

Effective Paragraphing

Use this guide to structure your body paragraphs:

The Color Coding Decoded:

TOPIC SENTENCE: The topic sentence should always be your own **claim** – not a quote, a summary, or a paraphrase of another author or text. It should also clearly relate to the Thesis Statement (see *The Four T's of W131*).

EXPLANATION AND TRANSITION: Sometimes (ok – almost always) it is a good idea to write a line or two linking the **claim** in the topic sentence to the evidence that you'll present to support that claim. Use this space to clarify your **claim**, to **explain** your reasons for making it, to **establish** a context for understanding it, and to **transition** into the evidence.

INTRODUCTION OF EVIDENCE: If **introducing** an article or an author for the first time, give their full name and the full title of the work that you're drawing from. Often the **introduction** can be linked with the **evidence** in the same sentence.

EVIDENCE: The reason we get out of bed in the morning (well, some of us...). The job of any piece of **evidence** is to support the **claim** in the topic sentence (and thus the **thesis** as well). **Evidence** may take the form of a quotation, a summary, a paraphrase, a fact or statistic, a personal experience (in certain contexts), or a piece of common knowledge. The more specific the **evidence**, the more persuasive it will be. *Remember to cite!*

WARRANT/EXPLANATION: **Evidence** cannot speak for itself. Even if you find the perfect **quotation** to support your **claim**, you still *must* explicitly state for your reader *how* it supports your **claim**. This is called the **warrant**, and it is usually – if not always – as long as or longer than the **evidence** itself.

INTRODUCTION OF FURTHER EVIDENCE: After explaining the first piece of **evidence**, you now have the *option* of **introducing** further **evidence** (remember not to overburden the reader with **evidence** – sometimes less is more). There are several ways of ordering **evidence** within a paragraph, but generally speaking it is best to save the better example for last (see “Climactic Order”). If the second piece of **evidence** is coming from a different source than the first one, be sure to **introduce** the second source here.

EVIDENCE 2: Follow the same guidelines as above.

WARRANT/EXPLANATION: Same as above. With the second piece of **evidence**, however, it is also necessary to show how it relates to the first piece of **evidence** (if the connection isn't immediately obvious).

TRANSITION: The last step: here you need to **direct** your reader into the next paragraph. These can be tricky, but the main point to bear in mind is that you *never* want to end a paragraph with a quotation, which can confuse your reader. Instead, use this space to give your reader a sense of what is coming in the next paragraph. One strategy for smooth transitions: when revising, make sure that the same idea is present in both last sentence of a paragraph and the topic sentence of the next one.