

The Color Coding Decoded:

TOPIC SENTENCE: The topic sentence should always be your own **claim** – not a quote, a summary, or a paraphrase of another author or text. It should also clearly relate to the thesis statement. For body paragraphs other than the first one, your topic sentence should begin with a transitional phrase that explains the connection between the previous paragraph’s main claim and this paragraph’s main claim.

EXPLANATION AND TRANSITION: Sometimes (ok – almost always) it is a good idea to write a line or two linking the **claim** in the topic sentence to the evidence that you’ll present to support that claim. Use this space to clarify your **claim**, to **explain** your reasons for making it, and to **transition** into the evidence.

INTRODUCTION OF EVIDENCE: If **introducing** an article or an author for the first time, give their full name and the full title of the work that you’re drawing from. Often the **introduction** can be linked with the **evidence** in the same sentence.

EVIDENCE: The reason we get out of bed in the morning (well, some of us...). The job of any piece of **evidence** is to support the **claim** in the topic sentence (and thus the **thesis** as well). **Evidence** may take the form of a quotation, a summary, a paraphrase, a fact or statistic, a personal experience (in certain contexts), or a piece of common knowledge. The more specific the **evidence**, the more persuasive it will be.

LINK/EXPLANATION: **Evidence cannot** speak for itself. Even if you find the perfect **quotation** to support your **claim**, you still *must* explicitly state for your reader *how* it supports your **claim**. This is also called the **warrant**, and it is usually – if not always – as long as or longer than the **evidence** itself.

INTRODUCTION OF FURTHER EVIDENCE: After explaining the first piece of **evidence**, you now have the *option* of **introducing** further **evidence** (remember not to overburden the reader with **evidence** – sometimes less is more). There are several ways of ordering **evidence** within a paragraph, but generally speaking it is best to save the better example for last. If the second piece of **evidence** is coming from a different source than the first one, be sure to **introduce** the second source here.

EVIDENCE 2: Follow the same guidelines as above.

LINK /EXPLANATION: Same as above. With the second piece of **evidence**, however, it is also necessary to show how it relates to the first piece of **evidence** (if the connection isn’t immediately obvious).

CLAIM: The last step: here you need to restate your topic sentence **claim** in a new way so that you can drive home the main point of the paragraph and prepare your reader for the next paragraph. These sentences can be tricky, but the main point to bear in mind is that you *never* want to end a paragraph with a quotation, which can confuse your reader. Instead, use this space to summarize the main point of your paragraph before you transition into the next claim (the topic sentence of the next paragraph). One strategy for smooth transitions: when revising, make sure that the first sentence of each paragraph repeats keywords or synonyms from the last sentence of the previous one.