

## What Is the Structure of a Body Paragraph?

Body paragraphs, just like introduction paragraphs, also share a similar structure. Here's an example of a typical body paragraph.

(1) One of the greatest challenges faced by engineers working on the Cassini project involved getting the spacecraft to Saturn. (2) Saturn lies almost 800 million miles away from Earth, an immense distance. (3) The amount of fuel needed to send Cassini on a direct route to the planet would be prohibitive. (4) Therefore, mission strategists had to come up with a plan to get the craft to Saturn using a minimum amount. (5) The solution was to use a technique called *gravity assist*, in which the craft uses the gravitational pull of a planet to “slingshot” it into deep space. (6) Mission planners sent Cassini on a route that passed by the planet Venus twice and back toward Earth for a final push. (7) This circuitous route added more than 200 million miles to the craft's journey.

Now we'll look at this paragraph in terms of its structure.

- (1) This sentence states the specific topic discussed (in this case, a challenge).
- (2) This sentence gives specific details about the challenge.
- (3) This sentence gives more specific details about the challenge.
- (4) This sentence explains what the specific challenge is.
- (5) This sentence gives a solution to the challenge.
- (6) This sentence gives more detail on the solution.
- (7) This sentence gives more detail on the solution.

Looking at the paragraph this way, it's clear that these body paragraphs are all about details. Of course, these details are all closely related to the topic sentence. This means that when dealing with body paragraphs on the TOEFL, you should

1. **Read the topic sentence carefully.** Make sure you are looking in the right paragraph for the information you need.
2. **Sort through the specific details until you find what you need.** It is easy to get distracted by all the information in a body paragraph. Stay focused on the information you need.

Reading the body paragraphs will help you answer *detail* and *inference* questions. When answering *main idea* or *primary purpose* questions, do not read more than the first sentence of the body paragraphs. The information found in the body paragraphs is too narrow. We'll cover these question types more thoroughly in Chapter 6.