



# The Brainfuse Writing Lab

## Essential Organization Guide

### A Quick Reference for Organizing your Essay

Organization refers to the structure that an author uses to convey core ideas, arguments, or narratives. Strong organization should act as a guide for both the author and reader. The structure of an essay will depend on the essay type.

### Types of Essays

**Analytical Essays** present a claim or argument that the author supports through his/her own analysis and research. This is one of the most common forms of research essays.

- *Example topic:* How the painting of Gustave Courbet represents a break in French Academic painting and the birth of the avant-garde.

**Expository Essays** focus on the clarification of complex subjects. This can include philosophy, technology, art objects, films, etc. The key difference between an expository essay and an analytical essay is the mode of argumentation. Expository essays focus more on clarifying/explaining the subject to the reader and less on personal analysis. In other words, expository essays are more factual and objective while analytical essays may require the writer to include his/her own opinions and thoughts.

- *Example topic:* How Sergei Eisenstein's revolutionary use of montage in film changed the way time is perceived in cinema.

**Argumentative Essays** focus on the author's exploration of a topic and defense of a particular point of view. Like in analytical and expository essays, the author's argument should be supported by research. Argumentative essays can often read more like a debate than other types of essays with the author recognizing competing points of views.

- *Example topic:* Should the United States prioritize Fine Arts funding in primary and secondary education?

**Narrative Essays** ask the author to tell a story to the reader. Narrative essays generally fit into one of two categories, course assignment or creative writing. A narrative essay should have a definitive beginning, middle, and end. Creative writing assignments may require students to diverge from traditional linear narratives.

- *Example topic:* My visits to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Louvre, and the British Portrait Gallery during summer break.



## Essay Structure

**Analytical, Expository, and Argumentative Essays** typically adhere to the following structure: Introductory Paragraph, Body Paragraphs, and Conclusion. The *format* of the essay may vary depending on your instructor's preference (e.g. APA, MLA, CMS, etc.). For assistance formatting your essay, see the appropriate [Brainfuse Style Guide](#).

**Introductory Paragraph** should introduce the reader to the topic and goals of the paper, the stakes of the argument (i.e. *why is this topic important?*) and the thesis statement

- The thesis statement is the key element of the introduction. A strong thesis:
  - Identifies the object of analysis
  - Presents the author's argument
  - Provides the main supporting evidence (ideally in the order it will appear in the body paragraphs).
    - *Example thesis statement:* "The paintings of Gustave Courbet represent the earliest instance of avant-garde art through their adoption of non-academic subjects, appropriation of academic style, and denial of Romantic tendencies."

**Body Paragraphs** provide the supporting augmentation for the author's analyses. Body paragraphs should follow the basic format:

- Main idea/Topic sentence is often, but not necessarily, the first sentence in a paragraph. It concisely introduces the main idea or thought being discussed within the paragraph. Its primary goal is to orient the reader within the paper and to provide context for the author's analyses and research.
- Supporting analysis should occupy the majority of the space within a body paragraph. This is the author's chance to provide a synthesis of his/her analyses and research. Essentially, the author is providing the reader with his/her interpretation of the materials.
- The transition sentence is where the author has the chance to strengthen and support his/her analyses with careful research (backed by citations of academic sources where appropriate.)
  - Transition sentences should come at the end of each paragraph. They act as a bridge between the author's analyses and the topic of the next



paragraph. These are important organizational elements because they allow the reader to trace the author's main argument throughout the entire essay.

- *Example Transition Sentence:* "While Courbet continuously eschewed the subject matter of History painting, he found success in appropriating its scale."

The **Conclusion** should be the final paragraph in the essay. It should reiterate the main points of the introduction. Think of the conclusion as a shorter version of the introduction. A strong conclusion should:

- briefly recap the thesis and key supporting arguments
- concisely reiterate the stakes of the essay

**Narrative Essays** generally following a similar pattern to the essays above. However, narrative essays incorporate one additional element to the introductory, body and concluding paragraphs noted in the essays above: a climax.

**Introductory paragraphs** for narrative essays serve a similar function as other types of essays. The author should use this paragraph to introduce the reader to the narrative and *why* it is being told. The setting, themes, and characters of the narrative may also be established here.

**Body Paragraphs** should contain a plot point and clearly move the narrative forward by engaging the themes, settings, or characters introduced in the introductory paragraph.

- Topic Sentence/Plot Points are similar to traditional essay types. Narrative body paragraphs should be anchored by a topic sentence. It is helpful to think of the topic sentence as an opportunity to establish a new point *within* the narrative.
- Transition Sentences end body paragraphs and prepare the reader to move onto the next plot point. The transition should provide a reason or logic for the story to move forward.

**Climax** within the plotline is the turning point of a story where the action or tension of a narrative is resolved and the message of the text is clear.

**The Conclusion** will generally provide a concise recap of the story. The goal is to reiterate the impact of the climax to the reader. This is also an opportunity for the author to indicate how the characters of the narrative have been changed by the story's events.