

The MEAL Plan: A Tool for Effective Paragraphing

One way to envision a body paragraph is as a “complete MEAL,” with the components being the paragraph’s **M**ain idea, **E**vidence, **A**nalysis, and **L**ink back to the larger claim.

Main Idea: Your topic sentence stating the concrete claim the paragraph is advancing.

Evidence: Paraphrase or direct quotations from the source material you are using to support your topic sentence's claim.

Analysis: Your explanation and evaluation of the evidence; explaining the evidence you provided and its relevance in your own words.

Lead Out: Concluding; preparing your reader to transition to the next paragraph (and the next claim).

The MEAL plan matches the general format of academic writing on many levels: that of assertion, evidence, and explanation. Many students make the mistake of writing toward a topic sentence or claim, rather than from one; keeping the MEAL plan in mind as you write will help you begin your paragraphs strongly and develop your analysis thoroughly.

Duke University Thompson Writing Program. (n.d.). Paragraphing: The MEAL plan. Retrieved from http://twp.duke.edu/uploads/assets/meal_plan.pdf