AXES & PIE Paragraphs

These acronyms can help you remember the types of elements that generally belong in body paragraphs. Throughout your paper, each sentence should relate back to your thesis statement to prove, argue, or otherwise support your claim.

Assertion	"topic sentence / main point"	Assertions are like mini-thesis statements that explain what the body paragraph will be about and make a specific point. They are not summaries or general statements. These are usually only one sentence.	
eXample	"concrete detail"	The example is just as it sounds. It is the evidence that you will use to support your assertion. Examples can be direct quotes or a brief paraphrase of the text you are using. Remember to always cite your sources and introduce your quotations with signal phrases, such as, "According to…" Also remember that your example cannot make your point for you, and it will need to be explained.	What quote or aspect struck you as most important, intriguing, or effective?
Explanation	"commentary / analysis"	The explanation will show the reader how the example supports the assertion. This is your analysis. If you are using a long example, make sure to explain all of it. The explanation section should be about twice as long as your example and should make up a majority of your paragraph. This is where you argue your point in detail.	Can you elaborate why? How does this prove your assertion?
Significance	"relevance" to the paper	The significance of the paragraph explains how everything you just proved in your specific example is still related back to the overall thesis of your paper. You do not have to refer to your whole thesis, but rather the most relevant part of it. This is usually about one to two sentences.	What does this tell you about the topic as a whole?

Note: If you want to use two examples in your paragraph, use AXEXES and make sure to always explain your eXample thoroughly. A paragraph with one example will be about 5-8 sentences long, and a paragraph with two examples will be about 8-14 sentences long. If you feel like you have a lot to explain about a particular example, have a full AXES paragraph for that example instead of trying to fit two examples into one paragraph.

CSUSM Writing Center
ELB 201

Information gathered from Bristol Community College, Mira Costa Community College, and CSUSM Writing Center resources.

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Point	"topic sentence / main point"	This is the main idea sentence, or topic sentence, of the paragraph. It establishes the topic and stance that you are taking in the paragraph. To unify the essay, it also needs to link directly to the thesis statement.	
Illustration	"evidence / quote"	The Illustration is the example, the direct quote from a source, a detailed example from a film, or a personal example that helps to prove your point. In other words, this is your piece of evidence. The Illustration is intended to be objective; it is telling facts of some kind to the reader.	What quote or aspect struck you as most important, intriguing, or effective?
Explanation	"analysis / significance"	The Explanation is the analysis. It explains to the reader why you included the Illustration that you did by answering the question "so what?'. The Explanation also shows how the Illustration connects to the Point of the paragraph and to the thesis of the essay. The Explanation is the "how" and the "why" of the analysis.	Can you elaborate why? How does this prove your assertion? What does this tell you about the topic as a whole?

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