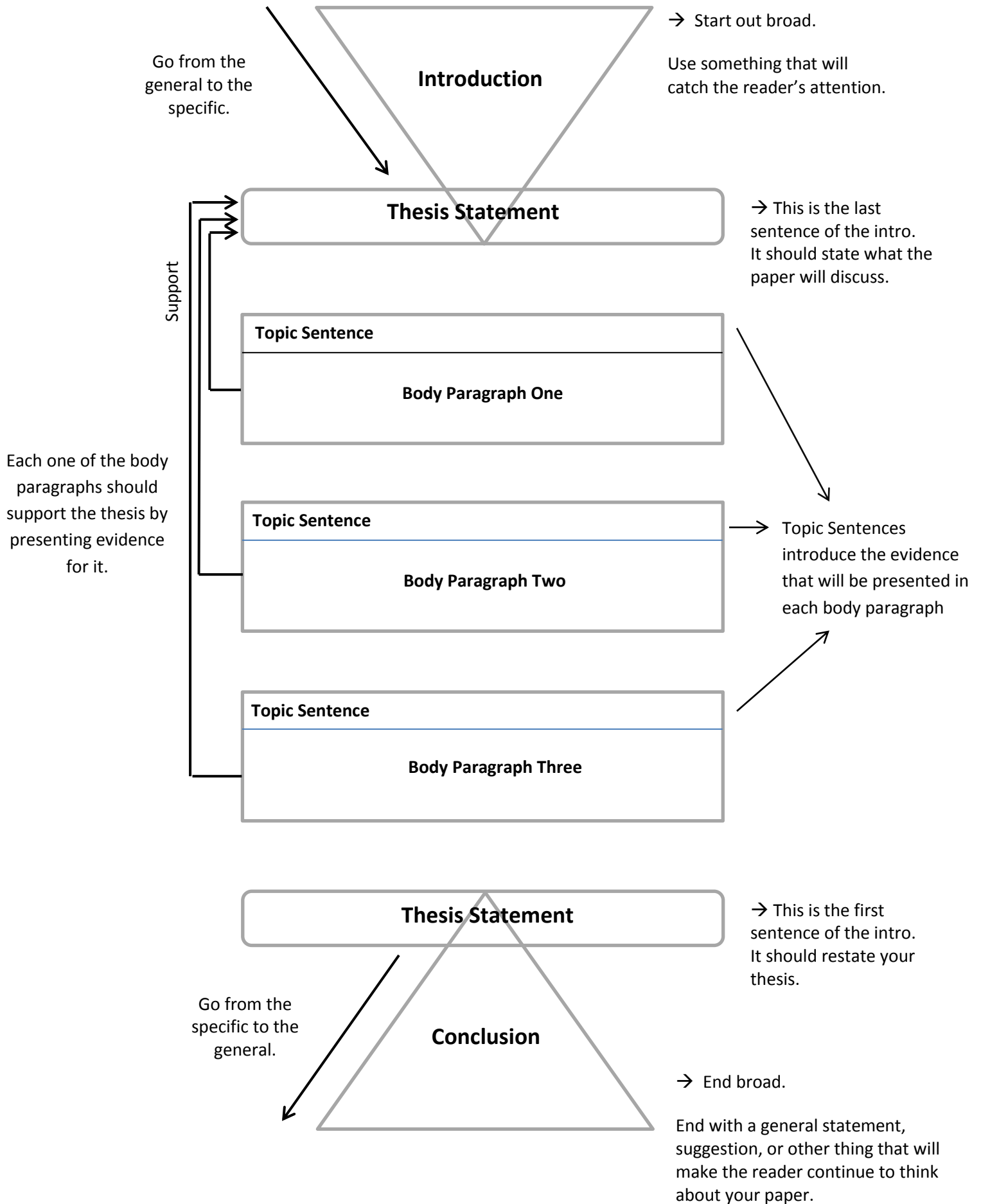


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Cause and Effect

The following are things to keep in mind when writing a cause-and-effect essay

Cause and effect analyzes why something happens. Cause-and-effect essays examine causes, describe effects, or do both.

Causes precede effects, but causality involves more than sequence: cause-and-effect analysis explains why something happened – or is happening – and predicts what probably will happen.

Do not assume that because event A precedes event B, event A has *caused* event B.

Many causes can be responsible for one effect. In the same way, one cause can lead to many effects.

Complex situations involve numerous causes and many different effects.

Even when you have identified several causes of a particular effect, one – the *main cause* – is always more important than the others, the *contributory causes*.

An *immediate cause* closely precedes an effect and is therefore relatively easy to recognize. A *remote cause* is less obvious, perhaps because it involves something in the past or far away. – NOTE: do not assume that the most obvious cause is always the most important one.

Sometimes an effect can also be a cause. This is true in a *causal chain*, where A causes B, B causes C, C causes D, and so on.

Formulating a thesis

When you formulate a *thesis statement*, be sure it identifies the relationship among the specific causes or effects you will discuss. This thesis statement should tell your readers three things: the issues you plan to consider, the position you will take, and whether your emphasis is on causes, effects, or both. Your thesis statement may also indicate explicitly or implicitly the cause or effect you consider most important and the order in which you will present your points.

Arranging causes and effects

There are several options when deciding on the sequence in which you will present causes or effects:

- Present causes or effects in chronologically order;
- Introduce main cause first and then contributory causes;
- Introduce contributory causes first and then the main cause;
- Stress positive consequences by beginning with a brief introduction of negative ones;
- Emphasize negative results by summarizing the less important positive effects first;
- Begin by dismissing any events that were not causes and then explain what the real causes were; or
- Begin with most obvious causes or effect and move on to more subtle factors – and then to your analysis and conclusion.

Transitions

Transitions are very important to cause-and-effect essays

Use *the first cause, the second cause; one result, another result* to distinguish causes from effects and help readers.

Use *the most important cause, another cause* to distinguish main from contributory causes.

Use *the most obvious cause, a less apparent cause* to distinguish immediate from remote causes.

Use the transitions *then, next* in causal chains to help the reader sort out the sequence.

Use *because, as a result, for this reason,* in causal chains to help the reader understand causal relationships.

NOTE:

Words such as *because, therefore, and consequently* indicate a **causal relationship** (WHY something happened).

Words such as *then, next, subsequently, later, and afterward* indicate a **chronological relationship** (WHEN something happened).

Do not confuse these.

(Kirszner and Mandell 321-330)

Compare/Contrast

The following are things to keep in mind when writing a compare/contrast essay

Comparison is used to show similarities, while contrast shows differences.

A compare/contrast essay is used to make sense of large amounts of information, to weight the benefits and drawbacks of different options, to formulate an opinion of a topic to which there are two sides, and to evaluate the truth of conflicting views.

Some of the words and phrases that call for a compare/contrast essay are *compare and contrast, similarities and differences, advantages and disadvantages, evaluate, which of the two had a greater influence on...?*

In order to write a meaningful compare/contrast essay, a basis for comparison must exist; that is, for the comparison and/or contrast to be justified, the things being compared must have enough in common. Without shared elements, there is no basis for analysis, and nothing of importance to discuss.

When two subjects are very similar, the contrast may be worth noting. When two subjects are not very much alike, you may find that the similarities are worth considering.

NOTE: When comparing and contrasting, make sure that the elements are the same (or at least similar) for each category.

| RIGHT | | WRONG | |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------|
| NOVEL A | NOVEL B | NOVEL A | NOVEL B |
| Minor characters | Minor Characters | Minor Characters | Author's life |
| Major characters | Major Characters | Major Characters | Plot |
| Themes | Themes | Themes | Symbolism |

Formulating a thesis

Your *thesis statement* should tell readers what to expect in your essay, identifying not only the subjects to be compared and contrasted, but also the point you will make about them. Your thesis statement should also indicate whether you will concentrate on similarities or differences or both. You may list the points to be discussed in the order in which they will be discussed.

Structuring a compare/contrast essay

There are two basic compare/contrast strategies: subject by subject or point by point.

- Subject-by-subject: you essentially write a separate essay for each subject, but you discuss the same points for both subjects. After selecting your points, arrange them in a logical order – such as by their increasing significance. This strategy is most appropriate for short, uncomplicated papers.
- Point-by-point: you make a point about one subject and then follow it with a comparable point about the other. This alternating pattern continues throughout the body of your essay until all your points have been made. This strategy is useful for longer, more complicated essays in which you discuss many different points. NOTE: in order to avoid falling into a monotonous, back-and-forth movement between points, vary your sentence structure as you move from point to point and use clear transitions.

Transitions

Transitions are important in compare/contrast essays because they supply readers with clear signals and identify individual similarities and differences. Without these, readers will have a hard time following your discussion and may lose track of the significance of the points you are making.

Use *in comparison, in the same way, just as...so, like, likewise, similarly* when comparing.

Use *although, but, conversely, despite, even though, however, in contrast, instead, nevertheless, nonetheless, on the contrary, on the one hand...on the other hand, still, unlike, whereas, yet* when contrasting.

(Kirszner and Mandell 371-377)

Exemplification

The following are things to keep in mind when writing an exemplification essay

Exemplification uses one or more particular cases, or examples, to illustrate or explain a general point or an abstract concept.

Sweeping generalizations and vague statements are not nearly as effective as specific observations, anecdotes, details, and opinions.

Use examples to explain, clarify, add interest, and persuade. How many examples is enough to support your thesis will depend on your thesis and your purpose.

Choose a sufficient range of examples.

Formulating a thesis

The thesis statement of an exemplification essay makes a point that the rest of the essay will support with examples. This statement usually identifies your topic as well as the main point you want to make about it. NOTE: before formulating a thesis, think of the examples you will present in support for it; that way, you will be able to test your ideas and their validity as well as understand the opposing viewpoints.

Structuring an argumentative essay

Exemplification essays usually begin with an introduction that includes the thesis statement, which is supported by examples in the body of the essay. Each body paragraph may develop a separate example, present a point illustrated by several brief examples, or explore one aspect of a single extended example that is developed throughout the essay. The conclusion reinforces the essay's main idea.

When deciding how to structure the body of an essay, keep in mind that there are various ways in which to do it. Examples may be grouped according to content (each paragraph dedicated to a group of examples with the same content). Examples may also be developed fully in separate paragraphs.

Examples may be arranged chronologically, in order of increasing complexity (beginning with the simplest and moving to the most difficult or complex), or in order of importance (beginning with those that are less significant and moving to those that are most significant or persuasive).

Transitions

Be sure to use transitional words and phrases to introduce your examples. Without them, readers will have difficulty seeing the connection between an example and the general statement it is illustrating. Some helpful transitions for an exemplification essay are *another*, *for instance*, *for example*, *in fact*, *namely*, *specifically*, *that is*, and *thus*.

(Kirszner and Mandell 211-218)

Argumentation

The following are things to keep in mind when writing an argumentative essay

Argumentation is a process of reasoning that asserts the soundness of a debatable position, belief, or conclusion. Argumentation takes a stand – supported by evidence – and urges people to share the writer’s perspective and insights.

Although an argumentation is generally based on appeals to logic, a writer may also use appeals based on emotion and/or the reputation of the writer in order to persuade readers. NOTE: Whatever appeal you decide to use, make sure it is a fair one. Lies, threats, misleading statements, and appeals to greed and prejudice – although they may be effective at times – are unacceptable ways of reaching an audience. Such appeals will undercut your audience’s belief in your trustworthiness and weaken your argument.

When choosing a topic, choose a topic in which you are emotionally or intellectually invested. Make sure you are open minded about such topic though, and that you are also able and willing to consider other people’s viewpoints on the topic. Being able to anticipate the viewpoints of the opposition can help you formulate a stronger argument.

Thoroughly inform yourself about the topic.

Make sure you chose an issue narrow enough to discuss in the space available to you. If the issue involves too many aspects, be willing to confine your discussion to one aspect of a broader issue.

Consider your *purpose* – what do you expect your argument to accomplish? How do you wish your audience to respond?

All of your points must be supported by evidence; otherwise, they are likely to be disregarded by readers. As evidence, you may present facts and opinions. Facts are statements that most people agree are true and that can be verified independently. Opinions are interpretations of facts. Not all opinions are equally convincing; experts’ opinions are generally more convincing than others.

Make sure your evidence is relevant (it supports your thesis and is pertinent to your argument), representative (it represents the full range of opinions about your subject, not just one side), and sufficient (it includes enough facts, opinions, and examples to support your claims). NOTE: make sure that your evidence is properly documented (cited).

Formulating a thesis

In an argumentative essay, your thesis must take a stand, meaning that it must be debatable. A good argumentative thesis states a proposition to which at least some people will object. It is pointless to argue a statement of fact or an idea that most people accept as self-evident. NOTE: if you are not sure about whether or not your thesis is a debatable statement, try formulating a statement that asserts the

opposite position. If at least some people would support such statement, then your thesis is indeed debatable.

Structuring an argumentative essay

There are multiple ways of structuring an argumentative essay. Generally speaking, make sure that you have a clear thesis statement; make sure that throughout your body paragraphs you support your thesis by presenting evidence; and make sure you address possible counter arguments (at least the more important ones).

Transitions

Transitional words and phrases in an argumentative essay help readers keep track of the argument.

Argumentative essays use transitions to signal a shift in focus. Use *first, second, third, in addition,* and *finally* to present specific points in support of your argument. Use *still, nevertheless, however* and *yet* to refute opposing arguments. Use *therefore,* and *for these reasons* when presenting your argument's conclusion.

Here are some useful transitions for argumentation: all in all, as a result, finally, first, second, third, for example, for instance, for these reasons, however, in addition, in brief, in conclusion, in other words, in short, in summary, nevertheless, on the one hand...on the other hand, still, therefore, thus, yet.

Recognizing and avoiding fallacies

Fallacies are illogical statements that may sound reasonable or true, but are actually deceptive and dishonest. The following fallacies are some of the most common ones. Not all common fallacies are included in this list.

Jumping to a Conclusion: This fallacy occurs when a conclusion is reached on the basis of too little evidence.

Appeal to Doubtful Authority: This fallacy occurs when people attempt to strengthen an argument with references to experts or famous people who have no expertise on the issue.

Misleading Statistics: This fallacy occurs when statistics are misrepresented or distorted in an attempt to influence an audience.

(Kirsznner and Mandell 525-549)