

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

Narrative

Comparison-Contrast

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

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

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