

Organization of the Essay

Classical Rhetorical Arrangement

Introduction: The opening section's function is to interest or inform the reader. Tip: Use a little known fact, offer a thesis that contradicts a commonly held view, find a clearer way to present complex ideas, examine the significant misunderstandings about your subject, or tell a story.

Exposition: This is the point where you must define your terms, provide background information, include historical significance.

Confirmation: This is the core of your argument. Look over your notes for development of proofs (cause-effect, analogy, comparison, example, authoritative opinion, evidence—facts or statistics). Tip: end with the strongest; don't begin with the weakest argument.

Refutation: This section demonstrates that you are well-informed and reasonable. The object is to find the truth by an examination of the merits and demerits of the opposing viewpoint(s). Tip: If the idea is extremely controversial, place the refutation earlier in the essay—it will be on the minds of the audience.

Conclusion: This is the opportunity to provide a final illustration, metaphor, solution or proposal. Tip: Only in long essays are you justified in repeating major points; ending with quotation can weaken your own voice in the argument; avoid "in conclusion"—your reader can see the empty white space ahead!

NOTE: *Each division may contain many paragraphs. The order of the divisions may be changed for good reason.*