



Paragraph Development

Building Better Support

by Anthony Starros, M.F.A.

Just like having the right tools can make building things easier,



there are tools to help you build ideas too.

Paragraphs in essays are really just a group of related ideas,

and building an effective body paragraph is easier if you know the tools, the *methods* for developing your ideas.

The *amount* of body paragraphs in an essay is not as important as the *effective development* of your claim.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- *How complete is my discussion?*
- *How well have I proven my point?*

Fulfilling a minimum length requirement in essays shows how deeply you are able to develop your thoughts.

It's not just a matter of filling space - it's showing how effectively you can *analyze, discuss, and explain* a topic.

To develop the right kinds of ideas, think about your essay's main point.

That will always be your go-to point of reference, your anchor.



As your anchor, it will keep you from floating away from your main point.

It will keep your essay *unified*.



Use Your Thesis to Determine The Kinds and Amounts of Information You Can Use in Body Paragraphs.



- *Find research and expert testimony that supports the claims made in your thesis or topic sentence.*
- *Include specific examples of real-life situations that involve or relate to your thesis.*
- *Analyze the support used - discuss what it means and how it relates to your claim.*
- *Include any personal insights from your own life that will show your readers how it affects you or what you know about it (your thesis).*
- *Talk about situations in which society might be impacted by the ideas in your thesis.*
- *Offer solutions for any problems surrounding the claim made in your thesis.*

Other Methods of Paragraph Development:



Figurative Language: *use similes, metaphors, and personification to add life to your writing.*

Analogy: *compare a difficult idea with something the reader will more easily understand.*

Process: *describe something related to your claim and how it works.*

Cause & Effect: *show the result of an action, or an action that leads to a result.*

Classification & Division: *distinguish between types or classes that relate to your claim.*

Definition: *explain a difficult term or concept in your own words. Don't rely on dictionaries.*

Personal insight: *how do you feel about your topic? How does it affect you? Describe any personal experiences you have with your topic. Put yourself in the essay.*

Analysis: *examine and evaluate an idea related to your topic. Discuss the relevance or meaning of it (like images in an advertisement or lyrics in a song). What does it mean? How does it relate to & support your thesis?*

Here's an example of some good analysis for an expository essay in my 105 classes:

Pay specific attention after the phrase "As I look..." for a model of effective analysis.

At the end of this trail is a dusty, dangerous, and rocky cliff that overlooks the city of Los Angeles and provides a spectacular view of the lights that shine bright during dark nights. I especially love this place at night because the billions of scattered lights appear so beautiful that they almost seem unrealistic. As I look into those lights, I travel into a zone where there is peace, quietness, and serenity. This allows me to take a step back from reality and think about all of the blessings that have been bestowed upon me, all of the people who have touched my life, and most of the things I casually take for granted. I can also see how wonderful the world can be. Viewing the city of Los Angeles from such a high point makes my problems seem so miniscule -- overlooking this city allows me to realize how big the world is compared to me, and how it contains so many things that I will never get the chance to see. Thinking about and reflecting on my life allows my problems to flow away. It is almost as if my problems are draining out of my head and into the abyss of the night sky.

Here's another example of some well-developed analysis from an English 1 essay where a student interprets and discusses the effectiveness of an anti-smoking ad.

Another ad the campaign includes is a commercial showing what the real cost of smoking can do (the whole premise behind the campaign), which can include the cost of your skin. The commercial starts off with a teenage girl buying a pack of cigarettes. The clerk tells the girl, "You need a little more, honey." Then the girl begins to tear a piece of her cheek off from her face and hands it to the clerk. The commercial ends by a spokesperson explaining that smoking causes wrinkles and premature-aged skin. By showing a teenager buying the cigarettes, the advertiser wants to focus on the population in that age bracket. It is focusing on beauty as well, which can be a good tactic for teenagers because they often worry about their physical appearance. One of the emotional stages that teenagers go through is self-concept and body image. If they view their body as being different or less than ideal from their peers, they may view themselves negatively. This is one of the reasons why "The Real Cost" FDA campaign focuses so much on the physical consequences of smoking - to have a powerful impact on their teenage audience.

Finally, here's an example of effective analysis after a quote: research essays aren't just about finding and using research, they're also about explaining the relevance behind the research and how it relates to and supports your claim.

Another reason why the reality television genre is a nuisance is not just because of its effects on people, but because the majority of the people watching it are teenagers and pre-teen adolescents (Patino). This is a significant problem because the individuals in this age group are at a phase of their life where they are impressionable, where they are easily affected by outside forces around them. In relation to this, Chris Weller writes:

In 2011, a survey asked more than 1,100 American girls, between the ages of 11 and 17, questions about their attitudes and reality TV viewing habits.

Overwhelmingly, the girls who consumed a regular diet of *Jersey Shore*, *Project Runway*, *American Idol* and *The Hills*, among other shows, were far more likely to assign greater importance to the [lack of] values championed by those shows.

This is an example of how reality shows are practically brainwashing the youth of this generation by molding their life values, opinions, and even morals to those of their favorite reality show stars. What makes this worse is that most reality shows do not teach valuable lessons or good morals but often promote an erratic party lifestyle, inappropriate behavior, and unrestricted debauchery throughout every episode. These reality shows are shaping the not-fully developed minds of this generation's youth, and are negatively affecting future generations to come.

Explain to your readers how you think your research relates to your claim.

- Don't assume that your readers can see the relevance of included information ~ explain it to them.
- Everyone has different ideas about why things are ~ it is your job as the writer to show your readers your own unique ideas.

fin