

The 5 Paragraph (Burger) Essay

Mr. Middleswart - - English 10/10B

There are certain things that, as you go through school, you **NEED** to know how to do. In math, for example, it might be Pythagorean's theorem or the multiplication tables. In English, one thing that is **crucial** that you be able to understand is the 5 paragraph essay. If you plan on going through college, essentially every essay you'll write - and there will be a LOT of them - follows the 5 paragraph format. Even if you don't plan on going to college, to get through high school you'll need to know how to write one, and in the world outside, nearly all work-related papers (letters, business reports, cover letters, etc.) also follow the 5 paragraph format.

Now, many of you may be saying "Oh yeah - I know how to write an essay. No problem." It is true that many of you are good writers and can pull off a solid essay. However, very few of you have mastered the 5 paragraph essay format, and even those who have can use some extra practice. So, pay attention to the "Triple Whopper" format below - we'll use it often this semester, and you'll use it frequently in the future as well.

"The Top Bun" - Paragraph 1 - Introduction.

In this paragraph, the format (in order) is:

- Hook - how can you draw your reader in?
- Transition - how to get to your main info?
- Preview main points
- Thesis - what is the main point of your paper? That is, what is the answer to the question your paper explores?

"The Meat - Burger 1" - Paragraph 2 - First Supporting Idea

- Transition/topic sentence - What is your first main piece of information?
- Support the main piece of info with details - shoot for at least 3 supporting details
- Conclude the paragraph with a clincher

"The Meat - Burger 2" - Paragraph 3 - Second Supporting Idea

- Transition/topic sentence - What is your second main piece of information?
- Support the main piece of info with details - shoot for at least 3 supporting details
- Conclude the paragraph with a clincher

"The Meat - Burger 3" - Paragraph 4 - Last Supporting Idea

- Transition/topic sentence - What is your last main piece of information?
- Support the main piece of info with details - shoot for at least 3 supporting details
- Conclude the paragraph with a clincher

"The Bottom Bun" - Paragraph 5 - Conclusion

- Transition - General statement about your main point
- Briefly restate - in a sentence or two - your 3 big supporting ideas
- Restate or reword your thesis statement from your intro
- End the paragraph with a statement about what everything you wrote means



The 5 Paragraph Essay

Some Additional Important Information

As I said, if you can master the essay format on the back of this sheet, you'll be in good shape no matter what you are asked to write about. With that said, there are some more "rules" of writing a good essay - there are 5 that we will focus on.

1) Everything in your essay should relate back to, or support, your thesis.

- Your thesis is the main point of your entire paper. Everything you write - every sentence - should relate to it. This is especially true of topic statements at the beginning of each paragraph.

2) Do not use "I" statements in your paper.

- Saying "I think," "I feel," "I believe," etc. in your paper makes it weaker. Instead, simply take the "I" statements out and your writing will become much stronger. For example - writing "I think the Boston Red Sox are the best baseball team in the major leagues" is a fairly weak statement. Instead, leaving the "I" out changes the sentence to this: "The Boston Red Sox are the best baseball team in the major leagues." See how much stronger that sounds?

3) Always be sure you can back up and explain your supporting reasons.

- A very common problem in writing is that people put down a great supporting reason, and then leave it alone. Always ask yourself "why?" after you use a supporting reason, and then answer that question in your writing. Example - "Teens should be allowed to drive at 15." If left as is, this isn't a strong statement. Asking why this is true, and then answering it right after the statement, is the stuff good essays are made of. Also, make sure that when you explain those reasons, you use more than just your own thoughts - writing "Having to wait until you're 17 to drive is stupid" is a weak argument - give some reasoning - facts, other's thoughts, etc. - to make it stronger.

4) Try to be as formal as possible.

- An essay should have voice - that is, it shouldn't be so formally written that it is boring - but try to keep informal, casual writing out of essays. This means no AIM writing (LOL, JK!, etc.), no swearing, no slang ("You know what I mean?, etc..."). Basically, pretend you're on a job interview when you're writing it. If you wouldn't say it to a potential boss, you probably shouldn't write it in your paper.

5) Do not add anything new to your conclusion.

- Your conclusion should sum up your paper, reminding the reader what you said. If you add any new writing/info to your conclusion, it only confuses the paper and the reader. So, just sum things up - do not add any new info.