

The Portable Editor

Tips for Improving Your Writing

Volume 3, No.5

In this month's issue, we return to the topic of argumentative writing and the value of organization in building an argument. A firmly structured paper that offers clear explanation for each argued point guides readers through a writer's reasoning process. A paper's organization demonstrates the writer's credibility as a critical thinker, both as someone who has considered all sides of an issue and as someone who has carefully evaluated the evidence.

A poorly organized paper can confuse readers and force them to guess about the importance of information presented. Following an organizational template, such as the one below, can help ensure that your paper is properly structured and that your argument is sound.

Typical Structure of a Class Paper

- I. Background Paragraph/Introduction
 - A. (What do I need to say to set up my thesis?)
 - B. Broad statement of the problem – familiarize the reader. Offer an update on the current status of the problem/issue and identify the part you plan to focus on.
 - C. Thesis Statement (Mention main points to come. Usually appears at the end of the paragraph.)

***Transition** (Remember that each paragraph should logically connect to the next. Appropriate transitions are like breadcrumbs leading the reader to the next batch of important information.)
- II. Body Paragraphs

Organize the body paragraphs by using topic sentences that illustrate the main idea for each paragraph. Writers should also use the body paragraphs as the space for offering evidence or examples that build support for their thesis statement.

 - A. **First body paragraph** (Includes topic sentence that presents a single idea.)
 - *Example/evidence* (Don't throw out your most important piece of evidence first! Remember to build up to your main point.) Explain how your evidence **supports your topic sentence**.
 - Concluding sentence on how your evidence/examples support your **thesis**.

***Transition**
 - B. Second body paragraph (Topic sentence)
 - *Example/evidence* (Focus on your second most important point.) Explain how your evidence supports your topic sentence.
 - Concluding sentence on how your example(s) support your thesis.

***Transition**
 - C. Third body paragraph (Topic sentence)
 - *Example/evidence* (Focus on the most important point.) Explain how your evidence supports your topic sentence.
 - Concluding sentence on how the example (s) support your thesis.

*Transition

- III. Concluding Paragraph
 - A. Summarizes how your main points support the paper's thesis statement
 - B. May include thoughts about implications of your findings for social work practice

Escalate Your Argument!

Most writers build a convincing argument by building from the weaker points to the stronger ones. In writing, "it's a matter of mind over what matters." After all, the human brain gives greater emphasis to "**the last thing**," whether the last part of a statement or the last point made in a paper. The last thing considered is given greater significance.

Therefore, make sure the **conclusion strongly restates** your position.

- Review main points and tell reader what action you want them to take.
- Address and resolve main points from your introduction.
- Do NOT introduce or raise new topics.

* Need help with transitions? See pp. 21-22 of the *APA Quick Reference Guide* at <http://bit.ly/APAQuickRef>

New Writing Support!!!!

Walk-in, Phone-in, E-mail – No Appointment Needed!

Cindy Porter has joined the SSW Writing Support Team to provide MSW students with writing and APA assistance. Cindy will be available **Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays** from **12-2 p.m.** Her temporary desk is in the 548 office suite. (She expects to relocate after Thanksgiving.)

Phone: 919-962-6498

To contact any of the members of the Writing Support Team (Diane, Susan, and Cindy), e-mail: soswwritingsupport@gmail.com.

Want More Resources???

Wish you had access to tutorials on avoiding plagiarism? APA style help? General writing tips? Check out the School's Writing Resources page (<http://sww.unc.edu/students/writing>) for your writing needs!

News Flash!!!

Updated APA Quick Reference Guide now available online! <http://bit.ly/APAQuickRef>