

WRITING CENTER TIP SHEET

Paper Writing Strategies

Organizing a Paper

Even though assignments can differ from class to class (and even within classes), papers have the same basic structure. Once you become comfortable with a three part paper structure, you'll find that the writing takes less time and it's easier to do your research.

I. Introduction

Serves as the opening of the paper (just like it sounds).

Goals: Ease your reader into your topic, perhaps giving them a historical or social framework to better understand why you're writing about this topic, i.e.: "Since the 1990s, drug abuse has caused ____ deaths in the United States."

- _ Provide a focused thesis statement expressing the position of the paper, i.e.:
"Bilingual education suffers from two main problems: a shortage of trained teachers and a lack of parental involvement."

Avoid: Stating the obvious, i.e.: "Crime is a big problem," or, "TV is a popular form of entertainment."

- _ Stating your intentions, i.e.: "In this essay, I will show..."

II. Body

This is where the majority of your research is used. The body of the paper makes specific points about a topic, and your research or quotes supports the paper's points.

Goals: Structure your paragraphs carefully, so they're focused on one topic at a time.

- _ Use quotes and research information to support your ideas—"sandwich" them between your thoughts. For example:

(writer's thought) Ted Williams is one of the best hitters in baseball history. An article on CNN.com states *(supporting quote)*, "Williams hit over .400 for two seasons, in 1952 and 1953." *(writer's thought)* This illustrates that Williams was able to accomplish what few players in the sport have ever achieved.

Avoid: Linking together a series of quotes—you want the paper to express your original thoughts.

- _ Confusing your readers by discussing two different ideas in the same paragraph.

III. Conclusion

The wrap up of the whole paper. This section reminds readers where you started (your thesis statement) and briefly recalls the information in the body paragraphs. Lastly, it leaves readers with something to think about—the "so what."

Goals: Remind readers of your main points, briefly.

- _ End on a strong note: a quote, look to the future, call to action, etc. This should give the reader something to think about.

Avoid: Repeating the identical wording from the introduction

- _ Introducing new ideas—save that for the body paragraphs.
- _ Contradictions. Stay focused with the main themes in your paper.

- Generalizations. Avoid using “all” and “every” when discussing a topic—there are exceptions to every rule.