

The Mini-essay Structure – the Recipe

(Or any traditional multi-paragraph essay structure)

Expository writing – “exposes” a position on an issue. It literally “puts out” for scrutiny what you believe on the issue, (ex = out; pos = put, place).

- I. Introduction
 - a. A general, *topical* interest opener
 - i. General to the topic, hooks the reader
 - b. A bit of background
 - i. Story title (underlined or italicized for novels, plays, movie; or quotation marks or italicized for short stories and poetry), genre, author, plot overview
 - c. Thesis statement
- II. Body Paragraph
 - a. Topic sentence – with transitional word or phrase which connects an idea from previous paragraph, (some aspect of the thesis) to the topic of this body paragraph.
 - i. Must “forward the cause” of the thesis. It is more specific than the thesis. (No “history lesson” topic sentences, please.)
 - b. Arguments with support
 - i. Analysis and explanation, examples, observations, predictions, comparisons, experience, statistics, expert testimony
 - ii. Quotations (when text is available), specific references to story
 - c. Concluding statement which discusses the importance, relevance, significance of the topic.

As a rule:

- 1. Do not begin your body paragraphs with a quote from the text. The first thought of a body paragraph should be your insight on the topic. Quotes are used, then, to support that good insight.
- 2. Do not “dangle” quotes at the end of a paragraph. The last thought of a paragraph should be your good summary.

- III. Concluding paragraph
 - a. Includes “reminder” of the thesis
 - b. Can, (even should), generalize to the “real world”
 - c. Further answers the “so what?” question
 - d. Should not introduce any new topics

When you hear “formal essay” you should remember to avoid the “big five:”

- 1. No first person – I prefer you avoid it in formal essays
- 2. No second person – You shouldn’t use it here
- 3. No contractions – They aren’t necessary and give your essay a less formal sound
- 4. No colloquialisms – (Seems like u guys love these things)
- 5. No past tense – These characters lived long ago, but only in our hearts. In print they live.