

Writing Center



**Research Paper Format**

# INTERESTING TITLE

Make your claim; tell the reader what to expect; show relevance

**INTRODUCTION** (*typically 1-2 paragraphs)*

**PURPOSE:** *To set up and state one’s claim or introduce a topic or idea*

* Make your introductory paragraph(s) **interesting**. How can you draw your readers in?
* What **background information**, if any, do we need to know in order to understand your claim?
* **STATE** your claim at the end of your introductory paragraph(s)

## You have multiple options for opening an essay. Some options include:

**Anecdote:** A little story that frames what your essay is about.

**Scene:** Give readers a look at some aspect of your topic. Ex: Paper on tropical rainforest deforestation opens with description of land stripped of trees.

**Profile:** Introduce a person who is key to your topic. Ex: Case study. **Background:** Provide important and surprising info about your topic. **Quotation:** Open with a great quote that frames or captures your topic.

**Dialogue:** Open with a conversation between two people in your essay. One of these people can be you.

**Question:** Ask your readers the question that launched your research **or** questions they themselves might raise.

**Contrast:** Compare two apparently dissimilar things that highlight the problem or question your paper will explore.

**Announcement:** Say what your paper is about; the thesis statement.

**New Discussion of an Old Topic:** Explain why an old topic is worth examining again. **Allusion:** Refer to a work of art, music, literature, film, or to a religious, historical, or mythical person.

# SUPPORTING EVIDENCE PARAGRAPH #1

**PURPOSE:** *To prove your argument or explore your topic. Usually is one paragraph but it can be longer.*

**Topic Sentence:** What is one item, fact, detail, or example you can tell your readers that will help them better understand your claim/paper topic? Your answer should be the topic sentence for this paragraph.

**Explain Topic Sentence:** Do you need to explain your topic sentence? If so, do so here. **Introduce Evidence:** Introduce your evidence either in a few words (As Dr. Brown states ―…) or in a full sentence (―To understand this issue we first need to look at statistics).

**State Evidence:** What supporting evidence (reasons, examples, facts, statistics, and/or quotations) can you include to prove/support/explain your topic sentence?

**Explain Evidence:** How should we read or interpret the evidence you are providing us? How does this evidence prove the point you are trying to make in this paragraph? Can be opinion based and is often at least 1-3 sentences.



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***Make us central to your writing!***

**Concluding Sentence:** End your paragraph with a concluding sentence that reasserts how the

Topic sentence of this paragraph helps us better understand and/or prove your paper’s overall claim. This also serves as a transition to your next evidence paragraph or counterargument paragraphs.

# SUPPORTING EVIDENCE PARAGRAPH #2, #3, #4, etc.

Repeat above

Note: *You need as many Support paragraphs as required to reach page assignment minimum and to prove your point, but also keep in mind the Intro, Counterargument, and Conclusion sections. Do not stretch or shorten any one area of the paper.*

**POSSIBLE COUNTERARGUMENT PARAGRAPH** (*1-3 paragraphs)*

**PURPOSE:** *To anticipate your reader’s objections; make yourself sound more objective and reasonable.*

* What possible argument might your reader pose against your argument and/or some aspect of your reasoning? Insert one or more of those arguments here and refute them.
* End final paragraph of counterargument with a concluding sentence that reasserts your paper’s claim as a whole.

# CONCLUSION PART 1: SUMMARY PARAGRAPH

**PURPOSE:** *In longer papers, this reminds readers of your argument/ focus and supporting evidence/ ideas, and to restate your paper’s overall claim and supporting evidence/ ideas.* (*1 paragraph)*

# CONCLUSION PART 2: YOUR “So What?” PARAGRAPH

**PURPOSE:** *To illustrate to your reader that you have thought critically and analytically about this issue.*

* Your conclusion should not simply restate your intro paragraph. If your conclusion says almost the exact same thing as your introduction, it may indicate that you have not shown enough critical thinking during the course of your essay.
* Your conclusion should tell us why we should care about your paper. What is the significance of your claim? Why is it important to you as the writer or to us as the reader? What information should you or I take away from this?
* *Your conclusion should create a sense of movement to a more complex understanding of the subject of your paper.* By the end of your essay, you should have worked through your ideas enough so that your reader understands what you have argued and is ready to hear the larger point (i.e. the "so what") you want to make about your topic.
* Your conclusion should serve as the climax of your paper. So, save your strongest analytical points for the end of your essay, and use them to drive your conclusion. However, do not include new information in your conclusion.
* Vivid, concrete language is as important in a conclusion as it is elsewhere--perhaps more essential, *since the conclusion determines the reader's final impression of your essay*. Do not leave your audience with the impression that your argument was vague or unsure.