

Body Paragraph Structure Guide

A strong body paragraph should follow a clear, logical structure so your ideas flow smoothly and your argument or explanation is easy to follow. Use the framework below for analytical, argumentative, or explanatory writing.

1. Topic Sentence

- Introduces the main idea of the paragraph
- Connects to the thesis or overall purpose
- Should be specific, not vague

Example:

“Atticus demonstrates moral courage by defending Tom Robinson despite community pressure.”

2. Context / Background (if needed)

- Briefly situate the reader in the scene, chapter, or example
 - Avoid unnecessary plot summary
 - Include only what the reader must know to understand your evidence
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3. Evidence

- Quote, paraphrase, data point, example, or textual detail
- Make sure evidence is directly relevant
- Integrate evidence smoothly into your sentence

Example:

“When the town criticizes him, Atticus explains that he could not ‘hold up [his] head in town’ if he refused the case.”

4. Explanation / Analysis (the most important part)

- Explain what the evidence means
- Break down how it supports your topic sentence

- Interpret—not summarize—the text
- Show reasoning, significance, and deeper insight

Questions to guide your analysis:

- What does this quote/example reveal?
- Why does this matter to the character, theme, or argument?
- How does it support your claim?

5. Link Back / Concluding Sentence

- Tie the explanation back to your main argument or thesis
- Summarize the takeaway of the paragraph
- Transition into the next paragraph (if needed)