

LEAF Paragraphs

L=Lead:

The lead sentence of your paragraph is arguably the most important. Your lead must include the main idea of your paragraph and must not be plot summary; it is a mini-thesis with a subject and an opinion. All evidence and analysis in this paragraph must relate to your lead. (If this paragraph is a part of a larger essay, the lead must connect to your main thesis and act as a transition from the above paragraph.)

E=Evidence:

Without evidence, your argument is too weak to stand. Each paragraph should contain at least two pieces of evidence. Evidence is the facts; you are pulling the proof from your research or from the text. Your evidence can be in the form of quotations (see Writers INC for proper citation format) or can be a retelling in your own words. If you use a quotation, you may need to set it up (transition into it), or explain it in your own words.

A=Analysis:

Each piece of evidence needs to be analyzed, or connected, to your argument. Think about why your evidence proves your lead (and ultimately your thesis). Explain the quotation you used. Relate it to your argument. This is where opinion plays a role (remember, though, no “I think” or “I feel”). Why do you think this evidence is important enough to use in your essay? The analysis can be the most convincing part of your paragraph and essay.

F=Finisher:

The finisher is the last sentence of your paragraph and it has two jobs. Its first job is to make sure your reader sees the connection between the paragraph and your lead (and your thesis). Show how your main idea (see lead) directly relates to the argument in your introduction. The second job, which is similar to the lead’s job, is to smoothly transition into your next paragraph.

Most paragraphs that you write will be LEAEAF or even LEAEAEAF. You may add as many EAs as necessary to make your argument strong. Too many examples, however, can be distracting, so only include the strongest.