

Organization



Five-paragraph essays have very predictable organization.

These short, academic essays typically have four, five, or six paragraphs: one introduction paragraph; two, three, or four body paragraphs; and one conclusion paragraph. The number of body paragraphs you need can change depending on the topic or time requirement (but they are still generally referred to as “five-paragraph essays”).

The way you organize your ideas in a five-paragraph essay may be different from the way you normally organize your ideas. You should focus on one central idea, and that idea needs to be clearly stated multiple times. The essay should present reasons and evidence that support that one, central idea. You may have heard that American writers “tell you what they are going to tell you, they tell you, and then they tell you what they told you.” This is often true in a five-paragraph essay.

While it is often easier to draft your essay by beginning with the body paragraphs, the following section will present the organization of an essay to you in the order your reader should experience your writing. You should prepare them for the topic (in the beginning of the introduction), present your main idea (at the end of the introduction), provide explanations and evidence to support your main idea (in the body paragraphs), and summarize or extend your main idea (in the conclusion).

Introduction Paragraphs
Body Paragraphs
Conclusion Paragraphs
Example Essay 1
Example Essay 2



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