

Drafting the Summary and Response Essay

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Before you begin listening to or reading this lecture, please thoroughly read the assignment on your syllabus titled “From Introductions to Conclusions” and found in your *From Inquiry to Academic Writing* textbook. If you aren’t familiar with academic standards for introductions, conclusions, and body paragraphs, the chapter will illustrate and explain some basic expectations. If you *are* already familiar with these concepts, the chapter will help you elevate your writing through the provision of instruction, models, and examples. Furthermore, the ideas discussed in “From Introductions and Conclusions” will apply to all of the writing you do for this course.

To help you think more specifically about drafting the Summary and Response essay, though, I’d like to highlight a few points for you. For the sake of coherence, I’ll organize my discussion following the Summary and Response Essay’s organization. However, remember that you may wish to start drafting the body paragraphs first.

Drafting the Introduction

In the Summary and Response Essay, your introduction has **two parts: the introductory paragraph** and **the summary paragraph**. Since the introduction grabs our attention, introduces the topic, and lays the groundwork for the rest of the essay, you need the first paragraph to generally lead us into the topic and the summary paragraph to identify and explain the specific focus of your paper, as well as lay the foundation for the response portion of your essay. That is, readers won’t understand your response to an essay unless they have first read a good summary of it.

In **the introductory paragraph**, your goal should be to **get readers thinking about the issue or problem** so that they can **see the relevance of the topic** and **understand why the issue matters**. The examples in your *Inquiry* reading for this week illustrate some ways you might introduce the topic. For this paper, though, I would recommend using the **inverted-triangle**, **narrative**, or **interrogative** introduction models. Because you cannot incorporate outside research into this paper, the paradoxical and minding-the-gap models will not work well for this paper.

In **the summary paragraph**, you need to follow the **guidelines** laid out in the “**Summarizing to Show Understanding**” reading assignment in *Rules for Writers* from last week. If you completed the Essay Plan Assignment last week, however, you should already be familiar with these guidelines and should already have an initial draft of your summary paragraph written.

Don’t forget that in academic essays, the **thesis statement** usually appears at the **end of the introduction**. In this case, since the summary paragraph is the last paragraph of your introduction, your thesis should be the **last sentence of the summary paragraph**.

Drafting the Body Paragraphs

If you’ve done your reading assignments this week and completed the activities from Learning Unit 3, you already know the components of a good body paragraph and how to organize the main points for

this essay. If you haven't looked carefully at the readings on writing effective paragraphs, I strongly recommend you do so before drafting your essay.

To build on your textbooks' recommendations for good body paragraphs, let's look at how you might organize a paragraph that incorporates textual references as you respond to the professional essay. Here are two common methods of developing a response paragraph.

We'll start with **Template A**:

1. Open with a **transition** and a **topic sentence** which puts forward the paragraph's main point.
2. **Explain what the author says** (or fails to say) about this point. To do so, you will need to incorporate a brief **summary** of, **paraphrase** of, or **quote** from the source. You might even spend two or three sentences laying out the author's position.
3. **Respond to the author's ideas**. Depending on your thesis and the main point you're developing, you may respond by pointing out weaknesses and disagreeing, by admitting that the author is partially right but overlooks a point, or by agreeing with the author and building on his or her point with your own examples and discussion. Whether you agree or disagree with the author's point, be sure to incorporate your own examples and discussion to develop your response.
4. When possible, end with a sentence **tying together all of the ideas** in the paragraph and **reiterating the paragraph's topic sentence**.

Now let's look at a second template, **Template B**. It's similar to Template A except that in this case, you're alternating references to the text and response to the text. This model allows you to respond very specifically to the author's ideas rather than generally to his or her general point on the issue.

1. Once again, you'll want to **open with a transition** and **topic sentence** which puts forward the paragraph's main point.
2. Next you'll **reference the text**. But this time instead of overviewing the author's ideas on the point, you'll bring in a **single quote or idea** from the author.
3. **Respond to the first textual reference** with examples and discussion.
4. Bring in a **second textual reference**.
5. **Respond to the second textual reference** with examples and discussion.
6. If possible, end with a sentence **tying together all of the ideas** in the paragraph and **reiterating the paragraph's topic sentence**.

Both of these templates should provide a good starting point for integrating source references; however, please note that you are not obligated to precisely follow either template. They're simply meant to help give you a framework for incorporating and responding to sources. I do realize that depending on your topic sentence, textual references sometimes don't work in a paragraph. For example, if you're commenting on a point the author entirely overlooked, you'll have a great deal of difficulty explaining the author's point on the issue since the author did not, in fact, discuss it.

Whether you follow one of these templates or not, the most important thing to remember is that your paragraphs should focus primarily on response and not just on explaining the author's points. Remember that your essay is a response essay, not a summary essay. Thus, if you were to take a highlighter and mark all of your ideas and responses in each paragraph, more of each body paragraph should be highlighted than not. For more specific examples of how your body paragraphs should look, please see the "Sample Body Paragraphs" handout in this learning unit.

Drafting the Conclusion

In its discussion of drafting conclusions, your textbook highlights five strategies.

1. "Pull together the main claims of your essay."
2. "Answer the question 'So what?'"
3. "Place your argument in a larger context."
4. "Show readers what is new," and
5. "Decide on the best strategy for writing your conclusion."

If you're unfamiliar with these five concepts or need examples and explanation, be sure to review this week's reading assignment in *From Inquiry to Academic Writing*.

Final Recommendations

By this point, you should be ready to start drafting your essay! Before you start, though, you'll want to gather a few materials.

1. I strongly recommend that you go ahead and print off the "**Summary and Response Essay Checklist**" available in this learning unit. This checklist could work as a basic guideline as you write each section of your essay, as it highlights some important issues related to **organization, content, format, tone, style, and MLA documentation**.
2. Print off the **Sample Student Essays** so you have a model of each section of your essay as you write.
3. Have your *From Inquiry to Academic Writing* textbook handy for reference.

4. Of course, you'll also need the **professional essay** you're responding to and your **prewriting and outlining notes**.

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