

How to Write Body Paragraphs (UK University Guide)

A practical, no-fluff guide to writing body paragraphs that develop one clear idea at a time, integrate evidence properly, and build a persuasive, well-structured argument.

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Featured Snippet Answer: A strong body paragraph opens with a clear topic sentence stating the paragraph's single main point, develops that point with evidence from credible sources, explains how the evidence supports your argument, and closes by linking back to your thesis or forward to the next paragraph. This structure is often taught as PEEL (Point, Evidence, Explain, Link) or TEEL (Topic, Evidence, Explain, Link).

AI Overview Summary: Writing strong UK university body paragraphs means dedicating each paragraph to one clear idea, using the PEEL or TEEL structure to organise it, and integrating evidence smoothly rather than simply dropping in quotations. Every paragraph should open with a topic sentence, develop the point with properly cited evidence, explain its significance in your own words, and link back to your overall argument. The most common weakness is paragraphs that describe or list information without any analysis or critical evaluation.

Quick Answer

Structure each body paragraph around a single main idea using PEEL: start with a topic sentence stating your point, support it with evidence from credible sources, explain what the evidence means and why it matters, and link back to your thesis or forward to your next paragraph. Never cram multiple unrelated ideas into one paragraph, and never let evidence sit unexplained.

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Why Body Paragraphs Matter

Body paragraphs are where the bulk of your marks are actually earned. While the introduction sets up your argument and the conclusion delivers your final judgement, it's the body paragraphs that carry the evidence, analysis, and critical thinking most UK marking rubrics weight most heavily — often 60–70% of the total available marks.

A common misconception is that a strong introduction and conclusion can compensate for weak body paragraphs. In practice, the opposite is true: markers assess your ability to think critically almost entirely through how you develop each paragraph, not through how you frame the opening or closing. A brilliant introduction attached to a series of descriptive, unanalysed body paragraphs will still receive a mediocre mark.

Well-structured body paragraphs also make your argument easier to follow. When each paragraph develops a single clear idea, supported by evidence and explained in your own words, the marker can track your reasoning step by step. When paragraphs blur multiple ideas together or list information without analysis, the marker has to work harder to find your argument — and that extra effort rarely works in your favour.

Expert Tip: Before submitting, read only the first sentence of each body paragraph in order. If those sentences alone tell a coherent story of your argument developing, your paragraph structure is working. If they read as a random list of topics, your paragraphs need clearer topic sentences.

What Lecturers Expect

What Lecturers Expect	What This Looks Like in Practice
One main idea per paragraph	A single, clearly stated point developed fully before moving on
A clear topic sentence	The first sentence states the paragraph's point without needing the rest to make sense of it

What Lecturers Expect	What This Looks Like in Practice
Properly integrated evidence	Quotations and data woven into your own sentences, not dropped in unexplained
Explicit analysis	Evidence is explained and evaluated, not just presented
Logical flow between paragraphs	Each paragraph connects clearly to the one before and after it

Lecturer Advice: If a lecturer has to re-read a paragraph twice to work out its main point, the topic sentence isn't doing its job. Aim for a point so clear that the rest of the paragraph feels like a natural elaboration of it.

The PEEL/TEEL Formula

Stage	Function	Typical Length
Point/ Topic	States the paragraph's single main idea	1 sentence
Evidence	Presents supporting evidence from credible sources	1–2 sentences
Explain	Analyses what the evidence means and why it matters	2–3 sentences
Link	Connects back to your thesis or forward to the next paragraph	1 sentence

Worked Example: "Transformational leadership has been widely associated with improved staff morale in healthcare settings [Point]. A 2021 study of NHS ward managers found that units led by transformational leaders reported 23% higher staff satisfaction scores than those led by transactional managers (Smith and Jones, 2021) [Evidence]. This suggests that transformational leadership's emphasis on individualised support and shared vision may address some of the specific pressures ward staff face, such as burnout and low morale during periods of high patient demand [Explain].

However, as the following section demonstrates, this benefit does not necessarily extend to measurable improvements in staff retention [Link]."

Suggested visual: A simple four-box flowchart — Point → Evidence → Explain → Link — with an arrow looping back to "Point" for the next paragraph, works well as a one-page reference students can keep beside them while drafting.

Why the "Explain" stage carries the most weight

Of the four PEEL stages, "Explain" is where the highest-order thinking happens — and, not coincidentally, it's the stage most students under-develop. Simply presenting evidence (the "Evidence" stage) demonstrates that you can find relevant sources; explaining that evidence demonstrates that you understand what it means, why it matters, and how it supports your specific argument. Markers can usually tell within a sentence or two whether a paragraph is going to explain its evidence or just leave it sitting there. Paragraphs that spend two sentences on evidence and only half a sentence on explanation are one of the most common reasons students land in the 2:2 rather than 2:1 band, even when their research is genuinely strong.

Writing Effective Topic Sentences

A topic sentence should do two things: state the paragraph's main point, and signal how it relates to your overall argument. A topic sentence that simply names a topic ("This section will discuss leadership theories") does neither — it describes what you're about to do rather than making a claim.

Weak Topic Sentence	Strong Topic Sentence
"This paragraph will look at transformational leadership."	"Transformational leadership improves staff morale but shows limited impact on measurable retention outcomes."
"There are several theories of consideration in contract law."	"The doctrine of promissory estoppel has significantly narrowed, though not eliminated, the requirement for consideration in English contract law."

Weak Topic Sentence	Strong Topic Sentence
"Social media has both positive and negative effects on wellbeing."	"The relationship between social media use and adolescent wellbeing depends more on usage pattern than on platform type."

⚠ **Common Mistake:** Writing a topic sentence so vague it could introduce almost any paragraph on the subject ("Leadership is an important topic in healthcare management"). A strong topic sentence is specific enough that only the paragraph that follows could reasonably come next.

Integrating Evidence Properly

Evidence should be woven into your own sentences and analysis, not dropped in as an isolated quotation followed by a citation and nothing else. The goal is to make the evidence serve your argument, not to let the evidence speak for itself while you step back.

Integration Method	Example	Best Used When
Paraphrase with citation	"Smith (2021) found that transformational leadership improved staff morale by 23% in NHS settings."	Summarising a finding without needing exact wording
Short embedded quotation	"Smith (2021) describes this effect as 'a significant but context-dependent improvement' in staff morale."	The exact phrasing adds precision or nuance
Data integrated into a sentence	"Staff satisfaction scores rose by 23% under transformational leadership, compared with 8% under transactional leadership (Smith, 2021)."	Presenting statistics or numerical findings
Signal phrase introducing a source	"As Smith (2021) argues, the benefits of transformational leadership are highly context-dependent."	Attributing a specific claim or argument to its author

Expert Tip: After every piece of evidence, ask yourself: "So what?" If you can't immediately answer that question in your next sentence, the evidence isn't yet doing enough analytical work in your paragraph.

The Analysis Gap

The single most common weakness in UK undergraduate body paragraphs is what's sometimes called the "analysis gap" — the space between presenting evidence and actually explaining what it means. Many students present strong, relevant evidence, but stop short of analysing it, assuming the significance is self-evident. It rarely is, at least not to a marker who wasn't inside your head while researching.

Descriptive Sentence (No Analysis)	Analytical Sentence (Closes the Gap)
"Smith (2021) found that 23% more staff reported satisfaction under transformational leadership."	"This 23% gap suggests that transformational leadership's emphasis on individual recognition may address a specific driver of dissatisfaction — feeling unseen by management — that transactional approaches leave unaddressed."
"The case of Central London Property Trust v High Trees House established that a promise can be binding without consideration in some circumstances."	"This case matters because it shows courts willing to prioritise fairness over the strict consideration requirement, though only where reliance on the promise would make it inequitable to go back on it."

⚠ **Common Mistake:** Assuming that including a citation automatically counts as analysis. A well-cited sentence that only describes a finding, without explaining its significance, is still descriptive writing — citations demonstrate research, not critical thinking.

Paragraph Length and Word Count

Total Assignment Word Count	Typical Number of Body Paragraphs	Approximate Words per Paragraph
1,000 words	3–4	150–200
1,500 words	4–5	180–230
2,000 words	5–6	200–250
3,000 words	6–8	250–300
5,000 words (report)	10–14	250–350

Lecturer Advice: There's no universal ideal paragraph length — the right length is however long it takes to fully develop one idea through PEEL, and no longer. A paragraph that runs to 500 words has usually drifted into a second idea that deserves its own paragraph.

Linking Paragraphs Together

Individual paragraphs need to connect to form a continuous argument, not read as a series of disconnected mini-essays. The link sentence at the end of each paragraph — and, often, an echo of it at the start of the next — is what creates this sense of continuity.

Linking Technique	Example
Signposting the next point	"Having established the morale benefits of transformational leadership, the following section considers whether these benefits extend to staff retention."
Building directly on the previous point	"This morale improvement, however, does not appear to translate into measurable retention gains."
Contrasting with the previous point	"In contrast to these morale benefits, situational leadership shows a more consistent effect on retention specifically."

Linking Technique	Example
Returning to the thesis	"This finding directly supports the argument that leadership style must be matched to organisational context rather than applied uniformly."

Worked Example: Ending one paragraph with "...these findings suggest transformational leadership's benefits are strongest in stable, well-resourced settings" and opening the next with "In more resource-constrained environments, however, situational leadership appears to offer greater consistency" creates a visible thread the marker can follow without effort.

Counter-Arguments Within Body Paragraphs

Higher grade bands typically expect some engagement with counter-arguments or alternative interpretations, rather than a body that presents only evidence supporting your own position. This doesn't mean including a counter-argument in every paragraph — but a strong assignment usually has at least one or two paragraphs that directly address an alternative view before explaining why your position still holds.

Approach	When to Use It
Dedicated counter-argument paragraph	Longer essays where a significant opposing view deserves full treatment
Counter-argument within a paragraph (concession + rebuttal)	Shorter essays, or where the counter-argument is narrower in scope
Brief acknowledgement within the "Explain" stage	Where the counter-argument is minor but worth noting for balance

Expert Tip: A useful structure for a counter-argument paragraph is: state the opposing view, cite evidence supporting it, explain why it has some merit, then explain why your own position remains stronger overall. This shows genuine critical engagement rather than dismissing opposing views outright.

Common Lecturer Feedback

Common Feedback Comment	What It Usually Means	How to Fix It
"Descriptive rather than analytical"	Evidence is presented but not explained	Add explicit analysis after every piece of evidence
"Paragraph lacks focus"	Multiple ideas are crammed into one paragraph	Split into separate paragraphs, one idea each
"Unclear topic sentence"	The paragraph's main point isn't stated up front	Rewrite the first sentence to state a specific claim
"Evidence not properly integrated"	Quotations or data are dropped in without explanation	Use a signal phrase and follow with analysis
"Paragraphs don't flow"	Ideas jump between paragraphs without connection	Add link sentences that connect consecutive paragraphs

⚠ **Common Mistake:** By far the most common comment on UK undergraduate essays — "more analysis needed" or "too descriptive." This almost always traces back to skipping or rushing the "Explain" stage of PEEL.

Weak vs Strong Examples

Weak	Strong
"Transformational leadership is a popular theory. Smith (2021) discusses it in relation to the NHS. It has some benefits for staff."	"Transformational leadership has been widely associated with improved staff morale in NHS settings. Smith (2021) found a 23% increase in staff satisfaction under transformational leaders compared with transactional managers, suggesting that individualised recognition addresses a specific driver of dissatisfaction that transactional approaches leave unaddressed."
"Consideration is needed for a contract to be valid. However,	"While consideration remains a general requirement for contract validity in English law, the doctrine of promissory

Weak	Strong
promissory estoppel is an exception. This was seen in the High Trees case."	estoppel — established in Central London Property Trust v High Trees House — allows courts to enforce certain promises made without consideration where reliance on that promise would make it inequitable to withdraw."

Expert Tip: Notice the strong versions combine evidence and explanation into flowing analytical prose, rather than presenting facts as a disconnected list of short statements.

Subject-Specific Examples

Business: "Hybrid working arrangements have been linked to measurable productivity gains in roles with clearly defined, individually assessable outputs (Chen, 2022). This pattern suggests that hybrid policies may be more effective when tailored to role type rather than applied uniformly, since collaborative roles reliant on spontaneous interaction showed no equivalent gain in the same study."

Law: "The doctrine of promissory estoppel, as established in Central London Property Trust v High Trees House [1947], allows a promise to be enforced without consideration where reliance on it would make it inequitable for the promisor to withdraw. This significantly narrows, though does not eliminate, the traditional consideration requirement in English contract law."

Nursing: "Applying Gibbs' Reflective Cycle to this escalation delay reveals that hesitation stemmed primarily from uncertainty about hierarchy rather than clinical judgement itself. This suggests that structured communication tools such as SBAR may address the underlying confidence gap more directly than additional clinical training alone."

Psychology: "Usage pattern, rather than platform type, appears to better predict wellbeing outcomes among UK adolescents (Twenge, 2020). This finding challenges

platform-specific restriction policies, suggesting that interventions targeting passive scrolling behaviour specifically may prove more effective than blanket time limits."

Computer Science: "Push-notification-based multi-factor authentication achieved the strongest balance of security and usability in this evaluation, outperforming SMS-based methods on both metrics. This suggests that push notifications should be the default MFA method where smartphone access can be assumed, with SMS retained as a fallback option."

Engineering: "Reinforced fillet welds demonstrated significantly longer fatigue life under simulated cyclical loading than standard butt welds. This finding has direct implications for design guidance in high-cycle loading applications, where fatigue failure rather than static load capacity is typically the limiting design factor."

Marketing: "Brand X's 2025 campaign increased brand awareness metrics by 34% but showed no corresponding increase in conversion rate. This gap suggests a disconnect between the campaign's creative strategy, which emphasised broad awareness, and its stated commercial objective of driving measurable sales."

Education: "Pupils receiving structured formative feedback showed measurably higher task persistence than those receiving only summative grades, particularly among pupils who had previously shown low engagement. This suggests formative feedback may address motivational barriers that summative assessment alone does not target."

Finance: "UK government bonds delivered lower but more stable risk-adjusted returns than corporate bonds over the five-year period examined, with corporate bonds showing greater volatility during periods of interest rate uncertainty. This trade-off suggests portfolio allocation should reflect an investor's specific risk tolerance rather than defaulting to a single bond type."

Common Mistakes

#	Mistake	Why It Weakens the Paragraph
1	Cramming multiple ideas into one paragraph	Loses focus and makes the paragraph's main point unclear
2	Missing or vague topic sentence	Reader can't identify the paragraph's point until they've read the whole thing
3	Presenting evidence without analysis	Reads as descriptive rather than critical writing
4	Dropping in quotations without integration	Disrupts flow and signals weak engagement with the source
5	No link sentence connecting to the next paragraph	Paragraphs read as disconnected rather than a continuous argument
6	Paragraphs disproportionately short	Rarely leaves room to develop analysis fully
7	Paragraphs disproportionately long	Usually signals more than one idea has been combined
8	Ignoring counter-arguments entirely	Misses marks available for critical engagement at higher grade bands
9	Repeating the same evidence across multiple paragraphs	Suggests limited research rather than developing new points
10	Over-reliance on one source throughout the body	Signals narrow reading rather than broad critical engagement
11	Using quotations that are longer than necessary	Dilutes your own analytical voice with excessive source material
12	Failing to explain technical terms or theories before applying them	Assumes shared knowledge the marker may expect you to demonstrate
13	Starting a paragraph with a quotation rather than your own topic sentence	Suggests the source is driving the argument rather than you
14	Inconsistent verb tense within a paragraph	Creates a distracting inconsistency that a careful reader will notice

#	Mistake	Why It Weakens the Paragraph
15	Treating the "Explain" stage as optional once evidence is presented	This is where most of the marks in a paragraph are actually earned
16	Using paragraphs to describe methodology rather than analyse findings	Confuses reporting with critical evaluation
17	Failing to signpost how a paragraph relates to the assignment question	Leaves the marker to infer relevance rather than demonstrating it directly
18	Overusing hedging language throughout the analysis	Undermines the confidence of your critical judgement
19	Not varying paragraph opening structures	Creates a repetitive, mechanical rhythm across the body
20	Including evidence that doesn't clearly support the paragraph's stated point	Weakens the logical connection between claim and support
21	Writing body paragraphs before finalising your outline	Increases the risk of overlapping or disorganised points
22	Not revisiting paragraph order after drafting	The most logical paragraph sequence often only becomes clear once all points are on the page
23	Failing to reference consistently within paragraphs	Creates gaps a marker may read as unattributed claims
24	Using body paragraphs to introduce your thesis for the first time	The thesis should be established in the introduction, not the body
25	Ending a paragraph on evidence rather than on analysis or a link	Leaves the paragraph feeling unfinished rather than resolved

⚠ **Common Mistake:** Writing all body paragraphs to a similar, formulaic length and structure without checking whether each idea genuinely needs that much space. Some ideas warrant a fuller paragraph; others are fully developed in fewer sentences.

Body Paragraph Checklist

Printable Body Paragraph Checklist

- ☐ Each paragraph develops one clear main idea, stated in a specific topic sentence
- ☐ Evidence is integrated smoothly into my own sentences, not dropped in unexplained
- ☐ Every piece of evidence is followed by explicit analysis of its significance
- ☐ Each paragraph ends with a link back to my thesis or forward to the next paragraph
- ☐ Paragraph length is proportionate — long enough to develop the idea, no longer
- ☐ I have engaged with at least one credible counter-argument where appropriate
- ☐ My paragraphs follow a logical sequence that builds a continuous argument
- ☐ All sources are properly cited within the paragraph, not just listed at the end
- ☐ I have re-read only my topic sentences in order to confirm they tell a coherent story

Body Paragraph Templates

Standard PEEL Paragraph Template

- ☐ Sentence 1 (Point): State the paragraph's single main idea clearly
- ☐ Sentence 2–3 (Evidence): Present supporting evidence from a credible source
- ☐ Sentence 4–5 (Explain): Analyse what the evidence means and why it matters
- ☐ Sentence 6 (Link): Connect back to your thesis or forward to the next paragraph

Counter-Argument Paragraph Template

- ☐ Sentence 1: State the opposing view or alternative interpretation
- ☐ Sentence 2: Cite evidence supporting that opposing view
- ☐ Sentence 3: Acknowledge its merit briefly and specifically
- ☐ Sentence 4–5: Explain why your own position remains stronger, with evidence

- ☐ Sentence 6: Link back to your overall thesis

Comparative Paragraph Template

- ☐ Sentence 1: State the comparative point (e.g. "X differs from Y in that...")
- ☐ Sentence 2–3: Present evidence for both sides of the comparison
- ☐ Sentence 4–5: Explain the significance of this difference or similarity
- ☐ Sentence 6: Link to the implication of this comparison for your argument

Case Study Application Paragraph Template

- ☐ Sentence 1: State which theory or framework is being applied
- ☐ Sentence 2–3: Describe the relevant case study detail
- ☐ Sentence 4–5: Analyse how the theory explains or fails to explain the case
- ☐ Sentence 6: Link to the broader argument or recommendation

Reflective Paragraph Template (Gibbs' Cycle stage)

- ☐ Sentence 1: State the specific aspect of the experience being reflected on
- ☐ Sentence 2–3: Describe what happened and your feelings at the time
- ☐ Sentence 4–5: Evaluate and analyse the experience using a relevant framework
- ☐ Sentence 6: Link to what this means for your future practice

Need feedback on your body paragraphs before submission? Our UK academic tutors can review your structure, evidence integration, analysis, and referencing to help you strengthen your work.

Practice Exercises

Exercise 1 — The topic sentence test

- ☐ Read only the first sentence of each of your body paragraphs, in order
- ☐ Check whether they form a coherent, logical sequence on their own
- ☐ Rewrite any topic sentence that doesn't clearly state a specific point

Exercise 2 — The "so what?" test

- ☐ Highlight every piece of evidence in a paragraph
- ☐ After each one, check whether the next sentence answers "so what does this mean?"
- ☐ Add analysis wherever evidence is left unexplained

Exercise 3 — One-idea audit

- ☐ For each paragraph, try to state its main idea in a single sentence
- ☐ If you find yourself needing "and" to describe two separate ideas, split the paragraph

Exercise 4 — Link sentence check

- ☐ Underline the final sentence of each body paragraph
- ☐ Confirm each one either returns to your thesis or clearly signals what comes next
- ☐ Rewrite any paragraph that ends abruptly on a piece of evidence

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the PEEL structure for body paragraphs? PEEL stands for Point, Evidence, Explain, Link — a four-stage structure for organising each body paragraph around a single main idea.

2. How long should a body paragraph be? There's no fixed rule, but 150–350 words is typical for undergraduate essays — long enough to fully develop one idea through PEEL, no longer.

3. Can a body paragraph cover more than one idea? It's best to keep one main idea per paragraph — combining multiple ideas usually makes the paragraph's point less clear and harder to develop fully.

4. What's the difference between PEEL and TEEL? They're essentially the same structure — TEEL uses "Topic sentence" instead of "Point," but both follow the same evidence-explain-link pattern.

5. How much of a paragraph should be evidence versus analysis? Analysis (the "Explain" stage) should generally take up more space than the evidence itself — this is where most of your critical thinking, and marks, come from.

6. What's the "analysis gap"? It's the common weakness where evidence is presented but not properly explained, leaving the paragraph descriptive rather than critical.

7. Should every paragraph include a counter-argument? No — but strong essays typically include at least one or two paragraphs engaging with an opposing view, particularly at higher grade bands.

8. How do I write a strong topic sentence? State a specific claim rather than naming a general topic — a strong topic sentence signals exactly what the paragraph will argue, not just what it covers.

9. Can I start a paragraph with a quotation? It's usually better to start with your own topic sentence — opening with a quotation can make it seem like the source is driving your argument rather than you.

10. How do I know if my paragraph is too descriptive? If you could remove the analysis sentences without losing any of the paragraph's argument, it's likely too descriptive — the evidence is doing all the work.

11. Should I use first person in body paragraphs? This depends on your discipline — reflective writing often permits or requires it, while most essays in the humanities and sciences expect a more impersonal register. Check your module handbook.

12. How many sources should each paragraph cite? There's no fixed number — what matters is that every claim requiring support is properly cited, whether that's from one source or several.

13. What's the best way to link paragraphs together? End each paragraph with a sentence that either returns to your thesis or clearly signals the point the next paragraph will make.

14. Can a paragraph be too short? Yes — a paragraph of only two or three sentences rarely has room to properly develop evidence and analysis, and can read as underdeveloped.

15. What if my evidence doesn't fully support my point? Revise your topic sentence to match what the evidence actually shows, rather than forcing evidence to fit a claim it doesn't fully support.

16. How do I avoid repeating the same evidence across paragraphs? Plan your body paragraphs in advance so each one draws on distinct evidence, and check for overlap once your draft is complete.

17. Should body paragraphs always follow the same order as my outline? Not necessarily — it's common to reorder paragraphs after drafting once the most logical sequence becomes clearer.

18. What's the biggest mistake students make in body paragraphs? Presenting evidence without properly analysing it — this is consistently the most common feedback comment across UK universities.

19. How do I write a body paragraph for a case study assignment? State which theory or framework you're applying, describe the relevant case detail, analyse how well the theory explains it, then link to your broader argument or recommendation.

20. Can I use bullet points within a body paragraph? Generally not in essays, which expect continuous analytical prose — bullet points are more appropriate for reports with a business or technical format.

21. How do I integrate a direct quotation smoothly? Introduce it with a signal phrase (e.g. "As Smith (2021) argues...") and follow it with your own analysis of what it means for your argument.

22. Should paragraphs be roughly equal in length? Not necessarily — length should be determined by how much development an idea genuinely needs, not by matching other paragraphs.

23. What's the difference between explaining evidence and describing it? Describing evidence restates what it says; explaining evidence analyses why it matters and how it supports your specific argument.

24. How do I handle a paragraph that doesn't fit anywhere in my structure? If a point doesn't clearly support your thesis or answer the question, consider cutting it rather than forcing it into the body.

25. Can I combine PEEL with a counter-argument in the same paragraph? Yes — a common approach is Point, Evidence, brief counter-argument acknowledgement, Explain why your position still holds, then Link.

26. How important is paragraph order to my overall mark? Very — a logical sequence helps the marker follow your reasoning; illogical ordering can make even strong individual paragraphs seem disconnected.

27. Should I revise topic sentences after finishing my full draft? Yes — this is one of the most effective final revision steps, since your argument often sharpens during drafting in ways your original topic sentences don't yet reflect.

28. What's a good ratio of paragraphs to sources in a literature-heavy essay? There's no fixed ratio, but each paragraph should draw on enough sources to demonstrate breadth without overloading the analysis with citations.

29. How do I write body paragraphs for a reflective assignment using Gibbs' Cycle? Structure each paragraph around one stage of the cycle (description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion, action plan), rather than blending stages together.

30. Can I use rhetorical questions in body paragraphs? Sparingly, if at all — most academic writing favours direct analytical statements over rhetorical questions, which can read as unresolved.

31. How do I make sure my paragraphs stay focused on the assignment question? Reread the question before drafting each paragraph, and check your topic sentence directly addresses some aspect of it.

32. What should I do if a body paragraph feels weaker than the others? Check whether it lacks a clear topic sentence, sufficient evidence, or explicit analysis — usually one of these three is missing or underdeveloped.

Key Takeaways

- Each body paragraph should develop one clear main idea, stated in a specific topic sentence.
 - Use PEEL or TEEL (Point/Topic, Evidence, Explain, Link) to structure every paragraph consistently.
 - The "Explain" stage carries the most analytical weight — never leave evidence unexplained.
 - Integrate evidence smoothly into your own sentences rather than dropping in unexplained quotations.
 - End each paragraph with a link back to your thesis or forward to the next paragraph.
 - Engage with at least one credible counter-argument where appropriate, particularly for higher grade bands.
 - Paragraph length should be proportionate to the idea being developed — no fixed word count applies universally.
 - Re-read your topic sentences in sequence to check they form a coherent, logical argument on their own.
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Conclusion

Body paragraphs are where most of your marks are actually earned, which makes them worth far more careful attention than they typically receive under deadline pressure. Use PEEL to keep every paragraph focused on one clear idea, make sure evidence is always followed by genuine analysis, and link each paragraph clearly to the next so your argument builds continuously rather than reading as a series of disconnected points. The fastest way to strengthen a weak body paragraph is almost always the same: check whether the evidence has actually been explained, not just presented.

Need feedback on your body paragraphs before submission? Our UK academic tutors can review your structure, evidence integration, analysis, and referencing to help you strengthen your work before you submit.

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