

## College Application Essay Paragraph Format

Below are the five components of a college paragraph. They follow the order in which they are most commonly found in a paragraph; however, this is not the only possible or even successful order.

### 1. Topic Sentence.

Unlike the 5 paragraph essay, the topic sentence here has two main functions, one of which it shares with the old five paragraph essay format. First, the topic sentence summarizes the main point of the paragraph.

Think of it as a mini-thesis. What your main thesis does for the whole paper, the topic sentence does for the paragraph. This is because not all of the sentences in the paragraph may clearly and directly support the thesis. But they all have to support the topic sentence. Secondly, though, it needs to make explicit how the main point of that paragraph supports or moves forward your main thesis.

### 2. Explanation and Expansion.

Again, usually, if well written, the ideas in your topic sentence will be a bit complicated. You ought to need more than one sentence to make all the finer points of them clear. In a few argumentative based sentences, you can elaborate, explain, and expand upon your main point. Sometimes you give background information or support for argumentative points here. What this can't be is examples.

### 3. Examples.

Usually students do okay on this. This is something you are familiar with from high school writing.

### 4. Analysis.

So what? Why? How? Why should the reader care? What does this say about the larger society? What does this say to further the thesis? You need to make clear to the reader what you as a writer get from the examples. Remember the movie with a friend analogy.

### 5. Transitions.

Finish the paragraph up with a sentence or two that helps move the reader into the next point. We will talk more about these later in the semester.

To give you an idea of what a college paragraph looks like, below see both a more high school and a college level paragraph that use the same examples and the same topic:

#### High school - college essay paragraph example

When Carol Hathway announces to the staff of the Cook County ER that she wants to be a doctor, the doctors on staff begin treating her differently. Instead of just having her do the kind of grunt work nurses usually get stuck with, they have her do some of the procedures that the med students usually do. Carol looks uncomfortable with this, but she does well. At the end of the episode, she and Kerri Weaver get into a fight about how to treat a mother whose kid died, and Carol decides that she wants to be a nurse because she loves what she does and is good at her job. This shows how gender plays out in the workplace because nurses are mostly women and doctors are usually men, although women are going to med school in increasing numbers but they don't get into the same specialties that make them a lot of money.

### College essay paragraph example

Hospitals divide the labor of caring for sick people among the professions, but because the professions are still dominated by certain genders, the division ends up being one of gender more than job title. Although we like to think of the medical profession as increasingly egalitarian, gender divides still run through it. The majority of nurses are still women. And while women have made great advances in gender equity in medical school attendance, that professional training that women fought so hard for access to may not allow for gender differences in treatment to trickle down into care in the hospital. The process by which doctors are socialized into how to be a doctor comes largely through the mentoring process of medical school. Vocational training within the applied sciences tends to be much more about apprenticeship than about theoretical knowledge. When Carol Hathaway, a long time ER nurse, decides to go back to med school and become a doctor, the MDs in the ER treat her very differently. Dr. Kerry Weaver asks her to perform procedures as if she were already a med student. While Carol is uncomfortable with this, she does perform well. Her skill at those procedures seems to make the point that nurses who excel at their profession are as skilled as doctors in some ways. However, later in the episode, when a mother's young child dies, Carol insists on giving the parent time with the child to grieve, rather than moving her out of the room to make way for incoming patients. Dr. Weaver snaps at Carol, telling her that if she is going to go to medical school, she has to stop thinking like a nurse. The implication in Dr. Weaver's criticism is clear. Nurses worry about the feelings of people, while doctors worry about seeing the next patient or about developing enough distance emotionally so that they can move quickly from one medical crisis to another. Nurses, a profession dominated by women, are the ones who are supposed to soothe over any hurts caused by a too abrupt or too uncaring doctor. This seems to be a profession-wide phenomenon. My own experiences with hospitals as well as the experiences of friends of mine seem unanimous on this. Everyone told me the same thing when I asked. Nurses were great, and if you were lucky you got a doctor with a decent bedside manner. But for the most part, the professionals who really looked after loved ones were nurses. Part of this is likely the result of the different roles nurses and doctors play within the hierarchy of the hospital.

The most obvious difference between the two paragraphs is length. However, there are other important differences. First, locate the topic sentence of each. What are the differences? Then, look for places where the writer expands upon or explains her position. Where does he provide support or examples, and how do those examples differ from one paragraph to the next? Also, where is the analysis in each?

Last of all, where do you expect each paper to go next?