

### 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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(Purple = content bridge; Red = assertion; Green = evidence; Underlined = explanation; Blue = significance)

**AXES Sample #2**

Despite lack of research and effective policies, a number of agencies and band councils throughout the North are involved with programs aimed at increasing levels of youth employment. These programs generally fall into two categories: those aimed at extending schooling to make postsecondary education more accessible for indigenous youth and those whose mission is to prepare disadvantaged on-reserve youth to break the cycle of dependence and find stable employment (AANDC, 2013). An example of a program in the first category is the Tungavik Federation of Nunavut (TFN). This program is intended to educate and train Inuit youth so that they are qualified for government and land claims-related positions (Richardson & Blanchet Cohen, 2000). An example of a program in the second category is the Prince Albert Grand Council (PAGC) Call for Action program, which provides unemployed Dene youth with an eight-month training program (Northlands College, 2016). Both categories of program aim to enhance the qualifications of northern indigenous youth, so they are better positioned to find employment in their region.

(From University of Saskatchewan Graduate Writing Videos)

### **Comparing Two Versions of a Paragraph**

Read two versions of the paragraph and identify the following:

1. The author's purpose. Is it clear? Is it to claim, explain, report or describe something?
2. The assertion.
3. The evidence that supports the point made in the assertion.
4. The explanation & significance. Do they connect the evidence with the point made in the assertion?

#### **Version One**

The first sighting of the platypus was reported in Australia in 1798. Preserved specimens were sent back to England, where they caused much scientific excitement. The platypus had a bill like a duck and laid eggs, but, instead of having feathers, it had hair. The platypus is now considered a mammal, even though it lays eggs. The platypus has hair, which, when examined in detail, is structurally similar to that of non-egg-laying mammals. These features of the hair were most fully described by the famous biologist Leon Augustus Hausman. Hausman died in 1966. His scholarly expertise on the topic of mammalian hair often brought him into the public arena, and once he was even called on to provide expert opinion on a sacred "yeti" scalp kept in a Himalayan monastery. Hausman showed that the hair scales of the shaft of the platypus exhibit the typical mammalian shift in shape between the base and the tip. The platypus also produces a milky secretion that is used to suckle the newborns. The milk is produced not from teats but from pores in the ventral abdominal skin. The milk has a much higher concentration of iron than that of the eutherian mammals. Hair and suckling of the young are features now universally acknowledged as definitive characteristics of mammals. The long and often controversial involvement of so many scientists in the documentation of platypus biology indicates the value of a socio-historical study of the engagement of the scientific community with this animal.

#### **Version Two**

The classification of the platypus was first debated in 1798 when specimens of this newly-discovered animal were sent to England from its native Australia, causing British scientists to puzzle over its combination of mammalian and avo-reptilian features. Today, despite sharing some features with the birds and reptiles, the platypus is classified as a mammal. First, the platypus has hair which, when examined in detail, is structurally similar to that of non-egg-laying mammals. These features of the hair were most fully described by Leon Hausman, the pre-eminent mammalian hair expert of the twentieth century. Hausman showed that the shafts of the hair of the platypus exhibit the typical mammalian shift in shape between the base and the tip. Second, like other mammals, the platypus suckles its newborns by secreting (from pores on its ventral abdominal skin) an iron-rich milk. The engagement of scientists with the platypus has been a long one and is deserving of a study in itself, but today scientists concur that the presence of hair and suckling of the young are sufficient to definitively place this animal in the Mammalian class.

From University of Saskatchewan Graduate Writing Videos

Identify the AXES structure (+content bridge if applicable) in the following paragraphs:

## 7.2. Implications

The consequences of a hostile and sexist gaming environment are pervasive. Research in the workplace has found that a misogynistic atmosphere has negative consequences for both men's and women's well-being. Additionally, those that perceive greater hostility toward women are more likely to leave their jobs (MinerRubino & Cortina, 2004). Women report negative psychological effects in misogynistic environments even if they themselves do not experience harassment (Miner-Rubino & Cortina, 2007). Thus, gaming communities that allow sexist behavior to continue may be losing both male and female participants.

This sexism and its expression may be driving women away from many networked games or forcing them into silent participation rather than active engagement. Research indicates that women's motivations for playing games are very similar to men's (Taylor, 2006; Yee, 2006). Thus, it is likely not the game itself that is keeping women from becoming more vocal participants in networked video games. As Yee (2006) notes, women are more likely to cite the game culture rather than the nature of the game as a deterrent to participation. For gaming environments, this means that additional measures must be taken to make games a safer space for women and other minorities. Reporting systems should be more efficient, and moderators should be less tolerant of sexist, racist, homophobic, and otherwise discriminatory language that reinforces hostility and aggression towards "outsiders." Otherwise, many minority players must continue to listen to hate speech in these environments and forced to stay silent, lest their true identity be revealed and they become the target for in-game and meta-game discrimination and aggression.

Gamers themselves should also be mindful of the hypermasculine nature of networked games and its ability to alienate players. Even when harassment is not taking place, sexist language and other actions reinforce masculine norms and other features that may create a hostile environment. For example, it is not uncommon for players to refer to an enjoyable victory as "raping" another player (Salter & Blodgett, 2012). Alternatively, stereotypical media representations of gaming as a male space and other reiterations of masculine norms may also diminish women's interest in playing online games. Previous research found that promoting masculine stereotypes via décor in a computer science classroom diminished women's sense of belonging, interest, and anticipated success in the subject (Cheryan, Meltzoff, & Kim, 2011; Cheryan, Plaut, Davies, & Steele, 2009). In this sense, every facet of the gaming industry, from game developers to web community managers to marketers, should be aware that they may be shutting out half of the global market by alienating women with stereotypical content and permitting sexist discourse to continue.

Fox, J. & Tang, W.Y. (2014). Sexism in online video games: The role of conformity to masculine norms and social dominance orientation. *Computers in Human Behavior* 33, 314-320.

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