The middle section, or body, of your essay develops and supports your thesis. To do this, each body paragraph should possess the following qualities:

- **Unity**—every sentence relates directly to the main idea of the paragraph.
- **Coherence**—sentences smoothly and logically connect to one another.
- **Development**—sentences contain the examples, evidence, and explanations readers need to understand the paragraph’s main idea.

A well-developed paragraph should support not only the thesis, but it should also be complete enough to stand on its own. Think of a paragraph as a mini-essay, each has an introduction (the **topic sentence**), a body (the **evidence** and **explanation**) and a conclusion (the **concluding sentence**). These elements are presented below:

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### Elements of a Body Paragraph

**Topic Sentence**
A topic sentence reiterates the claim made in the thesis statement that will be discussed in the paragraph and links it to the evidence supporting that claim.

**Example**
A key reason capital punishment should not be used in Texas is because of the possibility of executing an innocent person.

**Evidence**
The evidence directly supports the thesis’s claim. In an academic paper, evidence is often a quote from a primary or secondary source, but it can also be statistics, analogies, or hypothetical situations.

**Example**
For example, in April 1999 Gerald Wilkins, who had served 12 years on death row in an Illinois prison, was found not guilty of the crime he had been convicted of because of new DNA evidence (Wallace 12).

**Explanation**
The explanation describes how the evidence presented supports the thesis’s claim.

**Example**
If Mr. Wilkins’ sentence—death by lethal injection—had been carried out promptly, an innocent man would have died. Fortunately, he was still waiting for his execution date, and this made it possible to partially correct the error of his conviction.

**Repeat**
A well-supported body paragraph provides at least two or more pieces of evidence with an explanation of each. Present evidence followed by an explanation until the claim has been sufficiently supported.

**Concluding Sentence**
The concluding sentence ties together all information included in the paragraph making connections and providing a transition to the next paragraph.

**Example**
As long as Texas continues to sentence convicted people to death, there will always be the possibility of executing an innocent person.
Developing Body Paragraphs

The resulting paragraph reads:

A key reason capital punishment should not be used in Texas is there is always the possibility of executing an innocent person. For example, in April 1999, Gerald Wilkins, who served twelve years on death row in an Illinois prison, was found not guilty of the crime of which he was convicted because of new DNA evidence (Wallace 12). If Mr. Wilkins’s sentence—death by lethal injection—had been carried out promptly, an innocent man would have died. Fortunately, he was still waiting for his execution date, and this made it possible to partially correct the error of his conviction. (Repeat as needed to support the claim.). As long as Texas continues to sentence convicted people to death, there will always be the possibility of executing an innocent person.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do’s and Don’ts for Writing Body Paragraphs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Do’s</strong></td>
<td><strong>Don’ts</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do use clear transitions to aid in coherence.</td>
<td>Don’t use topic sentences that are too general. <strong>Ex. Guns are dangerous</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Using transitional words and phrases—such as <em>for example, one way, additionally, furthermore, for instance</em>—is a good way to introduce evidence in a body paragraph.</td>
<td>There are many things anyone can write about the danger of guns. Such a topic sentence may lead to a break in unity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do provide more than one piece of evidence per paragraph. Also, try to use a variety of evidence (statistics, expert opinions, analogies, quotes, etc.) if possible.</td>
<td>Don’t use topic sentences that are too narrow. <strong>Ex. The .69 caliber Harpers Ferry Rifle is a U.S. Civil War era weapon.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>What else can be said about this? This type of topic sentence can lead to a lack of development.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do document all outside sources—this will usually be the evidence—used within a body paragraph.</td>
<td>Don’t refer to more than one claim from the thesis (NOTE: a claim is different from a piece of evidence) per paragraph. This can lead to a break in unity, as well.</td>
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**Practice**

**Directions:** Label each sentence below as either a topic sentence, evidence, explanation, or concluding sentence. Then, put them together to form a unified body paragraph.

1. Before Macduff’s son is murdered, he proves himself to be an intelligent child through his understanding of worldly concepts.

2. Macduff’s son has a mature understanding of both his parents’ relationship and the ways of the world. He knows his mother loves his father, and so, would cry if his father should die. He also knows that if a woman does not cry when her husband dies, she likely has another man waiting for her.

3. These insights are rare for a ten- or eleven-year-old child, thus proving his intelligence.
4. For example, when his mother tells him that his father is dead—though his father has only gone to England—the child knows his mother is lying. Confident that his mother would weep over his father’s death, the child says to her, “If you would not, it were a good sign that I should quickly have a new father” (IV.ii.66-68).

5. Furthermore, Macduff’s son says that all the liars and swearers in the world will never be hanged because there are “liars and swearers enough to beat the honest men and hang them” (IV.ii.61-63).

6. The son clearly understands the corruption in the world and in human nature and that men are imperfect.

Unified Paragraph: