

Developing Your Essay

Make sure every body paragraph has a topic sentence that is clearly connected to your main argument or thesis statement.

It is often a good idea to begin the paragraphs in the body of your essay with a one sentence statement about what the paragraph is about. This not only helps the reader understand where the essay is going, but it helps the writer stay focused and helps eliminate rambling.

Make sure you are discussing only one major idea in every paragraph.

Many times longer paragraphs that contain more than one major idea can be split into separate paragraphs and further elaborated on. Search your paragraphs for main ideas; if you find more than one major idea in a paragraph, weed it out, plant it into a new paragraph, and develop it in its own right. Sometimes two main ideas clash in one paragraph, and at other times, you may find two main ideas complementing each other. In either case, if the ideas are important enough to elaborate on, you can separate them into their individual paragraphs.

Insert an example into each paragraph and discuss the example.

One of the best ways to explain a point is to provide a specific example. Almost every paragraph can use one. It is often useful to follow up the example with a brief discussion or explanation of the example and show how this example relates to your overall argument. For example, if you are writing an essay which argues that advertising has harmful effects on children, make sure that you cite a research study or offer up an example to prove this point. When you insert examples, you do not simply tell your audience something, you show them; this allows your writing to become more detailed and persuasive.

Do not overuse outside material/research in lieu of your own voice.

The voice that should be predominant in your paper is your own. Remember that quotes should support your argument; they should not make the argument for you. Also, if you include quoted material you will often have to provide your reader some context about the background of the quoted individual or the background behind the genesis of the quote itself. Do not assume that your readers have read the material you are quoting.

Another handout you may be interested in...

Effective Sentence Structure

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