

HOW TO BUILD RESEARCH PARAGRAPHS

Feeling stuck? Try following this 9 sentence magic formula for writing paragraphs.

by the Writing Center @ PVCC

SENTENCE GUIDE



EXAMPLES

1 A topic sentence that makes a claim

In the same way your thesis is your paper's central argument or "main claim," you want a topic sentence that makes a secondary argument or "sub claim" related to your thesis.

Resist the urge to begin your paragraph with either a quote or factual information! Start with your own ideas first!

Use the following guidelines when making a claim:

- A claim defines the paragraph's goals, direction, and scope.
- A claim is supported by evidence (your sources' quotes).
- A claim must make an argument.
- A good claim makes a focused rather than general point.
- Academic claims are complex, specific and detailed.

2 Introduce Quote 1 from Author A

Before stating the quote, introduce it. Try to either:

- Point to the main idea you want your reader to notice.
- Provide necessary background to understanding the quote.
- Tell your reader who the source is and why they're credible.
- Show the source's attitude toward the info in the quote.
- Put the source's ideas in conversation with your own.

3 Quote 1 combined into own sentence

Consider these templates (or make your own):

- According to X, "_____."
- In her book, _____, X explains that "_____."
- As the prominent author X puts it, "_____."

4 Interpret or analyze Quote 1

Analysis helps to keep the focus on your ideas rather than the source's. This is also your chance to respond to the quote.

To do so, try using the following questions or templates:

- What does the author mean?
 - In other words, X believes _____.
 - The essence of X's argument is that _____.
- What are the implications of what the author has written?
 - In making this comment, X urges us to _____.
 - X's claim that _____ rests upon the assumption that _____.
- How does the quote connect to your own claim or thesis?
 - I agree that _____ because _____.
 - X's position overlooks _____.
 - While X is right about _____, I disagree with the conclusion that _____.

1 A topic sentence that makes a claim

While the ancient Celts were a geographically diverse group consisting of different tribes throughout western Europe, they were culturally united by a common religion.

This topic sentence tells readers that this paragraph will focus on the religion of the ancient Celts. It also makes a claim ("they were culturally united by a common religion") that the paragraph's sources will support.

2 Introduce Quote 1 from Author A

A distinct characteristic of Celtic religion, as recorded by the scholar of Celtic history T.W. Rolleston, was the class of religious and legal authorities known as Druids.

This sentence identifies the source and why they're credible ("scholar of Celtic history T.W. Rolleston"). It also points to the source's main idea for readers ("Druids").

3 Quote 1 combined into own sentence

In his book *Celtic Myths and Legends*, Rolleston describes the "unifying power" of the Celtic "priestly class," writing that the Druids "were the really sovereign power in Celtica...all affairs, public and private, were subject to their authority" (46).

Remember to cite your source! In this case, MLA citation was used. Because the author's name is used before the quote, the only thing needed in the parentheses is the quote's page number.

4 Interpret or analyze Quote 1

In other words, Druids served as administrators of Celtic religion and society throughout the British Isles and western Europe, maintaining a common culture across the politically and geographically divided Celtic tribes.

This sentence uses the phrase "in other words" to restate the idea expressed in the quote before relating that idea back to the claim made in the topic sentence: "Druids...maintain[ed] a common culture...across the politically and geographically divided Celtic tribes"

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5

A bridge, transition or connection between Quote 1 and Quote 2

This sentence explains the relationship of the idea from the first author and the idea from the second author.

6

Introduce Quote 2 from Author B

As with Quote 1, you want to introduce Quote 2. Remember to either:

- Point to the main idea behind the quote
- Provide necessary background to the quote
- Identify the source of the quote
- Relate the source's ideas to your own

7

Quote 2 combined into your own sentence

In addition to the templates on the other side, consider ways to compare or contrast your two sources with the following:

- Y agrees/disagrees with X when she writes, "_____."
- Similar to/Unlike X, Y asserts, "_____."

8

Interpret or analyze Quote 2

In addition to the templates on the other side, consider ways to compare or contrast your two sources with the following:

- How does the quote connect to your other sources?
 - According to both X and Y, _____.
 - Y adds to/disagrees with X's idea of _____, when they say _____.

9

An original claim or idea about the insight you've gained from working with the two quotes together

5

A transition between Quote 1 and Quote 2

While detailed information on the Druids' beliefs is limited, contemporary scholars learn more about the Celtic mythology behind Druidic rituals by looking to Roman texts such as Julius Caesar's passage on the Celtic gods in his account of the war in Gaul.

This sentence relates the idea from the first author ("Druids") to the idea from the second author ("Celtic mythology"). Significantly, both ideas fall under and support the main idea established by the topic sentence: "the Celts were culturally united by a common religion."

6

Introduce Quote 2 from Author B

The Celtic gods described by Caesar are highlighted in Professor Philip Freeman's book *Celtic Mythology: Tales of Gods, Goddesses, and Heroes*.

Again, we point to the source's main idea ("The Celtic gods") and identify that source ("Professor Philip Freeman").

7

Quote 2 combined into your own sentence

According to Freeman, "The Celts were polytheists who believed in many gods, like the ancient Greeks and Romans, but their greatest god was not a white bearded king of the heavens...[rather] the Celtic Mercury was a craftsman, an inventor, a traveler, and a guide for all in need" (2).

Remember that you can use brackets [] and ellipses ... to help better fit quotes into your sentences.

8

Interpret or analyze Quote 2

Freeman identifies the "Celtic Mercury" as Lugus, "the shining one," and records his worship as far north as Ireland and as far south as Lyon, from Spain to Switzerland, illustrating that the Celts shared principal deities.

Again, this sentence analyzes the quote by elaborating on the idea expressed by the source before relating it to the claim in the topic sentence: "the Celts shared principal deities" supports the claim that "the Celts were culturally united by a common religion."

9

An original claim or idea about the insight you've gained from working with the two quotes together

Modern scholars have identified the powerful priestly class of Druids and a common pantheon of gods and goddesses as defining and unifying features of Celtic religion throughout Iron Age western Europe.

This sentence develops the claim made in the topic sentence ("the Celts were culturally united by a common religion") and integrates the ideas of both sources to identify "the Druids" and "a common pantheon of gods and goddesses" as unifying features of that religion.