

The S-E-E Paragraph

The following handy strategy will help you create organized, well-developed paragraphs for the body of your essays and reports.

S for Statement

Begin with a topic sentence that gives the reader a sense of what the single main idea of the paragraph will be.

My roommate refuses to see the overflowing garbage. (nicely narrow)

My roommate is a slob. (perhaps too broad for one paragraph?)

E for Example

This is the part of your paragraph where you support your topic sentence. Your evidence/examples should be appropriate and specific. If you are writing an essay or report that is not personal, you will need to use evidence in the same way, perhaps from a text, facts or specific observations.

E for Explanation

If the evidence you use is dense (facts or statistics or quotations), you might want to explain the importance of your evidence. Then you might need to explain how the paragraph supports your essay, and how the evidence connects with your overall thesis. Lastly, you might decide to move out from the narrow topic and speak more globally.

(Statement) My roommate refuses to see the overflowing garbage. (Examples) Even if I place the can in the middle of the kitchen, she steps over it as she moves to the dining room. (a specific detail) I've even seen her push the garbage down and gingerly place a used paper plate right on top, taking great care that it is nicely balanced. (even more specific) (Explanation) Of course, I usually just give up and take the can down the stairs and out to the smelly dumpster behind the old mattresses. Aside from throwing the garbage can at her and having a fight, I don't know what else to do.

WATCH OUT FOR FORMULAS! Some paragraphs don't need explanatory lines after their evidence. For example, you might not think that the above paragraph needs its last line; you have to decide. It depends on the complexity of your topic.