

Musings on the “5” Paragraph Essay

The “5” Paragraph Essay is one of the most traditional essay formats at the middle and high school level. It allows students a strict framework to use to organize their ideas and present them in an easy to follow format, which often times is one of the most difficult things for developing writers to accomplish. Hopefully, the mind is teeming with ideas on the given topic, and this essay structure provides a method to take this vast amount of information and package it for your reader. At this point in your writing, you are probably aware the basic things that the “5” paragraph essay accomplishes, but you are perhaps not aware of some of the variations of this essay type or some of the refinements that can make a simple “5” Paragraph Essay extraordinary. This document is intended to provide you with this information as well as give a number of other helpful hints and suggestions that will help take your writing to the next level. It will also explain to you why “5” is always in quotation marks when I refer to this type of essay. Although a helpful type of essay to learn, this style of essay is by no means the end step in your writing development. In fact, we encourage the majority of your essays to take on a form other than a “5” paragraph essay. For the time being, however, the strictness of this structure will allow us to include and easily identify some key elements of writing that you will want to use when you are ready to strike out beyond this style of writing.

Part I

What the “5” Paragraph Essay probably means to you:

An essay with the following basic format

- Introduction
 - Background sentences (broad to narrow)
 - Thesis statement (Claim)
 - 3 POA* points, A, B, C
- Body/Support Paragraph A
 - Topic statement
 - Transitional Element + 1st example and analysis
 - Transitional Element + 2nd example and analysis
 - Transitional Element + 3rd example and analysis
 - Concluding sentence
- Body/Support Paragraph B
 - Same format as above
- Body/Support Paragraph C
 - Same format as above
- Conclusion
 - Repeat Thesis and POA
 - General closing statements

* I’ll continue to use the rather Sprague/Salem specific term POA (Plan of Attack), although it’s probably good that you realize that this phrase may be total nonsense to your college professors and friends who might say something like “three supporting points”, “paragraph topics”, “roadmap” or “3 pieces of evidence” instead. It’s also probably good that you learn alternative names because they reinforce a little more in their meaning what the basic concept is.

Uses of the “5” Paragraph Essay:

For the most part, the “5” Paragraph Essay is used as a format for analysis or exposition. It is frequently used to discuss something that has already been written, or something that has already occurred in history, art, music, whatever. In this way, it can be termed a **secondary** text, in the sense that it is most often written *about* something else. The “5” paragraph format is not as frequently used for what we call a **primary** text. For example, the Declaration of Independence is not written in what we would call a “5” paragraph essay format, in fact, it would lose almost all of its literary effectiveness if it were. (Although, it’s kind of funny to imagine what this would look like with the Thesis/POA statement: The colonies should be independent from Great Britain because the king is a jerk, we’ve had to pay stupid taxes, and because we want to be free....and then 3 corresponding support paragraphs with three examples of each of these.) If, however, you wanted to write an essay *about* the literary effectiveness of the

actual Declaration of Independence, a “5” paragraph essay might prove to be an effective choice to organize your discussion.

Additionally, the “5” paragraph essay is also really helpful for in-class essays, including those that you will write for this class, your AP tests, and for college exams. Again, this has a lot to do with the fact that the strict structure will help keep the information you are trying to communicate clear and manageable.

Refining the “5” paragraph essay

Most of the refinements that we are going to focus on making to the “5” paragraph essay are going to have very little to do with the actual structure, but instead are going to focus on filling out this structure in more detail. This is quite challenging, because filling out this structure in more detail depends almost entirely on **content** and **argumentation**, in other words, on *thinking*. You’re reaching an exciting point in your education where having correct structure is not enough; this structure has to be added to with a quality and maturity of ideas and thought. Although this endeavor will undoubtedly cause some stress and frustration, you will be grateful when you have these skills, and many of your college peers do not.

Thesis Reminders:

Hopefully the concept of a thesis statement is fairly familiar to you, but it is always a good idea to do some refreshing and defining just to make sure we are all on the same page. A thesis presents the main topic or argument of your paper and will appear in your introduction paragraph. Specifically, for us, it will appear as the last sentence of your introduction. A thesis must meet two important requirements: 1. It must be supportable through factual evidence. 2. It must be arguable, which means that someone could probably produce evidence that could disprove your thesis. In other words, “Yellow is a color” is not a strong thesis because it can’t really be supported and it can’t really be argued: of course yellow is a color. “Yellow is a happy color” can operate as a thesis because it is both supportable and arguable. The term POA, which was explained above, is preview of the support paragraphs that you will use to support your thesis. “Yellow is a color” is just a Thesis statement, however “Yellow is a happy color because it is associated with summer, is bright, and is warm” is an example of a Thesis/POA statement.

Our Example Essay:

Let’s pretend that we are writing an essay on the classic children’s book “Green Eggs and Ham” by Dr. Seuss. We are exploring the *central message* or *theme* of this text, and what literary devices Dr. Seuss used to emphasize this message to his **audience**.

A brief word on audience

For a rhetorical analysis, which is what we address in AP Language, the effect of a text on the audience is a key idea. Our analysis process needs to include a discussion of what effect(s) a text is having on a specific audience at a specific moment in time, otherwise we are not performing a true rhetorical analysis. Because of this, you may want to brainstorm what you know or can infer about the intended audience and context for a passage or text prior to reading, so you can pay better attention to how the author appeals to them.

For example, “Green Eggs and Ham” is a children’s book intended for kids and perhaps even read to them by their parents. We might brainstorm some generalizations about being a kid: stubborn, easily amused, set in their ways, exploring a new world around them, etc. We might also infer that like so many children’s books that parents read to their kids that there might be a hidden message.

Given this, our thesis and POA might look like:

Sample Thesis/POA:

Dr. Seuss reveals the essential message that one should not be reluctant to try new things in life that might initially seem frightening or undesirable through his effective use of repetition, rhyme, and characterization that appeal directly to his reluctant, young audience.

Support Paragraphs:

This may bother those of you who like to go in order, but the most important part to focus on for refining this type of essay is the support paragraph for one very obvious reason: it is here that the real *thinking*, and by that I mean **analysis**, takes place. The intro tells us that analysis is about to happen, the conclusion reminds us that it just happened, but the support paragraph is where the all magic happens. Let's look at it in more detail, and pay careful attention to the "jobs" of each part of the support paragraph. Remember to notice that the skeleton structure of the body paragraph is the same as outlined above.

- **Topic Statement** (Called the *topic statement*, because accomplishing all this could extend beyond one sentence.)
 - Provides a logical transitional element and/or transitional thinking
 - Identifies the POA point this paragraph will be about
 - Establishes a direct causal relationship between the POA point, and the original thesis statement.
 - *May* explain any unclear terms or phrases used in the topic statement.
 - *May* list the three examples that will be presented momentarily. (This is especially helpful if your upcoming examples clearly fall into distinct categories—not as helpful if your upcoming examples are pretty much the same thing.)

Sample Topic Statement:

For example, Dr. Seuss emphasizes the importance of trying new things in life through his repetition of key phrases, locations, and pronouns. The repetition serves to make ridiculous the unnamed protagonist's unwillingness to accept Sam's generous offers of the green eggs and ham and therefore makes the reader believe that he should try this new option.

Sample Topic Statement, explained:

Transitional element: For example

Thesis statement: that Dr. Seuss emphasizes the importance of trying new things in life

POA point for this paragraph: through his repetition

List of upcoming examples (optional): of key phrases, locations, and pronouns.

Causal relationship between Thesis and POA point: The repetition serves to make ridiculous the unnamed protagonist's unwillingness to accept Sam's generous offers of the green eggs and ham and therefore makes the reader believe that he should try this new option.

Note: This last sentence in my sample topic statement (Establishes causal relationship between Thesis and POA point) is of utmost importance, primarily because up to now, you've most likely left this step out of your writing. You tend to make the assumption that the audience can figure out *how* the repetition helps to emphasize the theme of the story. Unfortunately, by leaving this step out, you've also omitted the actual analysis part of the process, which is the entire point of writing this kind of essay. Moral: Don't leave this step out. Your job is to connect the dots for your reader, not the other way around; they might connect them to make an elephant when what you were going for was a penguin.

A Note on Order:

There is no hard fixed order of how these components of the Topic Statement need to be presented in your writing, with the rather obvious exception that the transitional element must come first in the statement. In fact, because there is no fixed order to the individual components, this can allow for some variety in the different Topic Statements of your entire essay. This variety can be a very strong stylistic plus, as it might keep the reader of your essay from feeling that he/she is caught in one huge never changing formula.

Examples and Support:

Now we're to the process of actual analysis—the part where you provide examples that will support your thesis statement. This is the part referred to as "Example 1" of the Body/Support Paragraph. The good news is that the process that we use for "Example 1" will be the same for the other 8 remaining examples that you must provide in the rest of the essay, so I only have to type this once. The bad news is that it takes quite a bit of thought and effort to do this well, but that is what we're here to learn. So, let's create a process for thinking about our "evidence."

In most cases, your “**evidence**” will either be a direct quotation or reference to a text, or a reference to an event, fact, or occurrence. Once you have located something as a potential piece of evidence for your thesis, you need to ask yourself some questions about it AND think of potential answers to those questions. If you do this step carefully, you will be building an essay that analyzes a topic with depth and insight. These questions often build on previous answers, so it is helpful to ask them in the following order:

Where in the text is the example?

What is it doing? ...does it mean?

How is it doing this?

Why is doing this important for the audience?

If you’ve found satisfactory answers to these questions, good news! The answers to these questions will essentially form your *analysis* of your example. Notice what answering each of these questions forces you to do:

Where is the example?	(Provides quotation from text or reference to specific event.)
What is it doing?	(Summarizes example for your reader, specifies information.)
How is doing this?	(Demonstrates how your example proves the POA point)
Why is doing this important for the audience?	(Demonstrates why your POA point proves your Thesis)

Another good way to look at why you would want to include the answers to these questions as your analysis is to consider what each stage of the process tells the reader of your paper about your thinking abilities:

Where: Shows you can find information.

What: Shows you can understand and summarize that information.

How: Shows you can connect that information.

Why: Shows you can see the big picture and understand effect on audience.

The reader of your paper needs to see that you can do all of these different steps in order to be truly impressed with your writing and thinking. As you move down the list, it becomes more difficult to answer that question, but a true, quality thinker (which is what you are becoming) still remembers to do every step along the way, even the most basic.

When you have completed a full “where” “what” “how” “why” cycle, you have created what we sometimes call an **analytical unit**. As you might imagine, we’ll eventually have a lot of options for how we might want to spend these analytical units in a paper, which will explain why some papers may not end up being strictly “5” paragraphs.

Sample Example 1 and Analysis:

Topic Statement: For example, Dr. Seuss emphasizes the importance of trying new things in life through his repetition of key phrases, locations, and pronouns. The repetition serves to make ridiculous the unnamed protagonist’s unwillingness to accept Sam’s generous offers of the green eggs and ham and therefore makes the reader believe that he should try this new option.

Example 1 and Analysis: Throughout the entirety of “Green Eggs and Ham,” the phrases, “I would not, could not...” and some variations of “I do not like them” are repeated well over forty times by the main character of the story, indicating his refusal to try the new dish. In general, this repetition is appealing to his young audience, as children typically enjoy the predictability of repetition found in nursery rhymes or songs. But by repeating the exact phrases so often in his story, Seuss also focus attention on the character’s annoying stubbornness, and the reader begins to feel frustrated and unsympathetic towards an individual that refuses to try something that is simple and safe. Because the reader doesn’t want to seem as silly as the main character, it encourages him or her to see the importance of embracing new experiences in life which is the likely goal of parents in guiding their children to try new things.

To make a complete Body Paragraph, this should be followed by **Example 2 and Analysis**, **Example 3 and Analysis**, and the **Concluding** statement for this body paragraph. However, in the interest of your time, my time, and the print budget, I’ll assume that you understand that every example will follow this same basic pattern.

Sample Example 1 and Analysis, broken down:

Where: Throughout the entirety of “Green Eggs and Ham,” the phrases, “I would not, could not...” and some variations of “I do not like them” are repeated well over forty times by the main character of the story,

What: indicating his refusal to try the new dish.

How: . In general, this repetition is appealing to his young audience, as children typically enjoy the predictability of repetition found in nursery rhymes or songs. But by repeating the exact phrases so often in his story, Seuss also focus attention on the character’s annoying stubbornness, and the reader begins to feel frustrated and unsympathetic towards an individual that refuses to try something that is simple and safe.

Why: Because the reader doesn’t want to seem as silly as the main character, it encourages him or her to see the importance of embracing new experiences in life which is the likely goal of parents in guiding their children to try new things.

Final Note on Body Paragraphs: Because of the detail required at each step, this type of paragraph is likely to be quite long. If you think you have written a strong body paragraph and it is only a quarter of a page long, you have probably missed key parts of the process.

Introductions:

Few people seem to like writing introductions, and yet they’re a necessity in any type of essay. For many people, the first sentence of the introduction can take up more time than writing an entire support paragraph, and that’s understandably quite frustrating. Much of the hassle comes from trying to come up with that perfect, memorable beginning that will take your reader’s breath away, but the truth is, this is unlikely happen no matter how much thought you put into that first sentence. You’re going to take their breath away with your analysis (in the support paragraphs) and this introduction is just there to get you started. You also know that you don’t want to start right in with your Thesis and POA statement (unless you have special instruction to do so as might happen on certain in-class essays) so the big question is, what type of broad statements to make before getting around to your actual Thesis and POA? Here’s my suggestion:

You want to tell your reader:

<i>Things they need to know...</i>	while NOT telling them things...	<i>you can assume they already know that are false but sound pretty that they really don’t need to know that make you subject to ridicule</i>
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Here are some examples from both history and literature:

Pretend your thesis is “The success of the government of the United States was one of the primary causes of the spread of democracy in the world.”

You might want to begin your paper with...

- ...a few sentences on how American democracy came to be
- ...a few sentences on what does indeed make the American system democratic
- ...the historical context of the formation of the government of the United States and how that contrasted with other countries at that time.

You probably DON’T want to start your introduction with sentences like

- “Throughout history people have yearned for freedom.”
 - Really? How do you know this? How do you prove this?
- “Democracy is an ideal that everyone strives for.”
 - Probably not a fascist regime, so this is untrue in its absoluteness.
- “Groups of people have frequently banded together to form countries, and America is no exception.”

- I'm pretty sure I already knew that, but now I feel kind of insulted...

Now, pretend your Thesis/POA is "Franklin's *Autobiography* reflects Neoclassical ideals in its use of reason, irony, and educated diction."

You might want to begin your paper with...

- ...a few sentences on the historical context when Franklin is writing.
- ...a few sentences on Franklin's contributions to the intellectual climate at the time.
- ...a few sentences on Franklin's life and the *Autobiography*, perhaps what the *Autobiography* covers or how it lends insight into more than just Franklin the man, but into the entire time period.

You probably DON'T want to begin your paper with sentences like...

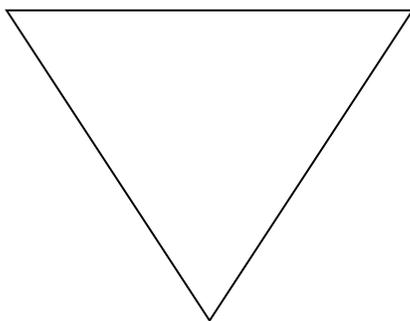
- "Ben Franklin is probably best known for his experiments with electricity."
 - What? Is this paper about electricity? Do you know this from a cartoon?
- "Everyone has a valuable and interesting life story to tell and Ben Franklin is no exception."
 - Sadly, this is probably not true.
- "Most people dream of someday having people read about their lives."
 - Again, probably not true, and definitely not connected to your thesis.

Sample Introduction

Dr. Seuss, a renowned author of children's books, created many stories that appeal to both children and adults. His works are often filled with memorable characters, humorous situations, and a clever rhyming style. *Green Eggs and Ham* ranks among his most well known books, and has even inspired celebrations where people dye eggs green and eat them along with ham. The lasting impact of this particular story most likely is a result of some of the deeper themes about humanity that Dr. Seuss addresses while simultaneously entertaining his audience. Dr. Seuss reveals the essential message that people should not be reluctant to try new things in life that might initially seem frightening or undesirable through his effective use of repetition, rhyme, and characterization which entertain his young audience while sneakily encouraging them to grow as individuals.

The Introduction Triangle/Funnel

Note that the style of the introduction above follows the inverted triangle/funnel format, beginning with broad information on my specific topic and ending with the presentation of the thesis/poa. The graphic below shows my process of narrowing from broad but relevant information to my narrow thesis.



This paper will be about Dr. Seuss' books

This paper will be about the content of his books (not the history or other stuff)

This paper will be about Green Eggs and Ham.

This paper will be about the themes of Green Eggs and Ham.

This paper will focus on the theme of why people should try new things by analyzing repetition, rhyme, and characterization.

Varieties of the "5" Paragraph Essay

At long last, this brings us to answer of the question that you've all been waiting for, the question that you've probably even forgotten after so much stimulating reading, which is why is the "5" always in quotation marks anyway? Why did I, as the author of this text, take the time to put quotation marks around it every single time I've typed it? (And, just for the record, typed "%" about 9 out of 10 times.) Well, the answer is that in my opinion, the "5" Paragraph Essay doesn't really have to be 5 paragraphs long. The "5" Paragraph Essay becomes truly useful when you realize that it is a philosophy about writing, not a rigid format. It is a philosophy that emphasizes the

necessity of organizing your information, analyzing your information, and making sure to connect the dots back to the big picture. It is a philosophy that will eventually allow you to write a 40+ page college paper in an organized fashion, that under *no* circumstances will be a mere 5 paragraphs long. It is a philosophy that allows you to make decisions like having 7 examples for your POA point A, and having each of those 7 examples consist of a page-long paragraph. Or, on the opposite end of the spectrum, it is a philosophy that will allow you the flexibility to write a 40 minute essay in AP English that has only 2 Support Paragraphs that you know are enough to express your ideas thoroughly and will not bring about the end of the world. Basically “5” paragraphs are only the beginning.



Part II

The Antithesis(Counterargument) Paper:

One important variation of the “5” paragraph paper is what we’ll call and Antithesis paper. The Antithesis Paper includes an antithesis in addition to the main thesis of your paper. (Note that this is said anTIHthuhsis instead of ANTIthesis) Remember, in English and History, we use the word *thesis* to mean something that can be argued, in other words, it is not a statement of fact such as “the earth revolves around the sun.” Just as it sounds, the antithesis is “anti”- or “against” your thesis; in other words, it presents an opposing viewpoint. Addressing an argument in opposition to yours can be a very important technique at times, as it gives the reader of your paper the feeling that you do indeed know the other side of the issue. This makes you seem more educated, knowledgeable, and perhaps even more trustworthy to you reader. It also can have the effect of strengthening your side of the issue, because it makes it seem like you’re acknowledging that the other side has evidence, it’s just that yours is stronger. In this class, you will be told specifically when you must use an antithesis in writing your essays. In your most common type of literary analysis essay, you will not use an antithesis, because your primary focus will be simply on supporting your analysis of the work. However, in some history DBQ’s and persuasive literary papers and in SBAC argumentation tasks, you will need to prove that you can see the other side of the issue by including a discussion of antithetical arguments.

Opposing vs. Opposite

Many people incorrectly assume that an antithesis presents the opposite of your original thesis statement. It’s important to be able to distinguish that a quality antithesis statement presents an *opposing* viewpoint to the ideas expressed in your thesis, but not necessarily the literal opposite of your thesis statement. A literal opposite looks at something in terms of being a “black or white” issue, in which black and white are opposites just like dark and light, cold and hot, wet and dry, etc. The trouble with approaching an antithesis as a literal opposite is that you could end up with something really awkward like the thesis “The New Deal was extremely important for ending the Depression,” with the antithesis, “However, the New Deal was not important for ending the Depression.” Obviously, such a bipolar paper is a little confusing and quite distressing to read. What you need to realize is that historians especially revel in the idea of issues and events not being “black or white”, but the proverbial “shades of gray.” This means that you’ll want to approach your antithesis from the viewpoint of trying to identify different causes, contributing factors, or ways of looking at things than what you present in your thesis. And, as you can see, *different* or against doesn’t necessarily mean *opposite*.

You may find that one way of avoiding this antithesis problem is to make sure you have a very mature thesis statement that doesn’t beg to be followed by a juvenile sounding opposite antithesis. It’s very tempting for the thesis “Roosevelt was a great man” to be followed by the antithesis “Roosevelt was a bad man,” but this type of writing makes us all sad. Therefore, do your part in making the world a happier place by making your thesis statement more mature and analytical. “Roosevelt’s policies instituted under the New Deal were instrumental in lessening the Great Depression’s grip on the American economy” followed by the antithesis of “To a certain extent, however, that the outbreak of World War II did more to contribute to the United State’s economic upswing than any policy of Roosevelt’s” will generate a more successful paper overall than the immature sounding examples above.

Basic Antithesis Paper Outline:

There are many different ways that you can include an antithesis in a paper. Below is the one that you will use most commonly in this class. You will need to make several adjustments to the format we discussed above, some of them major and therefore easy to remember, and some of the seemingly minor, but often the most important for success.

- Introduction

- Background statements
- Antithesis/Thesis/POA Statement
- Antithesis Paragraph
 - Only provides three pieces of evidence in support of the antithesis argument (what you don't believe in)
- Body/Support Paragraph A
 - Supports your thesis with three pieces of evidence. Does NOT try to disprove your antithesis.
- Body/Support Paragraph B
 - Supports your thesis with three more pieces of evidence. Does NOT try to disprove your antithesis.
- Conclusion
 - Emphasize Thesis and Support
 - [acknowledge antithesis]
 - Final thoughts

Writing the Antithesis/Thesis/POA statement:

Crafting a solid Antithesis/Thesis statement is absolutely essential to the success of the overall paper. In order to do so, you have to remember that you are taking two ideas that are significantly different from each other and combining them into a single statement where they can coexist logically. The only way that you can make this happen successfully is by using **Transitional Elements** that emphasize the oppositional relationship these two ideas have. Fortunately, you have a list of transitional elements sorted into categories for you and you have plenty to choose from in the "Contrast" Category. Let's look at some oppositional statements and then how we can turn them into an antithesis/thesis statement.

Statement 1	Statement 2	Antithesis/Thesis Statement
Dogs are a good pet.	Cats are a better pet.	Even though dogs can be positive pets, cats are nevertheless the best pet to have.
Franklin is somewhat Puritan.	He is more of a Neoclassical writer.	While he does possess some lingering aspects of Puritan philosophy, Franklin's works are more accurately described as Neoclassical.
The Articles of Confederation delineated an effective self-government for the colonies.	The Articles of Confederation were essentially weak and unfeasible form of government.	Although the Articles of Confederation did begin to address some of the Colonies' needs for self-government, their design and implementation was essentially weak and impractical.

Note: In each statement above, the antithesis portion, preceded by the Transitional Element, comes before the thesis half. This allows you to acknowledge the other side of the argument, while finishing strongly with what you want your reader to believe. Your reader will be more likely to remember the last thing he/she read better.

Contrasting Transitional Elements for the Antithesis:

You will need to provide an appropriate transitional element for your antithesis that makes it clear to your audience that your antithesis statement is not something that you entirely agree with. Some of these contrasting transitional elements include:

Whereas While Although Even though

What about the POA?

In an antithesis paper, you will frequently provide only **two** POA points as part of your introduction, because one of the three support paragraphs will be dedicated to talking about the antithesis, which leaves you only two paragraphs for support if you follow the strict "5" paragraph essay format. Therefore, you will only need to present two POA

points as part of your introduction. We've seen some examples previously about combining your POA with your thesis statement in order to create more of a flow in your writing. However, as you can probably deduce from the sample antithesis/thesis statements in the chart directly above, many of these statements are already a mouthful, and if you were to tack on a POA to the end of this, your reader's mind would be on overload. Therefore, it's a safe bet to have your POA as a separate (and final) sentence in your introduction and to include a brief reminder of what your actual thesis statement is that you will be arguing. For example,

While he does possess some lingering aspects of Puritan philosophy, Franklin's works are more accurately described as Neoclassical in nature. His use of *irony* and his adherence to *mandates of reason* in his *Autobiography* reveal his strongly Neoclassical tendencies.

Thesis: Franklin's a Neoclassical writer.

Antithesis: He has Puritan tendencies as well.

POA 1: He emphasizes *irony* and

POA 2: *reason* in his writing.

Notice how this also demonstrates the "oppositional" nature of the antithesis statement as being a Puritan is not the literal opposite of being a Neoclassical.

The Antithesis Paragraph

Located immediately after the introduction and just before your first real support paragraph, the main role of the Antithesis paragraph is to present proof and support contrary to your main thesis. It is important to remind your reader at the beginning of this paragraph that this is NOT your side of the argument and that you are intentionally presenting information contrary to the views your thesis expresses. Therefore you will once again rely on Transitional Elements to do this, but this time you will call upon some that specifically serve this purpose of the antithesis. What you really need to do is *qualify* that these are some ideas on the topic, just not the "right" interpretation in your opinion. For this reason, I tend to use the grammatical term "qualifiers" to explain what role these transitions are serving in this paragraph. Some options are more sophisticated sounding, and others get the job done, but are considered a bit weak.

Qualifying Transitional Elements—A few examples:

Weaker options

Some people...
A few people...
There are those/people...
Certain individuals...

Stronger Options

One interpretation/viewpoint...
One opinion...
In some ways...
To a certain extent...
To a certain degree...
In some views/opinions...

Antithesis Paragraph Topic Statement:

The topic statement of your Antithesis paragraph will follow a very simple formula. You will take a qualifying transitional element of your own choosing and combine it with the Antithesis half of the Antithesis/Thesis statement from your introduction. You will want to use the following basic formula.

Qualifying Transitional Element + Antithesis

Some examples:

- ❖ Some people believe strongly that dogs are the best pet that an individual can have.
- ❖ To a certain extent, Franklin's writing still demonstrates the Puritan tradition of the American Colonies.
- ❖ In some ways, the Articles of Confederation successfully delineated the role that a federal government would play for the Colonies.

Notice how each of these words seems to imply that there will be an argument coming up later in the essay that will show that these "some people" are not correct in their viewpoint. Also, because this paragraph

will only provide evidence in support of the Antithesis, you don't need to tack on the awkward "...even though cats are better," to the end of the topic statement. **AT NO POINT IN THE ANTITHESIS PARAGRAPH WILL YOU ADDRESS YOUR THESIS ARGUMENT.** This statement is in bold and capitals, because it is a very common mistake for students to make. You also **do not** need to include an overview of your pieces of upcoming evidence as part of this topic statement.

Support Paragraph A

Support Paragraph A (now the 3rd paragraph of your essay because of the antithesis paragraph) will require only one major adjustment. You will need to use a Transitional Element for your Topic Statement that falls under the "Contrasting" category again, just as you did with your Antithesis/Thesis statement. This will provide a way to bridge from your antithesis paragraph, to the "real" support for your thesis. It will use the following formula.

*Contrasting Transitional Element + Acknowledgement of Antithesis + **POA Point** + Thesis*

- Despite the fact that dogs have some positive qualities, the fact that cats are **naturally clean** make them the best house pet that a person could have.
- Even though Franklin's writings possess certain Puritan elements, his use of **extensive irony** demonstrates that he is a strongly Neoclassical writer.
- Although they demonstrate some philosophical ideals about a central government, the Articles of Confederation were mostly ineffective in part because of their failure to provide an **efficient representational democracy**.

Note: The items in bold in each statement are the POA point that this paragraph will be focusing on. There is some freedom as to whether you want to list the POA point before or after the restatement of your thesis. After this topic statement, you continue on with the standard paragraph format, which means you will then provide three examples that prove your POA point for that paragraph.

The Antithesis Paper: Quick Reference Outline

- Introduction
 - Background statements
 - Contrasting Transition + Antithesis + Thesis
 - POA Statement + Thesis recap
- Antithesis Paragraph
 - "Qualifying" Transition + Antithesis
 - Standard Paragraph Format
- Body/Support Paragraph A
 - Contrasting Transition + POA Point + Thesis
 - Standard Paragraph Format
- Body/Support Paragraph B
 - Transitional Element of Choice + POA Point + Thesis
 - Standard Paragraph Format
- Conclusion
 - Acknowledge Antithesis

- Emphasize Thesis and Support
- Final thoughts

Antithesis Paper Transitions: Quick Reference Guide:

Contrasting Transitions

Whereas
While
Although
Even though

Qualifying Transitions

To a certain extent
In some ways
To a certain degree
In some opinions
In one sense