Use within paragraph to connect ideas and sentences. This prevents your writing from sounding 'disjointed'

All language is to be formal (no slang, no abbreviations)

Type and double-space your assignment using a very basic font (Times New Roman is always a good one!)

Parts of a Paragraph

Topic sentence(s)

- This is when you state the argument you will prove through your paragraph
- In grade 9, this topic sentence will usually include your answer to a question that is asked
- Your argument is also known as your **thesis**

First Point

- *In your own words*, state the first overall idea that supports your thesis
- Sometimes this will be based on example from a text that we are working with

First Proof/ Quotation

- This is when you include a specific example or quotation from a text that proves the point you said you would argue
- You always need to introduce a quotation by providing '**context**' (*What is going on in a text when the quotation takes place? Who is involved in the quotation? Where does the quotation take place?*)
- You also need a 'lead -in' to the quotation so that it fits smoothly into your writing
- At the end of the quotation, you must provide a citation that lets your reader know where your quotation can from. This is inserted directly in the sentence, in parentheses.

First Explanation

- Make the connection for your reader between the point and the quotation.
- Clearly explain how the example and quotation help you to prove your thesis
- This needs to be your idea!
- Do not re-tell or translate a quotation

➔ Now, include some sort of **transition word or phrase** here that links or connects your two points to the topic of the paragraph

Second Point

- *In your own words*, state the second overall idea that supports your thesis
- Sometimes this will be based on example from a text that we are working with

Second Proof/ Quotation

- This is when you include a specific example quotation from a text that proves the point you said you would argue
- You always need to introduce a quotation by providing '**context**' (*What is going on in a text when the quotation takes place? Who is involved in the quotation? Where does the quotation take place?*)
- You also need a 'lead -in' to the quotation so that it fits smoothly into your writing
- At the end of the quotation, you must provide a citation that lets your reader know where your quotation can from. This is inserted directly in the sentence, in parentheses.

Second Explanation

- Make the connection for your reader between the point and the quotation.
- Clearly explain how the example and quotation help you to prove your thesis
- This needs to be your idea!
- Do not re-tell or translate a quotation

Conclusion

- Summarize the main points of the paragraph and explicitly make a connection back to your thesis (Use different words than you did in your original thesis but keep the idea the same)

WOW! There are so many things going on in one paragraph... who knew?!?! The reality is that there are many things that need to come together in order to write an effective paragraph:

- ✧ **You need to follow the correct structure**
- ✧ **You need to have content that is, at minimum, relevant and perhaps even insightful**
- ✧ **You need to ensure that the majority of the paragraph is your discussion that addresses the "so what?" – for each point/proof and in the conclusion**

Ok so... how does a proper formal paragraph look?

Question: Why should every high school student have to read Dr. Seuss' *The Cat in the Hat*?

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Monday February 6, 2012

Life Lessons from a Cat

Every teenager should read Doctor Seuss' *The Cat in the Hat* because

the story exposes the reader to two valuable life lessons. First of all, Seuss teaches the reader that through creativity it is possible to turn a negative situation into a positive one. He does so by having the Cat in the Hat arrive at the home of two children on a rainy day when the children are bored because they cannot go outside to play. The Cat, through the use of imagination, creates entertaining situations and despite the fact that they cannot leave their house, the children end up having fun. Both the children in the story and the reader learn that the Cat was able turn the children's boring day into a fun one simply by thinking creatively. This life lesson is valuable for teenagers to learn so that they realize

that their life is not controlled by external forces but rather, by their power of imagination. The second life lesson that is addressed by Seuss is that we are responsible for the consequences of our actions. Seuss illustrates this lesson when the Cat returns to the house to clean up the mess that he created during the day of fun. This shows both the children and the reader that the Cat realizes that his action (the fun) has a consequence (the mess) and that he is responsible for appropriately dealing with the consequence- which he does through cleaning the mess. This life lesson is valuable for teenagers to learn because as they grow up, they become increasingly responsible for their actions and need to find appropriate ways to deal with the consequences of their actions. Overall, through a simple children's story Dr. Seuss manages to impart two valuable life lessons

to the reader. Through the actions of a creative Cat, Doctor Seuss illustrates that individuals have power to positively influence any situation and that also, that we are all responsible for the consequences of our actions.

Topic sentence

First point

First Proof (*in the form of an example rather than a quotation in this case*)

First explanation

Transition (*NOT to be underlined*)

Conclusion

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The Details Matter: Formatting an Assignment for English Class

This is one of the best-looking assignments I have ever submitted. I am following MLA guidelines for formatting which is what is expected of me when I am producing any assignments in English class. I am typing it in a **readable** (and very boring!!!) **12-point font**, I'm **double-spacing**, and I'm leaving **adequate margins** (2.54 cm or 1 inch) so that my teacher can provide feedback. I will put **page numbers** and my **last name** in the **header** of each page so that if my pages happen to become separated, my teacher can quickly figure out who the pages belong to. In a program such as Microsoft Word, I will do this by going to 'Insert' and then choosing the Header option. I will be sure that my header is on the right side of the page. There are some other important details that I have included when formatting this assignment. For example, I have included my full name, my course code, my teacher's name and the full date at the top of the assignment. Furthermore, I have included a **creative title** that is the exact same font size and style as the rest of the assignment *and* that is not underlined or **bolded**. In conclusion, I vow that I will follow this formatting structure for *every* assignment that I produce in English class over the next four years because I understand and respect that attention to detail and the ability to follow proper formatting expectations are essential skills for any dedicated English student. In fact, soon I will have these formatting requirements memorized and I will do them by habit.