

4-Square Writing

In third grade, we learn to write 5 paragraphs on a topic. We use the 4-Square graphic organizer to help us do this. Here is how it organizes for us:

a. The center box: First paragraph (This introduces the topic/main idea. It tells us what the whole paper will be about. In third grade, we let this just be one sentence.)

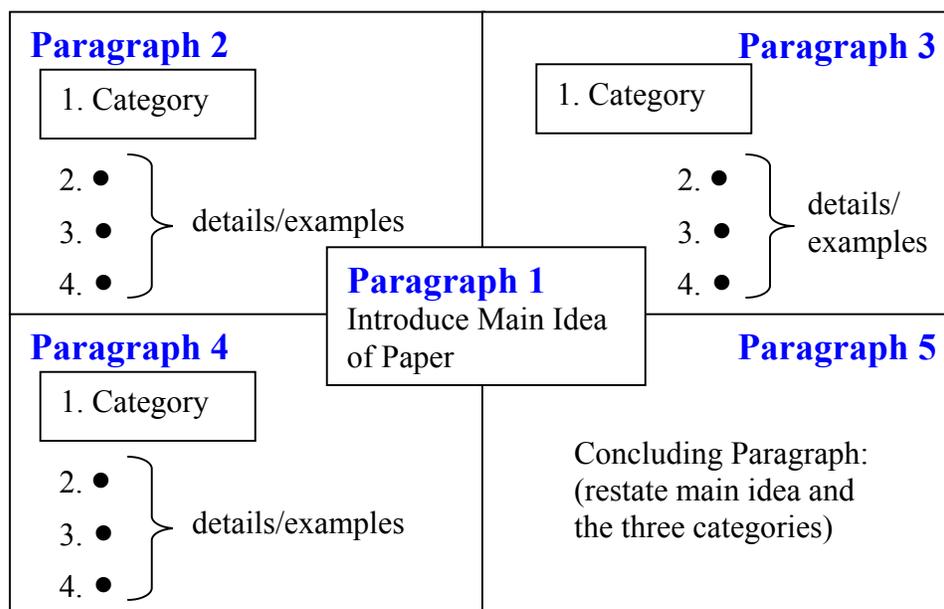
b. The top left square: Second paragraph

c. The top right square: Third paragraph

d. The bottom left square: Fourth paragraph

The middle paragraphs tell us about 3 different details of the main idea/topic introduced in the first paragraph. If you look at the first sentence of each of these paragraphs, it will tell you what detail that whole paragraph will be about.

e. The bottom right square: Last paragraph (This is our conclusion. It does not give us any new information. It is one sentence that mentions the main idea (from the center box), and lists the 3 detail categories (the words that are in the boxes of the other 3 squares). In third grade, we let this just be one sentence.)



In each paragraph, these numbers refer to Sentence #1, Sentence #2, etc.

4-Square Writing: Our 5-Paragraph Holiday Essays

The Thanksgiving essay was a guided activity that we did as a whole class. The Christmas essay, on the other hand, is personalized to each student's own experiences. We all used the same detail categories about Christmas: Decorations at Christmas time, Family and what we do with family at Christmas time, and Presents. For each category, the students picked 3 examples from their own life to give more information about it. Each of these paragraphs has 4 sentences:

- The first sentence introduces the category, and connects it to the main idea of Christmas. For example: *My family and I do special things together at Christmas time.* This sentence should not give any details about it.
- The 2nd, 3rd, and 4th sentences are the 3 details/examples that the student came up with from their own life.
- NOTES:
 - ✓ On the 4-Square, the category is in the box, and the examples/details about it are next to the 3 bullets. The students label them 1, 2, 3, 4 so they can check off each one as they turn it into a sentence.
 - ✓ Each square is color-coded so that the students can have a better visual. When a square is finished, they change colors. Change of color indicates a new square, a new paragraph, a new category of information.

We have one more essay that will be going home before our winter break. It will be a persuasive essay in which the student picks one gift that he/she really wants, and comes up with three reasons that are meant to convince you. So you will be their intended audience! It is a fun project that the kids always enjoy.