



Writing Guide: **The Academic Essay;** **Three Common Patterns**

An **essay** is a multiple-paragraph piece of writing in which you try to inform, persuade, or entertain the reader.

A **thesis statement** is a one-sentence statement of the main idea of your essay; it must identify your subject and make an assertion about it. Think of your thesis as a one-sentence answer to the question "**What are you trying to prove?**" A good academic essay should contain a thesis statement.

Make sure that you **support** your thesis adequately. Think of your body paragraphs as the answer to the question "**Why should we believe you?**" or "**What have you got to go on?**"

Three Common Academic Essay Patterns

Analytical

Intro paragraph
Thesis statement:
Answers the question
What are you trying to prove?

Body paragraph
Why should we believe thesis?
Reason #1

Body paragraph
Why should we believe thesis?
Reason #2

Body paragraph
Why should we believe thesis?
Reason #3

Conclusion

Narrative

Intro paragraph
Thesis statement:
Answers the question
What are you trying to prove?

Narrate in chronological order.
Start new paragraph with each shift in time or perspective (or speaker, if you include dialogue).

Conclusion

Comparison-Contrast

Intro paragraph
Thesis statement:
Answers the question
What are you trying to prove?

Similarities between Subject A and Subject B

Differences between Subject A and Subject B

(End with whichever is more significant, similarities or differences.)

Conclusion