



## RP assignment III: Writing a first draft from your thesis and outline<sup>4</sup>

If you've created a really strong thesis, found supportive sources and crafted a thorough outline, writing a first draft can be a simple matter of translating the outline into paragraphs that flow well one to the next. However, even if you've done all this you may not be sure where to begin the draft. I've got a few suggestions based on my own experience and advice from university writing centers.

### Body

**Consider writing the body first**, one section at a time, then the conclusion, and finally the introduction. It's important to have a strong ending that sums up the body. By having the body written first, you can summarize it in a short paragraph that forms the foundation of your conclusion. And, when written last, the introduction will truly introduce the paper you've just written.

When writing the body sections, **follow your outline, include sources and consider the PEEL strategy**. Begin by introducing the point (or purpose) of your paragraph. The meat of each body section should present evidence that supports your point. Be sure to use APA or MLA citation methods to cite the sources for this evidence. Conclude each section of the body by explaining how the evidence supports your thesis and link the evidence to your overall argument.

Point	Evidence	Explanation	Link
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there a point of view that needs sharing?</li> <li>• Is there an important piece of the puzzle that you can share?</li> <li>• Do you need to define a term?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What information do you have to support your point?</li> <li>• Are there quotes that you can use to illustrate the point that you are making?</li> <li>• Are there examples that you can include that show what you mean?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What effect does this evidence have?</li> <li>• How important is the evidence that you have shared?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What does this point and evidence have to do with the question?</li> </ul>
To begin with... Moving on to... As well as...	For example... This is shown in... Such as...	As a result of... This means that... This caused...	In conclusion... This tells us that... This helps answer the question because...

While a research paper focuses on building support for a thesis, it's important to present **counter arguments** and evidence that opposes your thesis. For a strong thesis, supportive arguments and evidence outweigh counter arguments and their evidence. You can either present counter arguments just before your conclusion, as the last body section, or just before the ending of each body section. In the latter case, the counter arguments for each body section are presented within that section. This approach may appear more even-handed and objective and may weaken the impact of the counter arguments by distributing them throughout the

<sup>4</sup> Adapted from [https://calswec.instructure.com/courses/306/pages/b-dot-7-1-writing-your-first-draft?module\\_item\\_id=3648](https://calswec.instructure.com/courses/306/pages/b-dot-7-1-writing-your-first-draft?module_item_id=3648)



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paper and not presenting them just before the conclusion. If you present counter arguments in each section, be sure to end each section with a strong conclusion that restates the arguments in favor of your thesis.

Once you've drafted each body section review them to be sure that: (1) body sections are presented in the **most effective order**; and (2) sections are linked by **transition sentences**. You may decide to change the order of the body paragraphs so that they present the strongest arguments last or so that the reader sees the most obvious and convincing evidence first. There is an art to creating a topic sentence that transitions one section to the next while providing a clear introduction to the next. Most of us have to rework the opening, or topic, sentence several times!

### **Conclusion**

What about your **conclusion**? Well, begin by restating your thesis. Then summarize the evidence that you've cited to support your thesis in a few sentences. Summarize the opposing evidence. And wrap up with a very strong statement arguing that the evidence in favor of your thesis is more convincing or powerful. The last sentence stays with the reader, so be sure it really 'sells'.

### **Introduction**

Finally, go back to the beginning and state your thesis as the sentence of your **introduction**. How does the introduction begin? You must introduce the subject(s) of your paper and the problem or controversy that led you to form your thesis. The depth of the introduction needs to be sufficient to give the reader the background needed to see the importance of your thesis and to understand the evidence presented in the paper.

### **References**

Of course, you need to present a list of **references** listed in a proper MLA or APA format. Be sure to list only those references that you've cited in your draft. If you must present those you haven't cited, place them in a separate section, perhaps called 'additional resources'.

### **Final tips**

- Still having a hard time getting started? Consider copying and pasting your outline into a fresh document. Get started by turning bullet points into complete sentences and go from there!
- Take breaks every 20 minutes or so to be sure you don't lose focus.
- Remember that first drafts aren't going to be perfect. They just need to get done!