5-Paragraph Essay: Basics

In college, at the basic level (EN 004, 101, 102, etc.), you will usually be asked to write a 5-paragraph essay. This is the basic format for essays, and all other essays are based on it. Once you master this, the rest will seem easy!

Here's the breakdown for a 5-paragraph essay:

Paragraph 1: Introduction

Paragraph 2-4: Body

Paragraph 5: Conclusion

- The purpose of the introduction paragraph is to introduce the topic to your reader.
  - Usually, you make a few general comments about the topic and try to engage the interest of the reader. This is important because if you reader isn't interested by the end of the first paragraph, he/she may not read on!
  - The intro paragraph usually ends with your thesis statement, which should be narrow and focused, very specific, and an assertion. It is the main point you are making about the topic; i.e. the reason that you're writing the paper.
  - Everything else in the paper supports or refers back to the thesis.
- The body paragraphs support the thesis.
  - The thesis usually has three examples or three reasons to support the point. Each one of these will then be addressed in a body paragraph with more details and examples to support it.
    - For example, if your thesis is, "Recycling should be mandatory in cities to reduce greenhouse gasses, waste sent to landfills, and the use of non-renewable resources," you will have a support paragraph about greenhouse gasses, one about landfills, and one about non-renewable resources.
    - If your thesis lists 3 ways we can reduce our waste, you would go into more detail about each one in each of your body paragraphs.
  - If you don’t discuss each topic and do so in the order presented in your thesis, your reader will be confused and may not be able to follow your reasoning.
- Finally, your conclusion wraps everything up.
  - The conclusion starts with a restatement of your thesis in different words.
  - It then should summarize the main points of your paper.
  - Finally, it can end with a parting statement that gives the reader something to think about or take with him/her.
- For more information on 5-paragraph essays, check out [http://www.studygs.net/5paragraph_edit.htm](http://www.studygs.net/5paragraph_edit.htm).
**Thesis Statement**

- Your thesis should be narrow and focused, very specific, and an assertion. It is the main point you are making about the topic; i.e. the reason that you're writing the paper.
- The first thing you want to do is decide WHY you are writing the essay. What is your purpose?
- Your thesis should state your topic and the point you are making about the topic, that is, your position on the question you are asked.
- It often also contains your 3 support points, i.e. reasons, causes, effects, solutions, examples, etc. for the main idea.
- Ideally, your thesis statement should be the last sentence of your introductory paragraph.
- For more on thesis statements, go to: [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/545/01/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/545/01/)