

Writing a Five Paragraph HISTORY Essay

The goal of history writing is to form a cohesive ANALYTICAL argument backed up by historical evidence. In order to make the best of a writing assignment, there are a few rules that, when followed, will help you find success.

The basic high school multi-paragraph essay should be organized in the following five-paragraph structure:

- I. Introduction**
- II. Body Paragraph One**
- III. Body Paragraph Two**
- IV. Body Paragraph Three**
- V. Conclusion**

This list is a basic guideline by which to structure historical essays. Assignments may vary in length and in mandated paragraph number, however, within the confines of this skeletal structure, these guidelines are everything you will need in order to write a successful History essay.

1. Introduction

- a. The Introduction starts with a broad opening statement which establishes the context and time period in question.
- b. The second, third, and fourth sentences of your introduction should explain/allude to your three body paragraphs. For instance the second sentence should say how your first body paragraph will help prove your thesis argument.
- c. Your fifth, and final sentence, should sum up your argument with a statement that combines the main points of your body paragraphs into a single unified thesis. The thesis statement should clearly present your argument to the reader.

2. Body Paragraph One

- a. Body Paragraph One will deal with the first sub-argument that you will present to prove your thesis.
- b. It should open with a topic sentence. This topic sentence should be an argument that helps support and prove the thesis statement. (Think of it as a mini-thesis for your paragraph)
- c. From the topic sentence, you can go on to present specific evidence to support your argument. This evidence must relate to your topic sentence. Do not fact dump or story tell. (Aim for using at least two solid pieces of evidence per paragraph.)
- d. Once you use a piece of evidence, you should be sure to write at least one sentence explaining why you used it and how it helps prove to your topic sentence. (This is the analysis)
 - i. For an in class essay, your explanation may be an analysis of a specific event, action or trend that proves historical impact
 - ii. For a Document Based Question (DBQ), your explanation may be an analysis of one of the documents provided
 - iii. For an out-of-class research assignment, your explanation may be a an analysis of a piece of evidence using properly cited statistical data, an article, or a paraphrase which provides deep insight into your argument
- e. Then, wrap up the Body Paragraph with a mini-concluding sentence that sums up only what you have discussed in this paragraph and how it relates to your thesis.

3. Body Paragraph Two

- a. Body Paragraph Two should follow the exact same rules as Body Paragraph One.
- b. This time, pick the second sub-topic in your intro paragraph.

4. Body Paragraph Three

- a. Body Paragraph Three should follow the exact same rules as Body Paragraph One and Two.
- b. This time, pick the third sub-topic in your intro paragraph.

5. Conclusion

- a. Your conclusion is a wrap-up of the entire essay.
- b. The first thing your conclusion should contain is a reworded thesis statement.
- c. The conclusion should then continue to address how your not proven topic sentence arguments supported your thesis statement.
- d. Finally, the conclusion should end with a more general observation about how the topic applies to the time period.
- e. Conclusions should be approximately five sentences.

It is important to remember that this is simply a rough sketch to guide your essays. If your topic is quite complicated, then you may have more than three body paragraphs. Furthermore, you can expand your individual sub-topics, as well. If you have a complicated sub-topic argument in support of your thesis, you may need to break that argument down into separate paragraphs.

Here is a diagram of the basic essay guidelines. Remember, "Body Paragraphs" simply stand for specific subtopics for your thesis. There can be more than three if needed.

I. Introduction

- a. Opening Statement
- b. Body paragraph 1 introduction
- c. Body paragraph 2 introduction
- d. Body paragraph 3 introduction
- e. Thesis Statement

II. Body Paragraph

- a. Topic Sentence (pertaining to Subtopic #1) Explanation/Define the subtopic
- b. Evidence/content A
- c. Explanation/analysis of evidence A
- d. Evidence/content B
- e. Explanation/analysis of evidence B
- f. Mini-conclusion only about Subtopic #1

III. Body Paragraph 2

- a. Topic Sentence (pertaining to Subtopic #2) Explanation/Define the subtopic
- b. Evidence/content A
- c. Explanation/analysis of evidence A
- d. Evidence/content B
- e. Explanation/analysis of evidence B
- f. Mini-conclusion only about Subtopic#2

IV. Body Paragraph 3

- a. Topic Sentence (pertaining to Sub-Topic #3) Explanation/Define the subtopic
- b. Evidence/content A
- c. Explanation/analysis of evidence A
- d. Evidence/content B
- e. Explanation/analysis of evidence B
- f. Mini-conclusion only about Subtopic #3

V. Conclusion

- a. Restatement of Thesis
- b. Sum up how your body paragraphs support your thesis statement (multiple sentences)
- c. Broad statement relating to topic and its legacy moving forward