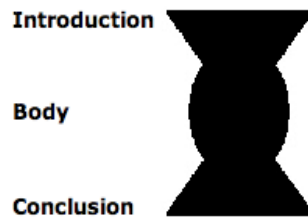




The Keyhole Essay Expanded: Introduction, Body and Conclusion Writing Guide

The basic five paragraph or *keyhole* essay is fundamental to writing. Familiarity with this format will provide you with the foundation for becoming an accomplished and articulate writer on any topic. *This is what it looks like:*



And, this is how you do it:

INTRODUCTION

Think of the *Introduction* as a kind of funnel that gradually draws the reader in until the paragraph narrows into the thesis statement. Your *Introduction* should contain the following:

1. **Opening:** Think of the introduction as an invitation, of sorts. Ease the reader in. Pique the reader's interest, but don't put her/him off. Whatever you do, don't confuse or befuddle the reader. Who wants to go to that party?
2. **Thesis statement:** Think of the thesis statement as the topic sentence for the paper or project. This statement contains the paper's main idea and tells the reader what the paper will be about. The challenge here is to not make the thesis statement too narrow or too broad. You can continue to shape your thesis as you research and construct your body paragraphs, but you should have a clear focus before you begin. One more thing: BE SMOOTH. Do not shout out your thesis statement with phrases like "The thesis of my paper is . . ." or "In this paper, I will analyze . . ." Such phrases are annoying and mark the work of an amateur.

BODY

Body paragraphs are the most important part of your paper. Here is where the reader either buys into your discussion or heads for the door. To keep the reader interested, your body paragraphs should contain the following:

1. **A Topic Sentence:** This sentence, usually the first, states the main idea of the paragraph. Everything else in the paragraph should relate to the main idea as stated in the topic sentence.

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<http://www2.infohio.org/rpc/docs/step4/KeyholeEssay.pdf>

2. **Support & evidence:** Depending on the type of paper, support and evidence can take many forms: references to a text or historical document; facts; quotes from artists, witnesses or experts; data, or any other **relevant** information that supports the main idea. You should have anywhere from two to five separate items of support and evidence. Ask your teacher to be sure.
3. **Explanation & argument:** This is the heart of the analysis or argument; clearly and thoroughly demonstrate how your support and evidence supports the main idea. Evidence is not enough. Think of yourself as a lawyer in court. You must make the jury (reader) understand how the evidence proves your point.

CONCLUSION

The *Conclusion* is where you say a warm goodbye to the reader. No need to get boastful or overly emotional. Don't claim your paper will change the world. It won't. But you might change the reader's mind. That's something. To that end, here are some things to keep in mind:

1. Review the highlights, or main points, of your discussion. But, please, don't simply repeat your thesis statement. BORING.
2. Leave your reader with something to remember, something that will make a lasting impression. Think of this as a nice parting gift for the reader. However you accomplish this, now is not the time for something new. Stay with your thesis.