

The Five Paragraph Essay

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The five paragraph essay is a formal essay made up of exactly five paragraphs: an introduction, three paragraphs of body (or explanation), and a conclusion. The advantages of the five paragraph essay are that it provides structure for students, which is especially important for timed essays, and that it aids students in developing topics in sufficient depth. The major disadvantages come when the essays rely so heavily on the formula that they become bland or when the topic divisions feel forced or artificial. What follows is a description of a typical five paragraph essay.

Essay Question:

As high school students, you developed impressions of what college life would be like based on tales told by college students, your teachers, or perhaps your parents. You might even have accepted the visions of college presented in films. What are the dominant impressions you have of college, and what expectations do you have?

¶1 Introduction

The introduction will be a minimum of **three** sentences in length. The first two or more sentences will provide the context for your response. The **last** sentence of the essay (the thesis statement) will identify the three paragraph divisions of your essay.

Before entering college, I had many misconceptions and impressions of what it would be like. Now that I am a college student, I have finally discovered some correct impressions of college life. The dominant impressions I have of college revolve around the maturing process that goes on, the long periods of time spent alone, and the colossal studying that is needed.

¶2 1st Body Paragraph

The first body paragraph will develop the first of the three divisions of your topic announced in your thesis statement. The paragraph will be about 8-12 sentences in length, will begin with a topic sentence identifying the first division of your thesis statement, will provide details explaining what is meant by that topic sentence, and will end with a concluding sentence that sums up the paragraph.

First and foremost is the extensive maturing process that every college student must undergo. As college is a "do-it-yourself" lifestyle, I have learned to depend on myself. I have learned to study way ahead for a test instead of waiting until the last minute. For example, I began to prepare for a math test yesterday that will not be given until next week. I set aside one hour every other day to review my exercises, study the formulas we had been learning in class, and to re-read the textbook. In addition, I now set my own sleeping schedule since my first class isn't until 11:00 a.m. and I can sleep later than the rest of my family. These examples show maturity because I have learned that my mother isn't going to be standing behind me telling me to study or coming in my room to wake me up in the mornings. The responsibility is now mine.

¶3 2nd Body Paragraph

The second body paragraph will develop the second of the three divisions of your topic announced in your thesis statement. This paragraph will also be about 8-12 sentences in length, will begin with a topic sentence which provides a transition statement from the first paragraph and identifies the second division of your thesis statement, will provide details explaining what is meant by that topic sentence, and will end with a concluding sentence that sums up the paragraph.

Not only do college students mature, but they also spend more time by themselves. . . .

¶4 3rd Body Paragraph

The third body paragraph follows the same pattern as the second body paragraph.

¶5 Conclusion

The concluding paragraph will be composed of a few sentences that will recap the main idea of the essay expressed in the introduction.

College is nothing like the twenty-four hour party I had seen on television and in movies. While I have had opportunities for fun, most of my college experience has involved self-discipline and hard work. Although I have made and continue to make new friends, I spend less time with other people than I do on reading, writing, and arithmetic. I now realize that somehow during the last few months, I have had to join the adult world of my parents complete with its responsibilities and demands.