



COLLEGE MATTERS

Tips to help you succeed in your academic college career

Organizing Your Paper

Think of the organization of a paper like the organization of a court case:

- In a court case, the **Opening Statement** is where background information is provided and/or groundwork is laid and the plea is stated (guilty or not guilty). Providing background information or laying groundwork is the purpose of your **introduction** and the plea is like your **thesis statement**.
- Next in a court case, the lawyer **provides evidence** to support the plea by calling expert witnesses, eye witnesses, etc. This is where the lawyer provides all the facts, details and evidence in order to convince the jury that the plea his/her defendant has entered is valid. In an essay, you provide evidence for your thesis (the plea) in the **body paragraphs** of your essay.
- Finally, after all the evidence has been presented, the lawyer has just a few minutes for his/her **closing statement**. Note that no new evidence is ever presented in a closing statement. Instead, the lawyer helps the jury to understand the significance of the evidence in relation to the plea. He/she may even help the jury see the evidence in a slightly different way. The closing statement is very similar to the **conclusion** of your paper. It is your chance to bring everything together to clearly show your reader what the significance of your paper is.

1.) The Outline

An outline is a sketch of what the final paper will look like. It is a guide that will keep you on the right path, a blueprint that makes it clear where each piece of information belongs. Your outline should be flexible at first; a changing, working outline to allow for changes

- The details in the outline should be listed from general to specific.
- The general topic is listed first, followed by the major subtopics and the supporting details and examples.

2.) The Introduction - The Opening Statement

Your opening paragraph must state the topic of the essay (thesis statement), gain the attention of the reader, and allow for a smooth transition into the body of the essay. Strategies may include:

- A series of questions about the topic
- An interesting story about the subject
- A startling or unusual fact or figure
- A reference to a famous person or place associated with the topic
- A quotation from a well-known figure or literary work
- A definition of an important, topic-related term

3.) The Body - Stating the Evidence to Support Your Plea (thesis)

Each paragraph should be focused around a main point, which is usually stated in a topic sentence located near the beginning of the paragraph. (However, the topic sentence can be implied and not stated outright.) If possible, the topic sentence should also reveal a direct connection to the overall thesis statement. Each body paragraph should contain plenty of details/evidence/facts to support your topic sentence (and ultimately your thesis).

A new paragraph is started whenever there is a shift in the essay topic, to break up a very long paragraph, or to show:

- A change in ideas
- A change in speakers
- A change in time
- A change in place
- A change in action

4.) The Conclusion--Closing Statement

The conclusion should do one or more of the following:

- answer the question, "So What?" So what should the reader take away from your essay after all is said and done. Think of a conclusion like the closing statement in a court case. This is your final chance to get your point across to the reader
- end the essay on a strong note. Pick a final sentence that will stick in your reader's mind
- bring a sense of closure to the paper
- tie all of the important points in the essay together
- leave the reader with a clear understanding of the meaning and the significance of the essay
- sum up the main points you made
- return to the opening and comment upon it
- wrap up the discussion

Note: Never present new evidence in your conclusion. All of your examples, evidence and supporting details belong in the body of your paper.

Learning Enhancement Center
Carlson Library
Lower Level B0200 - Rathbun Cove
Phone: 419.530.2176
www.utoledo.edu/success/lec