

## Writing an Analytical Essay - Nathan H. Payne

An analytical essay serves to present and assert a perspective or interpretation of the text being analyzed with evidence that supports or warrants. The most coherent way to format your analytical essay follows:

- 1.) Thesis - “the claim”
- 2.) Argument - “the support for your claim”
- 3.) Conclusion - “the final touches/recap”

The order translates to introduction (thesis), body (argument), and conclusion (same).

### Thesis

A well-formulated thesis makes a well-focused claim that requires further evidence. The direction is clear and leaves little room for valid digressions. A well-formulated thesis helps you write a good argument since it provides an over-arching goal for the writer and the reader; it is communication device that reveals the focus.

A good thesis will incorporate the name of the text referenced, the topics wished to be discussed, and presents information that requires evidence all in one sentence.

### VS.

A bad thesis is too broad, objective, or shallow.

The broad thesis relies on too many points, thus lacking clear direction. To fix this, try to narrow the thesis down by being more specific.

The objective thesis relies on facts or implied understandings of the text under analysis. To fix this, look for a different thesis topic. The thesis must have some subjectivity to it or else there would be nothing to argue.

The shallow thesis relies on specific material but does find difficulty connecting with the other parts of the text. To fix this, broaden it slightly or add another perspective.

### Arguments

Great arguments support the thesis with evidence. Every part of the thesis should be supported with evidence from the text.

### VS.

Unconvincing arguments support the thesis with summaries, repetitive/cyclical information, flawed logic, inaccurate definitions, misinterpretation of the text under analysis. Nothing about the thesis is self-explanatory.

### Strong Formatting the Argument:

[Introduction = statements leading to thesis + thesis]

[First Paragraph = First point + Evidence from text + Transitional statements]

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[Second Paragraph = Further expansion from other texts if related to the previous paragraph or second point + evidence from text + transitional statements]

This structure provides easy to follow guidelines: Point to support thesis + supporting evidence + transition.

### Weaker Formatting assuming a good thesis:

[Introduction = statements leading to thesis + thesis]

[First paragraph = summary of part the text]

[Second paragraph = analysis of the revealed part of the text {First paragraph transforms into retrospective evidence} + transitional statements]

The weaker structure derives from a break in logical flow. At best, it represents a summary followed by drawn conclusions rather than the true task: bringing forth evidence. Drawing conclusions, though similar to providing evidence, differs in that it only evaluates the text. Providing evidence from the text after your point stays consistent with the logical flow. Additionally, drawing conclusions only works retrospectively in this instance. For coherent writing, the writer would need to intersperse the ideas in the second paragraph regardless, thus making the summary useless.

Note: There are other valid formats as well. For example, comparing and contrasting texts in your argument may alter the structure.

### Conclusion:

The good conclusion brings the argument to a close by stringing all the information together through a summative recapitulation of the points.

The bad conclusion makes random statements that do not show a deeper or clear connection to the argument. These statements tend to be short or surface level.