

General Purpose and Body of the Message

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about how to use your purpose to develop the rest of your written message. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. General Purpose and Thesis Statements

No matter what your business writing project involves, it needs to convey some central idea. To clarify the idea in your mind and make sure it comes through to your audience, write a thesis statement. A thesis statement, or central idea, should be short, specific, and to the point.

This statement is key to the success of your document. If your audience has to work to find out what exactly you are talking about, or what your stated purpose or goal is, they will be less likely to read, be influenced by, or recall what you have written.

By stating your point clearly in your introduction, and then referring back to it in the body of the document and at the end, you will help your readers to understand and remember your message.

2. Outlines

Chances are you have learned the basic principles of outlining in English writing courses. An outline is a framework that organizes main ideas and subordinate ideas in a hierarchical series of roman numerals and alphabetical letters.

Here is one example.

I. Introduction

A. Thesis statement

II. Main point 1

A. Supporting detail

1. Sub-point

2. Sub-point

- B. Supporting detail
 - 1. Sub-point
 - 2. Sub-point
- C. Supporting detail
 - 1. Sub-point
 - 2. Sub-point

III. Main point 2

- A. Supporting detail
 - 1. Sub-point
 - 2. Sub-point
- B. Supporting detail
 - 1. Sub-point
 - 2. Sub-point
- C. Supporting detail
 - 1. Sub-point
 - 2. Sub-point

IV. Main point 3

- A. Supporting detail
 - 1. Sub-point
 - 2. Sub-point
- B. Supporting detail
 - 1. Sub-point
 - 2. Sub-point
- C. Supporting detail
 - 1. Sub-point
 - 2. Sub-point

V. Conclusion

This next example presents an alternate outline form that may be more suitable for brief documents like letters and emails. You can use this format as a model or modify it as needed.

Introduction

- General purpose or thesis statement

Body

- Point 1:
- Point 2:
- Point 3

Conclusion

- Summary of main points

3. Paragraphs

Paragraphs are how we package information in business communication, and the more efficient the package, the easier the meaning can be delivered.

You may wish to think of each paragraph as a small essay within a larger information platform, defined by a guiding thesis and an organizing principle. The standard five-paragraph essay format used for college term papers is mirrored in individual paragraphs. College essays often have minimum or maximum word counts, but paragraphs hardly ever have established limits.



HINT

A paragraph can be as long or as short as it needs to be to get the message across, but remember your readers and avoid long, drawn-out paragraphs that may lose their attention.

Just as a document generally has an introduction, body, and conclusion, so does a paragraph. Each paragraph has one idea, thought, or purpose that is stated in an introductory sentence. This is followed by one or more supporting sentences. The paragraph then concludes with a summary statement and transition or link to the next idea or paragraph.

Let's take a closer look at each component:

1. The topic sentence states the main thesis, purpose, or topic of the paragraph; it defines the subject matter to be addressed in that paragraph.
2. Body sentences support the topic sentence and relate clearly to the subject matter of the paragraph and overall document. They may use an organizing principle similar to that of the document itself (e.g., chronological, contrast, spatial) or introduce a related organizing principle (e.g., point pattern, process or procedure).
3. The conclusion sentence brings the paragraph to a close; it may do this in any of several ways. It may reinforce the paragraph's main point, summarize the relationships among the body sentences, and/or serve as a transition to the next paragraph.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned that the **general purpose and thesis statement** provide the organizing idea for your written message. Once you've drafted a thesis statement, an **outline** is an effective way of organizing the main points and subpoints that support your thesis. Your outline can then be further developed into **paragraphs** that communicate and summarize each main point.

Best of luck in your learning!

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