

PARAGRAPHS

In order for body paragraphs to be useful to your reader, they need to be:

- **Relevant:** directly *related to your thesis*
- **Focused:** centered on *one main idea*
- **Developed:** supported with sufficient *information and explanatory commentary*

One way to ensure that each of your body paragraphs is clearly focused, convincingly developed, and connects back to thesis is to use the PIE strategy:

- **P = Point:** the “P” is the point you are making in your topic sentence: a clear statement of the main claim you are addressing in that paragraph which directly supports the thesis.
- **I = Information:** the “I” fills out the body of your paragraph with concrete information that supports the main point. Provide specific details in the form of examples, quotes, paraphrases, facts, personal knowledge, real life examples and experiences, etc.
- **E = Explanation:** the “E” is the writer’s explanation of the significance of the provided information as it relates to the thesis. What is important or can be learned?

Of course, PIE paragraphs don’t always need to look exactly like this; while you want to start a paragraph with your main *Point*, you might alternate between *Information* and *Explanation*, so that your paragraph could look like this: P ⇒ I ⇒ E ⇒ I ⇒ E.

What do paragraphs do?

Paragraphs serve three important functions in an essay:

1. They group related sentences in one place so that they can work together to develop a point.
2. They provide visual breaks in the text that give readers a chance to pause and assimilate ideas.
3. They signal the progression of ideas in the essay. Along with transitions, paragraph breaks help your reader understand you are moving on to a new point or aspect of your essay.

What kinds of paragraphs are there?

In an essay, you'll have the following types of paragraphs:

- **Introductions** capture your reader's interest, establish a context for your topic, and smoothly lead your reader in to your thesis. You can read more about them in the "Introductions" handout.
- **Conclusions** help you bring together the points you've made in the body of your essay and give your reader some final thoughts about the significance of your ideas. You can read more about them in the "Conclusions" handout.
- **Body paragraphs** systematically develop each of the main points and sub-points you need to explain/prove in order for your thesis to be credible. You can read more about them below.

What are the qualities of a strong body paragraph?

In order for body paragraphs to be useful to your reader, they need to be:

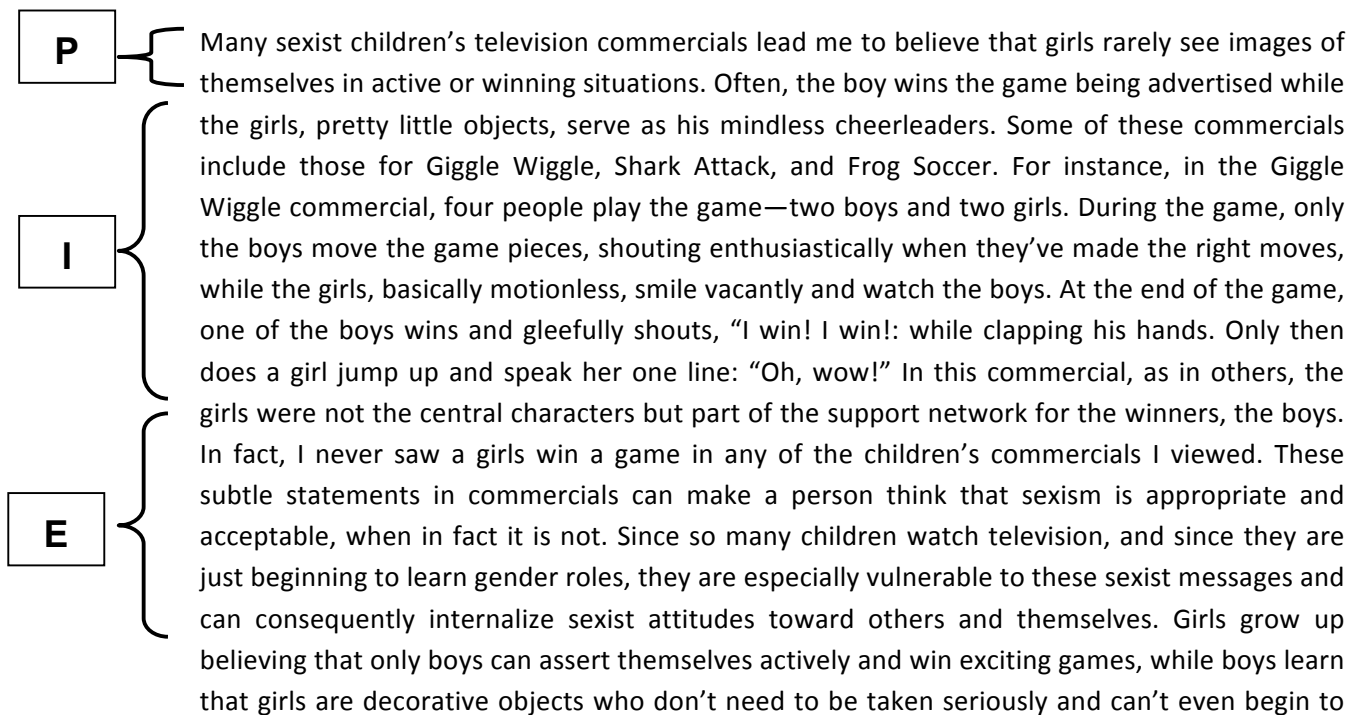
- Relevant:** Your reader should be able to clearly see how each of your body paragraphs is related to your thesis.
- Focused:** Your reader should easily be able to identify the one main idea your paragraph revolves around and how each of the sentences within that paragraph contributes to this main idea.
- Developed:** Your reader should be able to fully appreciate the implications of your ideas because you've provided sufficient supporting information and explanatory commentary.

What are some strategies for writing strong body paragraphs?

One way to ensure that each of your body paragraphs is clearly focused, convincingly developed, and connects back to thesis is to use the PIE strategy:

P = Point	I = Information	E = Explanation
Essentially, the “P” part of your paragraph is your topic sentence: a clear statement of the main claim you are addressing in that paragraph.	The “I” fills out the body of your paragraph with concrete information that supports the main point.	The “E” is the writer’s explanation of the significance of the provided information, especially as it relates to the thesis.
From the reader’s perspective, another way to think of PIE is:		
Tell me what your main point is.	Show me , with evidence and examples, how or why your point is true.	Answer the question “So what?” Help me understand so what is the significance of the information.

For example:



complete in important areas of life.

Of course, PIE paragraphs don't always need to look exactly like this; while you want to start a paragraph with your main *Point*, you might alternate between *Information* and *Explanation*, so that your paragraph could look like this:

$P \Rightarrow I \Rightarrow E \Rightarrow I \Rightarrow E$.

Strategies for writing your own PIE paragraphs

P: *Ideas for developing a Point:*

- Choose one point you'll need to substantiate in order to develop your thesis
- Write this point out as a sentence or two
- Gather together the information relevant to that point and write the rest of the paragraph
- Return to your original point sentence(s) and make any necessary revisions so that it "fits" the paragraph

I: *Possible sources of supporting Information:*

- Short direct quotes/paraphrases from class readings and discussions
- Data (facts, statistics, examples, expert opinions) from other reputable sources
- Personal experiences
- Relevant examples from pop culture sources, including movies & ads

E: *Strategies for generating thoughtful Explanations:*

- Analyze the information, picking it apart to reveal what is significant
- Clarify any ambiguous ideas or information
- Comment on the credibility of the information, discussing it's biases, assumptions, logic
- Relate the information explicitly to your thesis/controlling idea

PRACTICE—CREATING PARAGRAPHS USING THE PIE APPROACH:

Let’s practice creating paragraphs using the **PIE approach**. Select a topic from the box below and create a statement that makes a **Point**. Then brainstorm **Information** that could support that point. Then, brainstorm ways in which you could **Explain** the significance of that point. Finally, put it all together to write a complete paragraph.

First, select a topic by underlining one:

illegal immigrants	the president	legalizing all drugs
gangsta rap music	the health care system	police profiling
music videos	the minimum wage	reality shows

Second, using the topic you selected, write a topic sentence that makes a clear statement of the main claim you will be arguing in your paragraph:

Third, brainstorm both concrete information you can use to support your main claim, and also brainstorm an explanation of the significance of the information you are using.

Information that can support the main claim (concrete evidence that proves/illustrates the claim)	Explanations of the significance of the information. Answer the question “so what?”

