

Building Blocks for Essay Construction

Introduction (funnel) Captures the reader's interest and introduces the topic

Examples of how this can be done:

- Statement of what you believe
- Challenging (rhetorical) unanswerable question
- Anecdote, a short incident that makes a point
- Statement addressed directly to the reader
- Startling or interesting fact
- Brief, but way cool description
- Significant, relevant quotation
- Definition of concept (but never in terms of "according to Webster's Dictionary") Refer to the simple essay guide for making this work.
- End with the thesis statement, the main idea you will develop and support in your essay. A thesis must not only state the subject, but also offer a point of view on the subject. That way your essay truly has something to develop.

Body paragraphs (You may have as many as you need, but each paragraph should begin with a topic sentence that relates to the original thesis) **Here are some ways to beef up the body paragraphs:**

- Use facts, especially significant and interesting ones
- Use statistics (limited in number and rounded off)
- Quote an authority on your topic or report opinions of reliable sources or literary references
- Build strong images and/or sensory details
- Use an anecdote to make a point (if you didn't already do that in the introduction)
- Make comparisons (it was like..., it was as if...) or make contrasts
- Use examples
- Use non-examples (this is not to say...this is not some...)
- Imagine what might be (wonderings, wishing, hoping)
- Remember past experiences and observations
- Your strongest supports should be the beginning or end paragraphs. Cram the weakest in the middle, but try to avoid weak supports altogether, of course.

Conclusions This is where you summarize if necessary, wrap up loose ends, but especially leave the reader with the idea or impression you want to convey. Always tie back to the introduction in some way by repeating a word, phrase, image, or idea that you began with. Make your last sentence a zinger!

To hold it all together and make the essay flow, you must use **transitions** between paragraphs. Internal transitions are best (the golden chain in our model) and they will develop from the essay itself. Transitional words and phrases are useful too. You can find scores of them in our grammar and writing handbooks, and on line, I'm sure. These are words like furthermore, although, for this reason, similarly...

Finally, don't forget a fabulous **title** and don't forget to give it the **Having a Writing Conference with Yourself**. **Always** read your essays (and poems) aloud as well, so you can know what they will sound like in your reader's head!

