# Shape

Before anyone reads your essay, they can see your skill by the shape of the essay. You should divide your essay into paragraphs. Remember that a paragraph is a group of sentences with the same topic, meaning they are closely connected. The paragraph should be indented. Your sentences for one paragraph should not be separated with spaces. It should look like a rectangle of text.

This image shows what an essay shape should look like. The paragraphs are indented. They are about the same length, but the middle paragraph is a little bigger.



The introduction and conclusion can be a little shorter than the body paragraphs if they need to be, but they should all be pretty equal to each other.

Short essays typically have four, five, or six paragraphs: one introduction paragraph; two, three, or four body paragraphs; and one conclusion paragraph. The number of body paragraphs you need can change depending on the essay's topic, style, or time requirement.

When your essay will be printed (especially for your teacher to give you feedback), you should be careful to format the essay according to the directions your teacher gives you.

### Here are some common formatting directions you may need to know about:

* Write your name at the top of the paper (at left or right).
* Use 12 point font.
* Use 1 inch margins (2.54 cm).
* Double-spaced (2.0 spacing).
* Make each paragraph left-aligned.
* Indent the first line of each paragraph.

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