

Classical Liberal Arts Academy
Writing a Better Argumentative Essay
 Mr. William C. Michael, O.P.

Good: Modern Five Paragraph Essay ¹	Better: Scholastic Essay ²
I. Introduction 1. Introduce the topic 2. Give your thesis statement. 3. Give background context for topic. 4. Survey points to be made..	I. Introduction 1. State the question³ in dialectical format⁴. 2. Explain the significance of the question. 3. State your thesis.
	II. Exposition (of Contrary Proofs) ⁵ 1. State a proof offered for the contrary answer to the question.⁶ 2. State additional proofs known for the contrary answer.
II-IV. Three Body Paragraphs 1. Write three body paragraphs that support your thesis. 2. Start each paragraph with a topic sentence, which describes the topic of only that paragraph. 3. After the topic sentence, fill in the rest of the paragraph with proofs.	III. Demonstration 1. Present the first proof for your answer (thesis) to the question. 2. Present additional proofs for your thesis, in separate paragraphs.
	IV. Refutation 1. Refute the first proof given for the contrary answer in part II above. 2. Refute additional proofs given in part II.
V. Conclusion 1. Summarize points from previous paragraphs. 2. Restate thesis. 3. Remind reader of points made in three body paragraphs.	V. Conclusion 1. Restate the question. 2. Restate the significance of the question. 3. Summarize proofs for the contrary answer and their refutation. 4. Summarize proofs for your answer. 5. Close with exhortation (optional).

¹ Ellis, Matt. "How to Write a Five-Paragraph Essay, with Outlines and an Example". Grammarly, last updated April 14, 2023. <https://www.grammarly.com/blog/five-paragraph-essay>

² The "Scholastic Essay" format is drawn from the method demonstrated by St. Thomas Aquinas in the *Summa Theologica*.

³ The question must be a controversial question, worthy of deliberation. Often essays are doomed by the failure to establish a proper question.

⁴ By "dialectical format", we mean a question which requires one to choose one of two possible contrary answers, i.e., "Yes" or "No".

⁵ There are two purposes for the statement of opposing proofs: First, to demonstrate your care in researching the question and understanding the strongest arguments for the view (*ethos*); second, to prepare for your refutations in part IV.

⁶ Be sure to cite all sources properly so that reader can conveniently access them.