

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...

- A**ssertion:
- 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.

- e**xample:
- 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.

- E**xplanation:
- 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.

- S**ignificance:
- 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.