

Assertion, Support, Explication Paragraph Structure

Introduction: The assertion, support, explication model can be used to structure most body paragraphs. Here's how each piece of the model works:

Definition of Assertion: An assertion is a statement made as part of an argument. For example, if your argument is housed in your thesis, your body paragraphs might contain assertions (in the form of topic sentences) that underpin the thesis. These assertions also require their own support.

Definition of Support: Support refers to any evidence, documentation, or examples that add credence to an assertion. Support often takes the form of quotes or other information cited from sources, and it requires explication for the reader to understand how it fits with the assertion.

Definition of Explication: Explication refers to the process of clarifying how support connects to an assertion.

Short Sample Paragraphs Using the Assertion, Support, Explication Structure:

Sample One

In his poem "The Raven," Edgar Allan Poe uses figurative language to create an eerie mood. For example, in the second stanza, the narrator describes the lighting from the fireplace by saying "each separate dying ember wrought its ghost upon the floor." In this passage, Poe personifies the embers in the fireplace by saying they were "dying" and referring to their "ghosts." The reference to death and ghosts conjures spooky connotations and evokes an eerie feeling.

The underlined sentence provides the assertion.

The sentence in bold provides the support.

The portion in Italics provides the explication.

The underlined sentence provides the assertion.

Sample Two

The sentence in bold provides the first piece of support.

People can support pollinator populations in several ways. **For example,** people can plant pollinator-friendly plants in their yards. *These plants provide both food and habitat for birds, bees, and butterflies.* **Another way people can assist pollinators is to avoid the use of pesticides** *since many of those products harm beneficial insects as well as harmful ones.* While individual people can provide significant help to pollinators, these creatures would also benefit from more systemic protection.

The sentence in Italics explicates the support.

The bold part of this sentence provides support, and the part in Italics provides the explication.

The final sentence reinforces the original assertion but also transitions to a new idea that could set up the next paragraph.

Caveats and Notes:

- **You can alternate between support and explication within a single paragraph.** For instance, if you have two different pieces of support for one assertion, you might include the first piece and explicate it and then do the same for the second piece. In the first example above, the writer could include other examples of figurative language in “The Raven,” each with its own explication of how it contributes to an eerie mood. The second sample above alternates support and application.
- **Sometimes support and some explication may appear in the same sentence.** The fourth sentence in the second example above blends support and explication.
- **The assertion will only be one sentence, and each piece of support will usually be one sentence, but each explication may range from one sentence to several sentences.**
- **In addition to the assertion, support, and explication, paragraphs will often need a transition sentence at the end.** Adding a final transition sentence helps the reader follow the writer’s thinking between the end of the explication in one paragraph and the start of the assertion in the next. The first sample above lacks a transition sentence, but the second sample ends with a transition sentence.
- **The assertion should always come first, but the explication may precede the support in some cases in order to introduce or contextualize the support.**