There are five to six basic sections in a good and detailed body paragraph. Each paragraph in your paper (excluding the introduction and conclusion) should contain these six items. When writing your papers, if you get stuck in writing a paragraph or something doesn’t sound right, you can use this handout as a checklist:

1. **TOPIC SENTENCE**

A strong topic sentence does two things well: Explains where the paragraph is going relative to the main argument in the paper and provides a transition between the main idea of the last paragraph and the current one. It should clearly indicate what is to come in the paragraph. The sentence should also contain its own sub-argument rather than simply reiterating the main claim of the paper. The topic sentence is usually the first sentence in the paragraph (although at times it can be the second if the first sentence serves as a transition between the last paragraph and the current one).

2. **EVIDENCE INTRO AND SETUP**

The sentence that generally follows the topic sentence has the job of setting up the evidence that will be used to make the point of the paragraph. In essence, it connects the main idea to the quote and prefaces what is to come.

3. **EVIDENCE!**

The evidence of your paper gives the reader proof for your argument. Every body paragraph should contain evidence in the form of quotes, paraphrasing or summarizing when you are aiming to make a point. The use of quotations does not have to be one sentence. Sometimes it will be necessary to spend several sentences outlining your evidence and connecting different quotations or paraphrases together.
4. EVIDENCE ANALYSIS

After you have provided your evidence you MUST explain and analyze this evidence. No matter how good your evidence is, it won’t help your argument much if your reader doesn’t know why it’s important. It’s best to be explicit about the significance of your evidence. If you do not explain your evidence, (what it means) then the reader is free to interpret it any which way he or she chooses. Because you are hoping that they use the evidence to see something specific you are aiming to present, you must explain the evidence in your own words. Make sure to be very thorough about not only summarizing the quote but providing interpretations and analytical points that find the deeper meaning beyond the surface. This is probably the most important part of your paragraph.

5. EVIDENCE CONNECTION TO YOUR POINT

Also, you cannot automatically assume that your reader will even understand the evidence presented and how that evidence connects to the main point of your paragraph. To make sure that there is a direct correlation between the evidence and your point, tell your reader what you intend and perhaps why the evidence you have chosen allows you to prove your point. Remember, writing should not be about solving mysteries!

6. CONNECTION TO MAIN CLAIM

Once you have proven the point of a paragraph and have used sufficient evidence to make that point, you must tell the reader how the point of this paragraph connects to the main claim you are pursuing in your paper. This last section is critical to your paper because it helps the reader understanding your thinking process as you prove your main argument. Don’t leave it out!