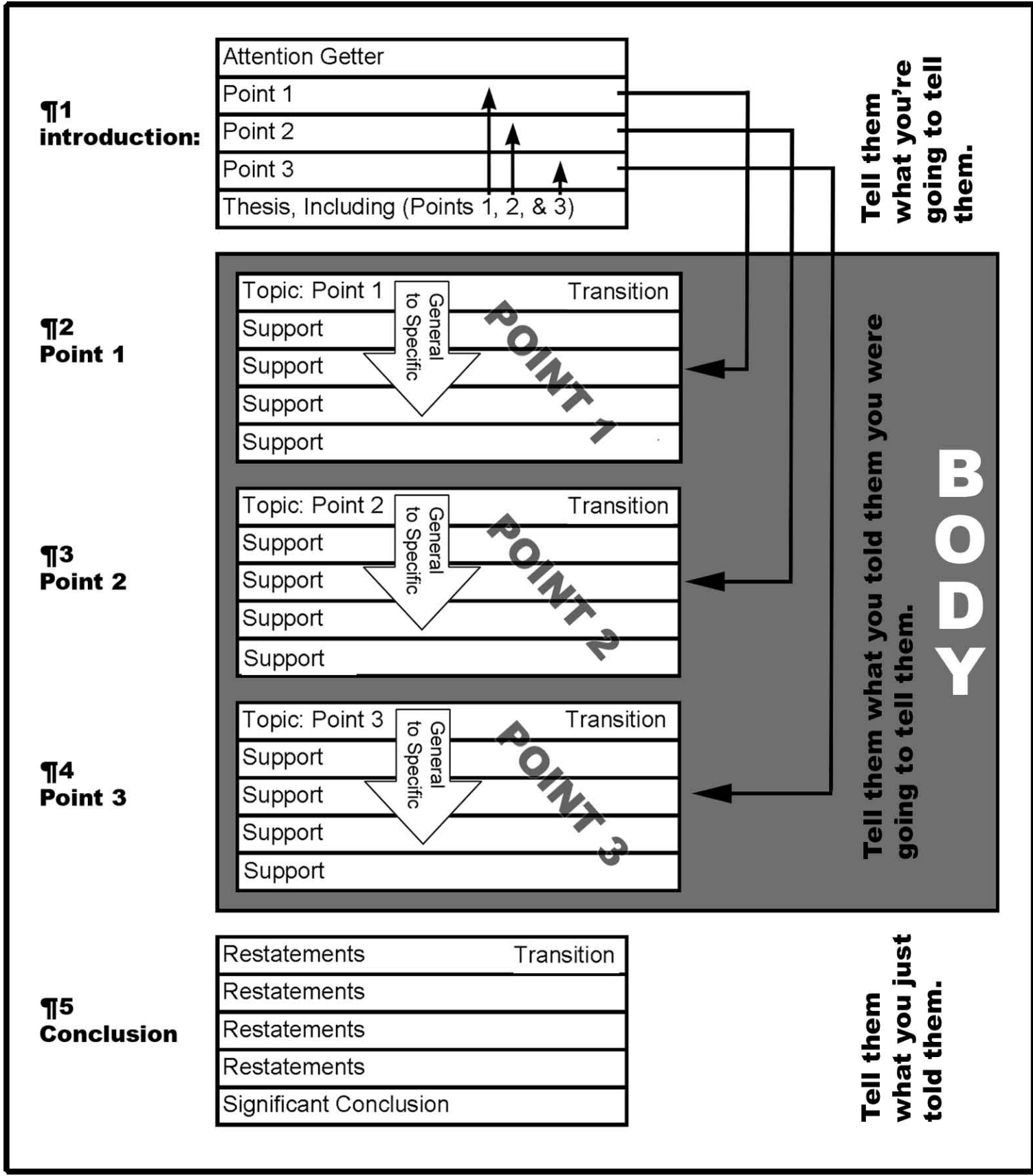


THE FIVE PARAGRAPH ESSAY



Attention Getter: Begin with something interesting, remarkable, or shocking about your subject. One student wrote, “When I shot my father, I laughed; of course, we were only playing a computer game, but many fear that game violence could lead to violence in the real world.”

Support: Construct a logical argument by using specific examples and/or quotes to prove your points. Use other rhetorical appeals to increase the persuasiveness of your argument.

Topic Sentence: Each paragraph should have a sentence at the top that announces what the paragraph is about. Try to transition smoothly from the previous paragraph.

Transition: Avoid choppy paragraph changes by tying paragraphs together logically. This can be as simple as starting with the word “however” if the paragraph is in opposition to the previous one or “moreover” if the paragraph will be allied with the previous one. Selective use of words like “also” can also aid in smooth transitions. For instance, if the previous paragraph is about the positive effect of keeping high pressure in tires to save gasoline, you might begin the following sentence with: “*However (conversely, on the other hand, nevertheless), too much air pressure in tires can be dangerous. Never exceed the manufacturer’s maximum pounds per square inch, or tires may burst. Too much pressure can also cause a reduction in traction when...*” If the previous paragraph claims that the drinking age of 21 is unfair because someone who is old enough to die for his or her country should be old enough to drink alcohol, your following paragraph could start with: “*Moreover (furthermore, additionally), if a person is old enough to trust with our democracy at election time, he or she is old enough to trust with a beer.*” One can get more elaborate, but the principle remains the same; at the top of your paragraph, include something that logically relates it to the previous paragraph.

General to Specific: It is usually a good idea to write from the general to the specific:

“Shark attacks often may be cases of mistaken identity. One can find species of shark capable of attacking humans in polar waters, temperate oceans, and tropical seas. However, most shark attacks occur in waters where people surf and sharks instinctively hunt for seals. Many marine biologists believe that because the outline of a person paddling a surfboard looks similar to a seal swimming near the surface, it could account for the many shark attacks in Northern California. One surfer, John Smith, was bitten by a Great White shark fifty yards from the beach in Marin County, California, but the shark, as Smith put it, ‘spit’ him back out again. Perhaps, as many scientists suggest, the shark was really in the mood for a seal like the ones that lounge placidly on the nearby rocks and buoys.”

We started with the global range of man-eating sharks, narrowed to areas where sharks feed on seals and people surf, and narrowed further to a specific attack in a specific place by a specific species on a specific person.

Restatement: Remind your audience of what they have learned.

Significant Conclusion: Go out with a creative bang or flourish or simply craft a concise and elegant statement.

Thesis Sentence: The thesis is your point. A good thesis mentions all of your paper's major sub-points and acts as a road map to your paper. It helps you keep your bearings while writing and helps your audience to not get lost while reading. A good paper should also look at both sides of an issue, so a good thesis should also mention both. One good formula for generating a thesis sentence is to make two columns and brainstorm a list the arguments for and against your point. Then, start with the word "although," which means "even though." When you start with "although," you will have to look at both sides. The "although" half of your sentence will hold the opposing argument, and the second half of the sentence will hold your opinion. It is also very easy to change a persuasive thesis into an informative thesis.

Topic: Violent Video Games	
For	Against
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are fun. • They help get rid of aggression safely. • There is no real proof they are dangerous. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People sometimes kill after playing them. • They get people used to behaving antisocially.

Although _____ , _____ .

Although some say the fact that a few killers have played violent video games proves that gaming causes antisocial behavior, there is no real evidence that gaming is anything but a safe, fun way to blow off steam.

Or, you can switch the argument around:

Although hardened gamers say there is no proof that violent gaming is dangerous, their antisocial, aggressive way of getting their kicks has been an element in enough real killings to ban violent games forever.

Let's try making it an informative thesis rather than a persuasive one. In the informative thesis, we simply state both sides of the argument without picking a side.

Although gamers say violent computer games are a safe, fun way to blow off aggressive steam, opponents say they can cause antisocial behavior and, in the worst cases, murder.

Introduction: Think of the thesis paragraph as a contract with your readers. When you include something in your thesis paragraph, you are promising to tell them more about it further on in your paper. After the attention getter at the top of your introduction paragraph, lead up to your thesis sentence by writing a sentence for each point that your thesis will make.

(Attention Getter) When I shot my father, I laughed; of course, we were only playing a computer game, but many fear that game violence could lead to violence in the real world. (Point 1) Although it is true that many real killers have played violent computer games before committing their crimes, and mothers are sure that games are to blame for their children's bad behavior, these facts do not scientifically establish violent games as the cause of crime and bad behavior. (Point 2) In fact, violent video games could have exactly the opposite effect by letting people work out their aggressive feelings in a safe way. (Point 3) Additionally, let us not forget that violent computer games are lots of fun, and fun is good. (Thesis) Even though some antisocial people and killers have played violent video games, there is no real evidence that gaming is anything but a safe, fun way to blow off steam.