

**TAXES** gives you a formula for building the supporting paragraphs in a thesis-driven essay. Your body paragraphs should consider your evidence in a well-connected analytical narrative. It is not enough to use quotations and/or summarize each passage that you use. **You must develop an argument as you write.** You should use passages from the source material, but you should choose wisely and use the quotations sparingly. Stringing together too many quotations as a substitute for providing your own analysis will result in an underdeveloped paragraph.

## TAXES

### The hourglass structure of a well-developed body paragraph

#### Topic Sentence

A sentence that states the one point the paragraph will make. Also functions as a transition.

#### Assertion Statements

Statements that present your ideas. What are you going to say or prove about the topic?

#### eXamples

Specific passages, factual material, or concrete data. This is where to put your quotes/research.

#### Explanation

Commentary that shows how the examples support your assertions. What point do your examples make?

#### Significance

Commentary that shows how the paragraph supports the thesis statement. Think, So what? Why does this whole paragraph matter?

### **Topic Sentence**

When beginning a paragraph, write a clear topic sentence that that over-arches the paragraph or section as a whole. This sentence can also serve as a transition from the previous topic to the new one. It should state the one point the paragraph or section will make, a point that helps build the chain of reasoning in support of your thesis statement. Often, the points necessary to prove your thesis can be rephrased into effective topic sentences.

### **Assertion**

Follow a topic sentence with strong assertion statements that express your ideas about the overarching topic sentence. Sometimes your topic sentence can serve double duty as an assertion sentence, especially in shorter essays where it pays to be economical. Remember that just because you assert that something is so doesn't mean your readers will be convinced; an assertion doesn't go far enough to persuade readers that your thesis statement is valid and compelling. Essentially, this is where you make a point about the topic above.

### **eXample**

Ground your ideas in supporting examples, and remember to explain carefully how the examples demonstrate the point you want to make. Examples, or evidence that backs up your assertion statements, topic ideas, and ultimately the thesis claim, can take a number of forms, depending on your writing context and purpose. For instance, you may offer a quote from the text you are interpreting, a statistical or factual detail from the research you have done, or a statement from an expert in a relevant field.

### **Explanation**

Analyze your example(s), providing an Explanation of how it/they support your assertions. This is the part of your paragraph that enables you to avoid mere summary. Therefore, your voice should be at its very strongest here; if your explanation is weak or unclear, your reader may have trouble distinguishing your voice from that of your source(s). This can take a few sentences.

### **Significance**

Finally, be sure to close the paragraph or cluster of paragraphs on a topic with a careful and clear clarification of its significance to the paper's thesis statement. This is an important, and often forgotten, part of TAXES. It can be as short as a single sentence, but without it, the paragraph hangs in limbo. Tell the readers as clearly as you can how the point you have just made furthers the argument of your paper. Often, you can restate the burden of proof that this paragraph or group of paragraphs makes. Imagine someone saying "So what?" after reading all of the above. This is your last chance to say how the paragraph as a whole is important.

## Example Paragraph

When beginning a paragraph, write a clear topic sentence that that over-arches the paragraph or section as a whole. This sentence can also serve as a transition from the previous topic to the new one. It should state the one point the paragraph or section will make, a point that helps build the chain of reasoning in support of your thesis statement. Often, the points necessary to prove your thesis can be rephrased into effective topic sentences.

## TAXES Example

One of my biggest fears is being singled out. This caused me to stay quiet for the entire first semester of literature, and I did not participate in class discussions because I didn't want to be judged by my peers. One day, I had a question, but the thought of asking it made my heart pound, and my mouth immediately felt dry and glued shut. This is not unlike Sherman Alexie, the author of "Superman and Me", when he explains that "those who failed were ceremonially accepted by other Indians and appropriately pitied by non-Indians" (2). Although my situation wasn't as drastic and wasn't about race, I felt that the only way to be accepted was to be unsuccessful along with my peers—and that was the only way I felt safe and comfortable. Since then, I have found comfort in being anonymous, which has held me back from other opportunities.