

Analytical Paragraph Structure

In an essay, the analytical paragraph is a body paragraph. It presents evidence in order to prove the thesis. When an analytical paragraph stands alone (is not in an essay), the topic sentence is the thesis.

When an analytical paragraph stands alone:

TOPIC SENTENCE (thesis, when not a body paragraph in an essay)

- is a direct response to the prompt
- makes an arguable claim

ANALYSIS

- develops the idea expressed in the topic sentence *before* evidence is introduced
- answers question(s) raised by the topic sentence
(generally “How?” or “Why?” or “So what?”)
- defines terms of/adds depth to topic sentence

CONTEXT / EVIDENCE / INTERPRETATION

Context: (of the evidence, which is usually a quotation)

- Gives brief background of who is speaking, what is going on in a piece
(**John Smith writes of his encounter with the Indians**, “they all laid down their bows and arrows.” -or- **Steinbeck endorses the potential of the American dream**: “The fact that we have this dream at all is perhaps an indication of its possibility.” *Context is in bold here.*)

Evidence:

- is linked to context
- supports the claim (i.e. proves the thesis)
- is usually a quotation

Interpretation: (immediately follows evidence)

- links the evidence to the thesis
- explains HOW this evidence proves thesis (*Interpret all evidence immediately after introducing it, even if the interpretation seems obvious to you!*)

ANCHOR

- anchors evidence to thesis
- summarizes argument of paragraph using terminology of thesis

When an analytical paragraph is in an essay as a body paragraph:

TOPIC SENTENCE

- introduces the topic of the evidence to be presented in this body paragraph
- is clearly linked to the thesis

ANALYSIS

- develops the idea expressed in the topic sentence *before* evidence is introduced
- answers question(s) raised by the topic sentence
(generally “How?” or “Why?” or “So what?”)
- defines terms of/adds depth to topic sentence

CONTEXT / EVIDENCE / INTERPRETATION

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Evidence:

- is linked to context
- supports the claim (i.e. proves the thesis)
- is usually a quotation

Interpretation: (immediately follows evidence)

- links the evidence to the thesis
- explains HOW this evidence proves thesis (*Interpret all evidence immediately after introducing it, even if the interpretation seems obvious to you!*)

ANCHOR

- anchors evidence to thesis (using terminology of the thesis)