

How to Make Yourself Understood

English I Online Materials

Tips for Writing Sensible Paragraphs

Unit 8

Essay Structure



キーワード (key words)

エッセイの構造 (essay structure) 主題提示 (thesis statement)

Tips for Writing Sensible Paragraphs

Unit 8 Essay Structure

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Scripts and Annotations (スクリプトと解説)

Hello everyone. I'm Jeff Gayman. Welcome to the "How to Make Yourself Understood" video series, Unit 8. How is your study of the English language going? Writing something clearly in English is very difficult? I know, but if you learn the logic and basic structure of academic writing, your writing skill will surely improve. It is important to keep trying.

What is an "Essay"?

In this unit, we are going to learn the structure of an essay. An essay is a piece of academic writing dealing with a particular subject. Academic papers researchers write and class reports or term papers students submit all fall under the category of an essay. Compared with the stand-alone paragraph we studied in Unit 7, an essay is made of more paragraphs and thus capable of conveying a more detailed and complex argument. However, the underlying organizing principles are the same. An essay is, so to speak, a paragraph on a larger scale. Let's look at the fundamental characteristics of an essay.

Points

⇒エッセイ ≠ 随筆

「エッセイ」と言うと、『枕草子』や『徒然草』のような「随筆」を思い浮かべる人が多いかもしれません。しかし、この unit で学ぶ essay とは、そのような文学的随筆ではなく、むしろ論文やレポートのようなもの、つまり、**あるテーマについて論理的に論じた複数のパラグラフから成る文章**のことです。

Characteristics of an Essay

First of all, just as a paragraph is a text, an organized whole, so is an essay. Secondly, just as a paragraph contains only one topic or main idea, so does an essay. In the case of an essay, that one topic is called a "thesis," which is a theory or idea you maintain or argue in the essay. Finally, remember that everything in a paragraph is related to the topic of the paragraph. In the same manner, every paragraph in an essay is related to the one thesis maintained in the essay.

OK. You are beginning to see what I mean by an essay being a paragraph on a larger scale. Since you have learned what a paragraph is in the previous lecture, you should be able to understand the structure of an essay by means of analogy.

Now, let's see the components of an essay one by one in comparison to those of a paragraph. Again, you will see how the same organizing principles govern both.

Points

⇒エッセイ = パラグラフの拡大版

パラグラフ	エッセイ
テキストとしてのまとまりを持つ	テキストとしてのまとまりを持つ
1つの内容 (topic) を持つ	1つの内容 (thesis) を持つ
どの部分も topic と関連している	どの部分も thesis と関連している

この表からもおわかりのように、複数パラグラフから成るエッセイは、単一パラグラフと同じ構造を持っており、その意味で単一パラグラフの拡大版と言えます。

Essay Components

You remember that the first part of a paragraph is a topic sentence, right? In the case of an essay, the first part is an introduction, which is made of one paragraph or, in the case of a longer essay, two or more paragraphs. An introduction should contain one sentence called a “thesis statement”, which expresses the main argument of the entire essay in a nutshell. The thesis statement makes clear to the reader what the essay is going to maintain.

The next part is the body, which is the longest part in an essay, where the thesis is developed in full and argued. The paragraphs in the body correspond to supporting sentences in a paragraph and thus are sometimes called “supporting paragraphs.”

The final paragraph or paragraphs in an essay serve as a conclusion. The conclusion summarizes and concludes the main argument of what you have stated in the previous parts of the essay.

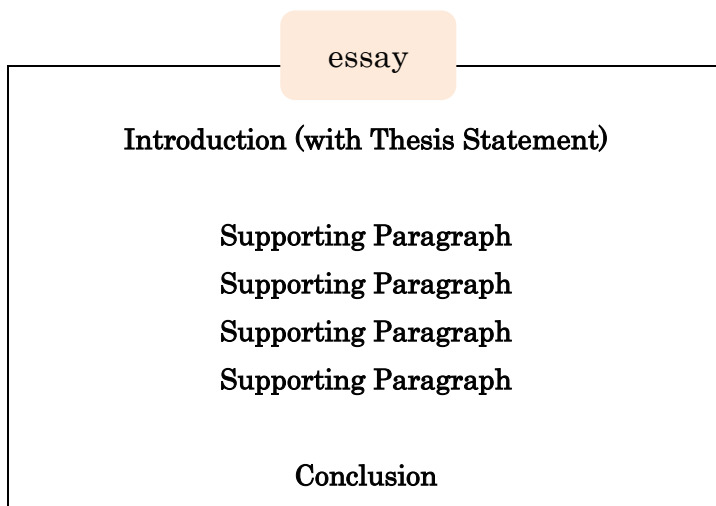
< essay >

An introduction: one or more paragraphs containing a “thesis statement”

The body: paragraphs to develop and argue for the thesis

A conclusion: one or more paragraphs to summarize the point

Every piece of academic writing should have this three-part structure: an introduction with a thesis statement, a body consisting of supporting paragraphs, and a conclusion.



Points

⇒ エッセイの構成要素

パラグラフ		エッセイ	
topic sentence	パラグラフの主要な論点 (topic) を 1 文で表したものの	thesis statement	エッセイの主要な論点 (thesis) を 1 文で表したものの。introduction に含まれる
supporting sentence(s)	topic sentence の内容を展開し、論証する文	body (supporting paragraphs)	thesis を展開し、論証するパラグラフ
conclusion	結論をまとめる文	conclusion	結論をまとめるパラグラフ

上の表からおわかりのように、パラグラフとエッセイはほぼ共通の構成原理によってまとめられています。ここでも、単一パラグラフの構造が拡大されたものがエッセイの構造であると言えます。そして、**パラグラフにおける topic sentence と同じ役割を担う文 thesis statement がエッセイには不可欠**なのです。

Now let's look at a sample short essay and see how each component is located. For the first reading, just focus on the general structure of the essay.

Sample Essay: How I Changed the Way I Read

[introduction]

These days, in many aspects of our daily life, computers, especially small mobile devices, are changing the traditional way of doing things. For example, mobile devices with a camera installed have almost replaced film cameras at least for casual use. Travelers now depend on maps displayed on their mobile phone screen instead of paper maps. Using an online calendar for scheduling is now quite a normal procedure. As for me, when I was admitted to college last year, I started something new to follow this trend: the digitization of most of my reading activities. Let me show you how I read books now and how I evaluate this new method of reading.

thesis statement

[body: first supporting paragraph]

In order to convert the books I buy into a digital format, first I use a desktop paper cutter to cut off the spines and separate all the sheets from each other. Then I scan dozens of the sheets at a time, using a very fast document scanner. The scanned data are automatically stored as PDF files in my tablet PC. The tablet PC containing these PDF files serves as a kind of book for me: I can read and turn pages on the screen with my forefinger.

[body: second supporting paragraph]

One year after having changed my reading method in this way, I have become sure that digitized reading has several advantages. First of all, I no longer have to carry along bulky textbooks from home to college, because everything I need in the classroom is stored in my light-weight, handy tablet. Not only the textbooks but also my whole library is now accessible wherever I go. For example, when a passage displayed on the screen happens to remind me of another related title, I can immediately search for and open it. That was impossible when I was totally dependent on paper books, because there was a limit to the number of books I could carry with me.

[body: third supporting paragraph]

In addition to this excellent portability, digital reading gives me more freedom in taking notes. Everybody knows you can jot down your memos in a paper book, if it is your own, of course. With digital reading, you can likewise annotate on the screen using your finger or a stylus pen. What is more, you can delete or modify your notes at your will, which is impossible with paper books.

[body: fourth supporting paragraph]

Although someone might mention the danger of losing your whole library by losing your tablet PC, actually, here again digitized books beat their paper-based equivalents. Because digital files are so easy to copy, I have the backups of my whole library in my laptop PC and in two portable hard-disk drives so that if my tablet is lost or broken, I still have my library data at hand. This three-fold backup is impracticable with paper books. Just imagine how time-consuming and tedious it might be to make just one Xerox copy of a 200 page paper book! Even if you manage to make it, where do you put those paper copies? In contrast, with digital book data, backup can be so simply and quickly done. Therefore, you can say that my books are far more securely protected than paper books.

[conclusion]

Portability, flexibility in annotation, and ease of backup: these are some of the reasons why I am very much satisfied with my present reading environment. It may be that my reading method works because I am a sophomore and have less than a hundred books of my own. A professor who owns thousands of books would find the idea of converting them into PDF from scratch totally unrealistic. I am wondering what will happen as my library gradually increases in the future. For the time being,

however, I cannot imagine my daily life without my whole library in my tablet.

So, how was it? You may have noticed that this sample essay is based on the sample paragraph we saw in the previous video. The single paragraph is now expanded into a six paragraph essay. You see that an introduction paragraph comes first which contains the thesis statement, followed by a four paragraph body, and that a concluding paragraph ends the essay. We are going to discuss the detailed analysis of each paragraph of this essay in the next lecture. So, please look forward to it!

Points

⇒ sample essay について

Unit 6 で読んでいただいた sample paragraph を 6 つのパラグラフに拡大したエッセイです。単一パラグラフと同じ構造を持っている点に注意してください。

1. introduction: 第 1 パラグラフ。thesis statement (下線部) を持つ
(単一パラグラフの topic sentence に相当する)
2. body: 第 2～5 パラグラフ。それぞれ thesis statement を support する
(単一パラグラフの supporting sentences に相当する)
3. conclusion: 第 6 パラグラフ。結論をまとめる
(単一パラグラフの conclusion に相当する)

⇒ 建築の比喻

パラグラフとエッセイの構造をわかりやすく説明する際に、よく建築の比喻が用いられます。1つひとつのパラグラフはブロックであり、そのブロックを組み立てることによって大きな建築物(エッセイ)が作られる、というわけです。そして、この構造はミクロとマクロのレベルでも見られるのです。

ミクロのレベルで言えば、1つひとつの文がブロックであり、そのブロックを組み立てることによって、パラグラフという建築物が作られます(これについては Unit 7 で学習しました)。マクロのレベルで言えば、短いエッセイが1つひとつのブロック(本のセクション)となり、そのセクションが集まって1つの章となり、その章が集まって一冊の本になるというわけです。

今学習しているエッセイの構造は、さらに大きなレベルの文章を作り上げるための基礎でもあります。ですから、しっかりと理解して自分のものにしてください。

Summary

Now, let's wrap up today's points. A single paragraph and an essay made of more paragraphs are governed by the same organizing principles.

1. An essay is a text, an organized whole.
2. An essay contains only one thesis, a theory or idea to be maintained or argued.
3. Every paragraph in an essay is related to the thesis and contributes to the unity of the essay.
4. An essay has the following three components:
 - introduction, containing a thesis statement
 - body or supporting paragraphs, and
 - conclusion, summarizing the entire essay

Do you remember the metaphor of architecture used in the previous video? A sentence can be likened to a building block. Combining sentences on one topic makes a paragraph. In the same fashion, a paragraph, in turn, can be likened to a building block too. Combining these building blocks on a particular thesis creates an essay. You can construct still larger building units in a similar manner. For example, a short essay made of several paragraphs can be a section in a larger unit. Namely, several sections make up a chapter. And eventually, several chapters constitute a book. Within each of these different levels of academic writing architecture, the same organizing principles work and contribute to the ideal author-reader communication. If you follow these general principles and architecture, your academic writing will become a lot clearer, more intelligible, and more attractive!

Well, that's all for today. I hope you enjoyed the lesson. Good luck, keep working hard, and see you next time!

