

Building Strong Body Paragraphs

A strong body paragraph explains, proves, and/or supports your argument/claim/thesis statement. It may be useful to think of your paper as a **tree**: the **trunk** represents the whole paper, which is designed to prove your main argument, while the **branches** signify individual body paragraphs that develop your supporting claims or arguments. These components must work together to effectively develop your primary idea or overall claim. Ultimately, each body paragraph should be **unified, coherent, and fully-developed**.



An effective body paragraph will usually accomplish the following:

1. Express a Claim/Point/Argument

Identify the main idea of your paragraph and its relevance to your thesis or argument. Elaborate on the topic if it requires further clarification, context, or specificity.

2. Provide Evidence in Context

Choose your evidence source and summarize the context. Incorporate appropriate evidence to support your claim. The evidence may consist of quotations, examples, statistics, facts, etc.

3. Analyze Evidence and Link to Larger Argument

Explain what the evidence means and how it connects to the argument in your paragraph or thesis statement.

Focus on synthesis (connecting themes and traits that you observe in your evidence) and analysis (interpreting the evidence and its significance). This kind of work establishes credibility by showing that you understand the evidence and its importance in your argument.

Sample paragraph (separated by claim, evidence, and analysis)

1. **Claim:** While there is little doubt that extracurricular opportunities at University are a positive and critical component of students' overall development, providing students with time management skills is equally important.
2. **Evidence:** One only needs to look at past alumni to see the validity of this claim. As famous alum Harry Wright states: "I sometimes overdid it with extracurricular activities when I was at University, missing out on valuable academic opportunities. Fortunately, I buckled down in my senior year and managed a "C" average, and things have worked out fine since".
3. **Analysis:** In this example, Harry Wright is arguing that the detrimental effects of excessive extracurricular involvement can be rectified in the senior year of university. Even though Harry Wright is certainly correct when he implies that it is never too late for students to try to raise their GPA, it is probably better for students to attempt to balance academic and other activities early in their university career. Also, Wright assumes that all students can achieve what they want with a "C" average, but many students need higher GPAs in order to apply for professional school, graduate school, and entry-level jobs. Although extracurricular activities are often a positive and critical component of student life at UW, administrators should consider providing a time management education and awareness course for all incoming students. After all, not every UW graduate will be as lucky as Harry Wright. If UW students are going to succeed in business and higher education, they need to first understand the importance of time management.

Tip: students are often taught the "hamburger" method of constructing body paragraphs (where claim, evidence, and analysis are layered on top of each other in a formulaic way). However, as you develop your writing style further, you should be aware that more nuanced writing will often navigate back and forth between evidence and analysis. See academic journals in your discipline for different strategies.