

## AXES Paragraph Structure

Strong and fully developed paragraphs should present a claim, support it with evidence, and synthesized and commented upon. One model for developing strong paragraphs is what we call the AXES model.

AXES stands for:

- Assertion
- eXamples
- Explanation
- Significance

and these are the specific elements that should be in your body paragraphs to fully develop them.

### ASSERTION

- Also known as a topic sentence; usually a claim.
- Focuses the body paragraph to one main idea
- One paragraph = one main idea
- In academic writing, assertions are often not statements of fact; rather, they are reasonably arguable statements that are specific and focused.
  - “Pollution has adverse effects to human health.” (factual statement, not an argument)
  - “High levels of air pollution in metropolitan areas lead to increased respiratory illnesses.” (argument)

### EXAMPLES

- Examples refers to facts, statistics, sources, and other forms of evidentiary (or supporting) material.
- Different types of evidence have different functions and will depend on your assignment.
  - Anecdotal (personal observations)
  - Analogical (comparison of similarities between two dissimilar concepts, things or ideas)
  - Statistical (figures, numbers, data)
  - Testimonial (secondary sources from expert or scholar in the field)
- In academic writing, evidence is the credible, appropriate, and strong supporting material that illustrates the validity or correctness of the assertion.

### EXPLANATION

- Evidence does not speak for itself, so you—the writer—have to give your reader how you see the evidence working with your assertion.
- Explanation is the *discussion of the evidence* as it pertains to the assertion.
  - “Why does that data mean your claim is true?”
  - Assertion + Evidence = Explanation
- Also referred to as “discussion” or “synthesis” of point(s).
- In academic writing, explanations serve to illuminate to the reader how the evidence supports the claim.
- How to write it? Refer to the evidence as a starting point.
  - “This evidence shows that the claim is true because...”

### SIGNIFICANCE

- Significance (1) refers to the relevance of your claim and evidence and (2) *ties your assertion to the thesis statement*.
- Answers the “So What?” of the claim you just made.
- Gives the reader the missing link between what you claim in the paragraph(s) and what you argue in the paper as a whole.

**Identify the AXES structure in this paragraph:**

In addition to highlighting platform jumping practices in Zambia, our informants foregrounded different motivations for and gradients of anonymity in online environments. Anonymity is critical to online identity construction, and social media provide different possibilities for maintaining anonymity (Van der Nagel & Frith, 2015). Alice Marwick and danah boyd have noted that while in offline situations people know the context within which they are conversing, in social media sites there is often a “context collapse” in the sense that users are unsure who exactly is viewing their performance of self and are unable to restrict this performance to a particular audience segment (Marwick & boyd, 2011). Anonymity provides a way to negotiate this context collapse. The desire for anonymity depends on the user’s perception of a particular news site, blog, or social media platform and the kinds of people and social groups the user thinks will frequent the platform. As users gauge varied online contexts, they enact anonymity in the process of making their views public, and they may either critique or endorse the status quo.

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(Red = assertion; Green = evidence; Underlined = explanation; Blue = significance)