

Organizing Your Paper

Many people focus on the art of writing papers, but outlining the structure of your paper is one of the simplest ways you can improve your writing. Use this worksheet as a guide for including key elements in each section of your paper.

Introduction

Question	Develop or state a significant question for your paper and explain its importance.*
Context	Provide enough background information so that your reader can “get it.”
Thesis	Include a statement at the end of your introduction that answers your question in a nutshell.**

Body Paragraphs***

TS	Start with a topic sentence (TS) that states your point and explains your reasoning.
Evidence	Back up your point by offering evidence in the form of examples and quotations from the sources at hand.
Analysis	Explain how the examples and quotes you provide support your point.
Clincher	Answer the “so what” question by stating how this point relates to your thesis.

Conclusion

Thesis	Reararticulate the main point, or punch line, of a paper.
Synthesis	Review the points you’ve now laid out to your reader.
Explain	State how all the major themes and claims of your paper fit together to answer the question developed in your introduction.

* Sometimes, the paper prompt provides a question for you, but in all cases, you need to set up or dramatize the question in the introduction.
 ** Make sure you include a thesis and not just a topic. For example, a topic may read: “This paper discusses how apples and bananas are related,” whereas a thesis asserts: “Apples and bananas are related in that both are fruit, but apples are crunchier.”
 *** Repeat this formula for each body paragraph, however many you include in your paper.