



USING PECTA FOR PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE

The PECTA acronym is one way to effectively structure a paragraph in essay writing. Each paragraph you write is making a point about the stance or argument you are taking on a given subject that you are writing about, giving evidence to support that point, discussing and exploring it using critical thinking and showing how it relates to the main theme of the essay. The acronym is:

Point - State the point of this paragraph.

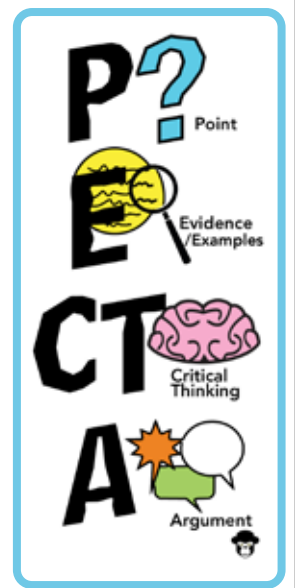
Evidence/Examples - Discuss the research that supports your point. Give examples of this.

Critical Thinking - Critiques of both your evidence and alternative viewpoints.

Argument - The conclusion of the paragraph, showing how this relates to the overall argument of your essay.

The Critical Thinking is the key element to the paragraph. This is where you explain why and say so what. See Musostudy's READ Backwards handout for more information on this - <https://www.musostudy.com/resources/3SS/read-backwards-handout.pdf>

A good way to use PECTA is to first make notes for each of the 4 sections so you can see and arrange your thoughts in the PECTA order. Then start to form them into sentences and then check that the sentences all flow together and the paragraph makes sense and has a sense of flow or story the reader will find easy to understand. This may take a few goes to get right - keep at it - clear writing takes practice!



For example, if I am writing a short essay about how chocolate aids memory, my paragraphs might make the following points: people eat chocolate for many reasons; chocolate contains things that are good for you; the thing in chocolate that helps memory is X; and how best to use chocolate for memory.

This now gives me a structure for the essay. Each paragraph's theme could be:

1. Introduction
2. People eat chocolate for many reasons
3. Chocolate contains things that are good for you
4. The thing in chocolate that helps memory is
5. How best to use chocolate for memory
6. Conclusion

If I was using PECTA, for each paragraph I would need an opening sentence to expand on my point; plus one or two more to explain what my point is and give some background to it. Then I need some sentences of evidence and examples to back up the point I am making. I then use critical thinking to say why this is important - this is the key section of your paragraph - this is what makes academic writing good! Lastly I link it back to the main argument of my essay. Here is an example, with each of the four sections colour coded (**Point**, **Evidence/Examples**, **Critical Thinking**, **Argument**):

People eat chocolate for many reasons

People eat chocolate in many forms and for many reasons. These range from for comfort, for pleasure, to give an energy boost and even for health. Four thousand years ago chocolate was made as a bitter drink by the Olmec in Central America and used during rituals and for medicinal purposes (A Big Choc, 2021). When it was first imported to Europe sugar was added and by the nineteenth century it became the chocolate we know today, used as a sweet, decadent treat (Do Eat Me, 2016). Its use for health has endured to today because it contains polyphenols, which may help reduce blood pressure (Go Help Health, 2019). However, chocolate now contains a vast array of different ingredients and is often very high in sugar and hydrogenated fat (Sweet Sugar Times, 2020), meaning that the health-giving properties may be masked by the detrimental effects of too much sugar. In modern times we can see chocolate eaten for a variety of reasons - in its raw, original form for health as the ancient Mexicans did, as a decadent treat - combined with sugar and cream, in brightly wrapped gift boxes, similar to the first Europeans to be able to afford it; but also as a cheap, everyday snack - giving a quick energy boost or to raise our mood. We could even argue that some of the ways we use it in celebrations (such as Easter eggs) are ritualistic, similar to its original use. It can be difficult, therefore, to evaluate the memory giving properties of commercially available chocolate because of this variety of formulations and the ways it is used. Research would need to be carefully structured to arrive at any conclusions. However, research into its individual properties has been carried out