



PIE Structure

PIE structure is a way of forming body paragraphs that can be used in virtually all analytical and argumentative papers. It is particularly useful if you have a tendency to summarize too much, or if you have trouble with organization.

P: Make a point.

I: Illustrate the point with a quote or specific example from the text.

E: Explain or elaborate on the point in the context of the illustration.

PIE helps you place your thoughts (the point and the explanation) in the strongest parts of the paragraph—the beginning and end. The information from your reading (the illustration) fits into the middle of the paragraph, showing how and why your thoughts make sense in light of what you've read.

A point...

- interprets the text or topic.
- states your opinion.
- relates directly back to the thesis.

The point is your idea. Say *why* or *how* an author conveyed an idea, or *why* or *how* you believe what you do. Do not simply say *what* you read, even if it was hard to figure out. Ideally, the point should be expressed in just one or two sentences.

An illustration...

- quotes or paraphrases the text.
- points to a *specific* example—usually one thing that happened once.

An illustration comes out of your reading. It needs to relate directly to the point, illuminating or proving it. It will probably take a sentence or two to illustrate your point, and it might take more, but most good body paragraphs spend more time on the point and explanation than on the illustration.

An explanation...

- shows how your point and your illustration fit together.
- refines and clarifies the point in light of the illustration.

The explanation is your idea. It is not quoted or paraphrased from something you've read. Generally speaking, the more you can think of to say, the better, but be careful not to repeat the same thought over and over.