AXES Method of Paragraph Development

Oftentimes, when writing, we are tempted to see the evidence itself as development but it’s only a start. Consider a trial, where evidence is also central. In a trial no evidence is ever considered self-evident – the lawyer has to…
- make a case for its introduction
- explain why it’s legitimate evidence
- examine it: Is it what it appears to be? Is it accurate? How else could it be explained?
- link it to other evidence in a logical way that calls for guilt or innocence.

So in your essays, you need to find evidence, introduce it, explain it, and weave it into your big picture argument.

Try using the acronym **AXES** to construct a convincing, well-developed paragraph that uses evidence well…

**Assertion:**
- The assertion (or topic sentence) states the specific arguable point you will make in the paragraph.
  - Moreover, the assertion connects the paragraph to your thesis (claim).
  - Generally, assertions should go at the beginning of the paragraph (the first sentence, or – if there’s a transition sentence – the second).
  - Assertions must be **arguable** – the point that YOU are making about something.

**eXample:**
- The examples are the evidence that supports (or "proves") your assertion.
  - These could be a direct quote from the text, a detailed description of a visual object, data, etc.
  - Examples should be introduced and briefly contextualized.

**Explanation:**
- Examples NEVER speak for themselves: you must provide explanations, which clarify how and why the evidence relates to your assertion and subsequently your central claim.
  - For instance, in a textual analysis, an explanation of a quote pulls out particular words, images, references, etc., from the example and shows how these support the assertion.
  - Explanation of examples and data outline the reasoning that logically links the evidence to the assertion.

**Significance:**
- If you simply state, support and explain the assertions, your reader may respond with indifference unless you also tell them why they should care by showing the significance.
  - Statements of significance anticipate and answer the question "So What?" In other words, why is the point made in the paragraph important in light of your thesis?
  - Providing significance is crucial to making an argument that says something, has a purpose, or is interesting.

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