

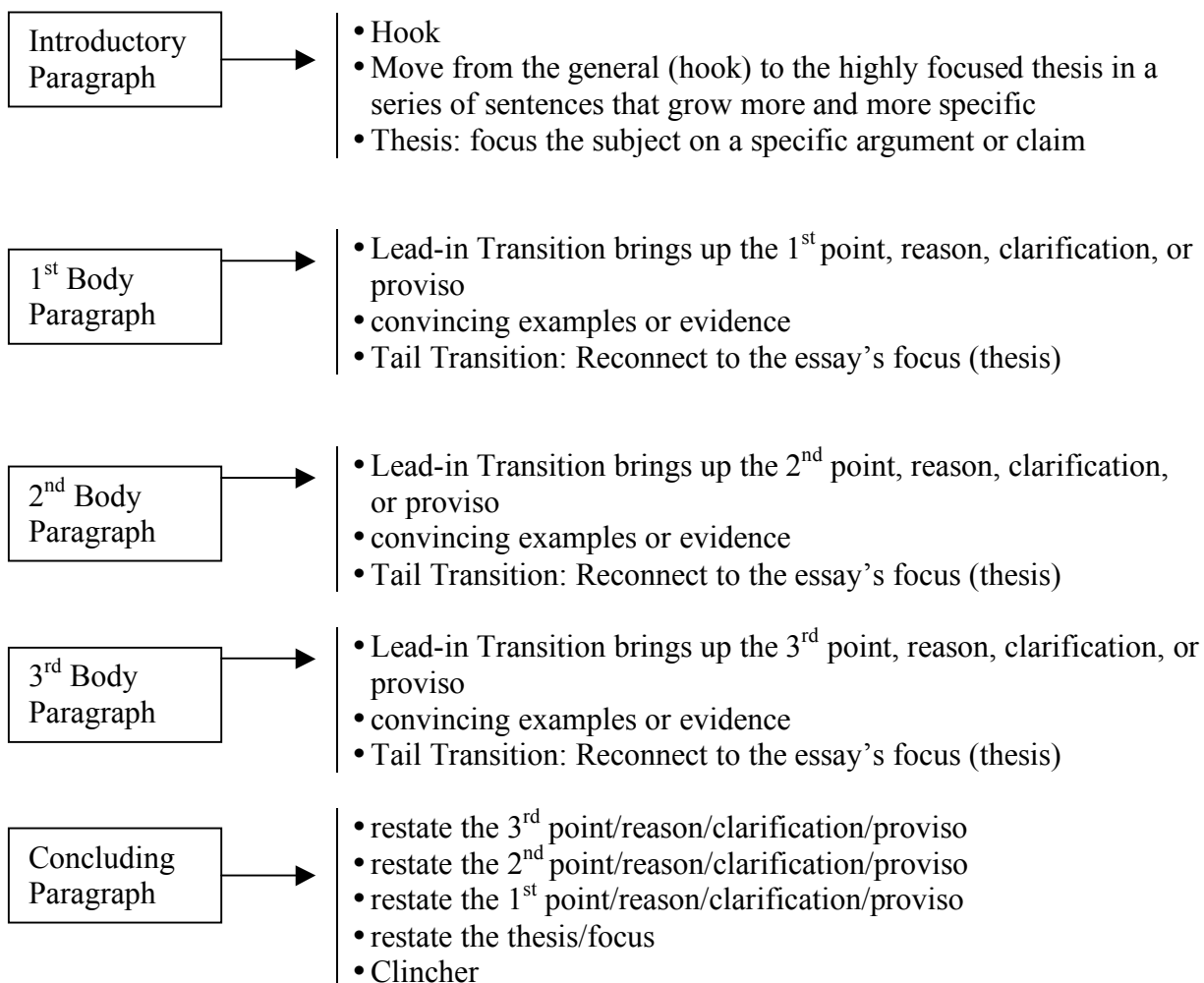
The Writing Packet

Fundamental Concepts for Analytical Writing

Writing is a gigantic category. Not only are there dozens of different types of writing (fiction, non-fiction, poetry, journalism, technical, persuasive, expository, notational, advertising, text messaging, and so on) but each type of writing is different. Sometimes very different. The only thing that all writing has in common is this general principle: the purpose of the writing determines how it should be written.

In school, most writing is some combination of analyzing and persuading in the form of an essay. This, at least, is the writing that is demanded on the MCAS tests, the SAT, and other formal evaluations. This is the writing that is asked of all college students. This is also the writing that typically fills a master or doctoral thesis. Therefore this packet contains the most fundamental, the most basic, elements of analytical and persuasive writing.

A Breakdown of a Simple Essay



Hooks:

(Def.) A hook is the very first sentence of an essay. Its purpose is to catch the reader's attention like a fishhook catches a fish. Remember, the hook must relate to the subject of the essay, but the hook should never sound like or act like the essay's thesis.

Some possible hooks:

- a profound or essential question
- a deliberately trivial question
- a questionable definition
- state the obvious
- disagree with the obvious
- a paradox or contradiction
- a riddle or puzzle
- relate two unrelated ideas
- a PG joke
- a BRIEF personal anecdote
- a pop culture reference
- challenge a cliché

Thesis:

(Def.) A single sentence that ends the introductory paragraph and tells the reader what the essay will focus on and argue for (or against). The thesis also indicates how the essay will approach the argument.

Steps for writing a Michigan style thesis:

1. restate the question
2. take a clear position
3. provide reasons (this approach leads to a simpler and shorter essay)
or provide a direction, approach, or method for analysis
(this approach leads to a more complex, longer essay)

For example:

1 (simpler): The character Janet is central to the plot of "The Storm" because she displays the suspense and fear that keeps readers on the edge of their seats.

2 (more complex): It is only by first thoroughly understanding the political landscapes of both Shakespeare's England and Henry VI's England that the characterization and role of Joan la Pucelle in the play can be understood.

Transitions:

(Def.) Transitions are words and phrases that connect the various ideas in a piece of writing. Transitions are the glue that hold an essay together, and therefore transitions should be some of the most frequently used words in the essay. Though it is not the term that is used, the word *connections* also describes what is meant by *transitions*.

There are two places where transitions are extremely important:

1. The first sentence of a body paragraph (the lead-in transition)
 - The lead-in transition should anticipate the next question or problem the reader will be thinking about and turn this question into the essay's next point, reason, clarification, proviso, etc.
2. The last sentence of a body paragraph (the tail transition)
 - The tail transition should re-connect the point/reason and examples in the paragraph to the essay's thesis.
 - The tail transition may also help the essay to flow toward the point that will be made in the next paragraph.

Transition words are *all* the words that create logical connections between ideas. In the boxes below are a few of the hundreds of transitional words and phrases that exist.

To add:

again, also, and, further, furthermore, in addition, moreover, too

To compare:

as, as if, likewise, similarly, important, of some importance, more important, most important, on one hand, on the other hand

To contrast:

although, but, however, nevertheless, on the contrary, on the other hand, hitherto

To give an example:

for example, for instance, in one case

To show cause and effect:

if, in order that, since, accordingly, as a result, consequently, hence, so that, then, therefore, thus, because, leading to, causing, creating, establishing

To insist or emphasize:

above all, certainly, in fact, indeed, of course

To indicate a sequence:

first, second, third, etc.
after, afterward, at the same time, before, subsequently, until, while, finally/last

To restate:

alternately, in other words, that is to say

To summarize:

all in all, altogether, to summarize, so far

To acknowledge another point of view:

of course, granted, while it is true that, as long as, though, although, even though

To show exception:

aside from, barring, besides, despite, except, excepting, excluding, however, in spite of

3 Convincing Examples

One example is not convincing. Two examples may be coincidental. Three examples are persuasive. The general idea is that the more examples you use, the better. Most often, this part of the essay is where quotes from the original story or poem would be used.

Guidelines for Using Quotes

1. The quotation should be *part* of a sentence you wrote, not the whole sentence.
2. Quotations should not be used at the beginning or the end of a paragraph or essay.
3. Quotations should never take up more than 1/3 of the paragraph you are writing.
4. The sentence containing the quotation should end with a citation: the author's last name and the page number, enclosed in parenthesis: (Smith 42).

quote (*Def.*) Any word or phrase from a story or poem *becomes* a quote as soon as you write it in your essay and place quotation marks around it.

The word *quote* is not a word you would write in your essay.
Quoting is something you *do* in your essay.

Events from the plot of a story can also serve as evidence or examples of the point you are making.

Using Events from the Plot as an Example

1. Events should not be quoted.
2. Events should be summarized in your own words, in only a sentence or two.
3. Never summarize a series of events in a row. Instead, deal with one event at a time as an example of the point you are making.

Concluding Paragraph

There are three things to keep in mind when writing a conclusion:

1. In the final paragraph, *nothing new* should be mentioned.
2. When restating points that have already been made (and the thesis), do your best to use different word, or *synonyms*.
3. Restating something that has already been explained can be done with *fewer words*. Explanation and examples are not needed because they have already been provided; the conclusion is simply a recap.