Body Paragraphs Activity Sheet

Instructions: Read “Building Body Paragraphs” Study Sheet first, and then follow these steps and fill in the outline as you go. If you’d like, you can repeat steps 3-8 for the whole body of your paper, if you are currently writing one.

1. Write Out Your Topic: Sometimes writing your topic as a question can be helpful, and then you can think of the purpose of your paper to be answering that question. For example, if I’m writing a paper on the benefits of space exploration, I might phrase my question like this: Do the benefits of the United States allocating funds towards space exploration outweigh the costs?

2. Create a Working Thesis: Just write down a rough draft of what you want your thesis to be. Make sure if you change your paper as you write that you amend your thesis to match it. Ex. The benefits of space exploration, including having a backup plan in case earth’s resources fail, expanding territory, and knowing whether or not aliens exist, far outweigh the potential costs.

3. Determine the Large Areas and Small Areas of Concentration: Some essays are very long, and have sections that include multiple paragraphs. If your essay is shorter, you may only have individual paragraphs that each cover their own topic. Determine whether you need larger groupings of paragraphs into sections, determine what those sections and the paragraphs within them will cover, and if you don’t need larger section, just determine what your paragraphs will each cover.

4. Write the Topic Sentence: Once you’ve decided the main topic for one of your paragraphs, you need to write a topic sentence that explains the main idea or claim that you are discussing in that paragraph. So, using my space exploration paper again, if my thesis states that the benefits of space exploration outweigh the costs, the topic sentence for one of my paragraphs might read: One reason space exploration should be invested in is because we need a backup plan in case a global catastrophe happens on earth.

5. Introduce Your Evidence: After you’ve made a claim, you need to back it up with evidence. Before you present your evidence, however, you need to
introduce it. Once you’ve introduced a piece of evidence into your paper, you
don’t need to do so again if you use it more than once. I might introduce a piece
of evidence like so: John Smith, an expert on the global resource crisis and climate
change, has made several statements on the current state of earth’s climate and
resources.

6. Provide Your Evidence: After the introduction, provide your evidence,
whatever it may be. Evidence can take many forms: statistics, a quote from an
expert, a personal testimony, etc. You can also present evidence in several
different ways, including in a quote, paraphrase, or summary. Here’s an example
quote that I might use for my space exploration paper: In his book The Global
Resource Crisis, Smith demonstrates why a backup plan is needed: “With the
current track we are on, the resources earth provides (such as food, water, clean air,
etc.) will be completely depleted within 900 years” (40).

7. Analyze the Evidence: Whenever you use evidence in a paper, you cannot
simply put it in and let it stand on its own. You have to analyze the evidence. A
few things to do when analyzing evidence is to explain what the evidence is trying
to say, why it is important, and how it relates to your discussion. The analysis for
the evidence in my space exploration paper might look something like this: If
what Smith claims is true, then in 900 years, humans will no longer be able to live
on earth.

8. Tie the Evidence Back to Your Thesis: After you’ve presented your evidence
and analyzed it, you need to state how the evidence supports your thesis for your
paper. This step is crucial because without the tie-back your evidence serves no
purpose. My tie-back in my exploration paper might look like this: Because of the
possibility that earth will not be livable in the next few hundred years, investments
should be made in finding other planets with the resources that humans need to
continue living.

9. Repeat Steps 3-8 Until You’ve Completely Written the Body of Your
Paper: Once you’ve compiled all of the components in steps 4-8, you can put
them all together a refine them into a finished paragraph. You may need to add
transitional phrases and things of that nature. Be sure to read over the paragraph
multiple times to see if all of the components are fitting together smoothly.

From the Writing Center
at the Academic Resource Center

John Tyler Community College
Skeleton Method Outline Template

Topic:

Working Thesis:

I. Topic for Large Area of Concentration (Section) (optional) _________________

   A. Topic for Small Area of Concentration (Paragraph) _________________

      1. Topic Sentence(s) -

      2. Introduce Evidence -

      3. Provide Evidence -

      4. Explain Evidence -

      5. Tie-Back Sentence(s) -

Finished Paragraph: