

Writing effective body paragraphs



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Why is structure important in body paragraphs?

Body paragraphs are where you will spend much time (and most of the assessment word count), formulating and justifying your task response. It is important therefore that the reader can easily follow your thinking by making sure you present well-structured body paragraphs. Each of these should have a main idea, or topic, which relates to the argument you are developing. This idea should then be further explained and supported with evidence and, where appropriate, examples. Transition or linking words (see below) should be used to connect the sentences within the paragraph, to help the writing flow more smoothly. Below is a suggested structure for a body paragraph.

How should I structure a body paragraph?

Topic Sentence (Main Idea)

The topic sentence of the paragraph should relate to the overall issue you are writing about. It expresses the main point and should link (support) your thesis statement if one is required.

Explanation sentences

These expand your main idea. This is where you explain relevant concepts and terminology using evidence (in text citations). Try to do more than describe your topic. Think critically about information, how does it relate to your topic or other things you have read? Why it is important? Ask yourself “so what” when adding information as a way of demonstrating that you have thought about the relevance of the information rather than simply “found” a reference that matched. See below for critical thinking sentence starters.

Evidence

It is important to include evidence to support and strengthen your ideas. This information should be paraphrased and referenced to acknowledge the original source according to the appropriate referencing style of your course. Refer to the relevant UniSQ referencing guide for your course on the library website.

Concluding sentence

Should explain why the topic of the paragraph is relevant to the assessment question and link to the following paragraph if possible.

Body paragraph example

“Graduate engineers require more than technical skills to meet the needs of clients”. Using the supplied case study, critically discuss this statement in relation to the Code of Ethics and Guidelines on Professional Conduct (Engineers Australia 2022)

Ethical practice underpins the provision of safe and sustainable practice in the engineering sector. Boyd and Dare (2024) state it is important for engineering students to receive scaffolded learning opportunities to develop skills as ethical practitioners, enabling them to deliver high quality client services. Additionally, Boyd and Dare (2019) argue, that ensuring students have access to high quality workplace mentoring on placement is integral to them developing ethical work practices. Observing others on site and receiving meaningful feedback for contributions and interactions with clients will assist students to “Engage responsibly with the community and other stakeholders; ...foster the health, safety and wellbeing of the community and the environment [and] balance the needs of the present with the needs of future generations” as outlined in Guideline Four of the Code of Ethics and Guidelines on Professional Conduct (Engineers Australia 2022). Therefore, it is essential that students have sufficient scaffolded mentoring and guidance during placements to develop the skills and confidence required for ethical practice as graduates.

Topic sentence

Paraphrased & referenced evidence

Linking words to introduce additional information.

Direct quote from Code of Ethics as evidence

Ask yourself “so what” to add critical thinking to your writing.

Ensure your paragraphs flow smoothly and logically

Just as transition words can be used to connect your ideas within a paragraph, they are also used to connect ideas between paragraphs to improve your writing flow. The order that you structure your paragraphs should reflect the structure you have outlined in your introduction.

For the example essay topic (above), you may have indicated in your introduction that you would be discussing communication skills; cultural competence and ethics, therefore the first body paragraph should address communication skills. The second paragraph logically should discuss cultural competency and the third ethics. To create logical flow and transition your reader between your first and second paragraphs, you can add linking words at the beginning of the second paragraph, for example:

- “The second skill necessary for allied health workers is cultural competence”
- “In addition to communication skills, allied health workers need to be culturally competent”.

Sentence starters for critical thinking

This could mean therefore...	These data are relevant because...
Therefore, this illustrates...	This is important because...
Farrow’s (2022) results/ findings/ demonstrate...	Smith’s (2023) research indicates...
A consequence of this is...	These authors show bias because they assume...

Use these words to help improve your writing flow

Transition (linking) Words and Phrases					
For continuing an idea	For providing a contrasting view	For showing cause and effect	For showing sequence	For concluding	For restating a point or giving examples
Additionally... In addition... Moreover... Because Consequently... Clearly, then... Furthermore... In the same way... Continuing this idea... Also... Pursuing this further...	In contrast to these... Unlike the previous example... Despite these findings... However... Contrary to these findings... In opposition to... Nevertheless...	Following... In response to... Therefore... As a result of... For this reason... The result... Thus... Due to this... Consequently... The reaction...	The first [concept/aspect]... The second [concept/aspect]... Firstly, Secondly, Finally After...Afterwards... As soon as... In the first place... Later... Meanwhile... Next...	Therefore... This..... Hence... In final analysis In conclusion... In final consideration... Indeed...	In other words... Specifically... For instance... For example... One such occurrence... This is demonstrated by To illustrate... Also... To demonstrate... This is supported by...

Adding paraphrased or quoted information		Adding extra sources to agree with existing evidence	Adding extra sources to challenge existing evidence	
Argues Articulates Asserts Claims Concludes Comments Describes Demonstrates Examines	Explains Indicates Observes Outlines Predicts Reasons Research Reports States	Affirms Corroborates Supports Substantiates Validates Verifies	Argues Challenges Contradicts Contrasts Debates Disputes Doubts	Refutes Rejects Opposes Questions

Further support

Contact your student learning advisors via the Support for Learning team here:

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