Unit 3: Writing—Building upon Your Writing Skills

Overview

At this point in your writing life, you should be comfortable writing paragraphs. You have had frequent practice at determining audience, planning, drafting, and revising several kinds of paragraphs. You are now ready to connect a series of paragraphs into an essay. As you work, you will find that the effective paragraph and the effective essay have much in common. For example, a paragraph has a topic sentence that tells readers its focus. Similarly, an essay has a thesis statement that tells readers the focus of the entire essay.

All of the sentences in a paragraph should relate to the topic sentence. In much the same way, all of the paragraphs in an essay should relate to the thesis statement. The sentences in a paragraph should be put in an order that helps clarify a writer's point. As you might expect, the paragraphs in an essay should be ordered to help readers follow and grasp the writer's discussion and information. The list goes on, but you get the idea. A paragraph is a mini version of an essay.

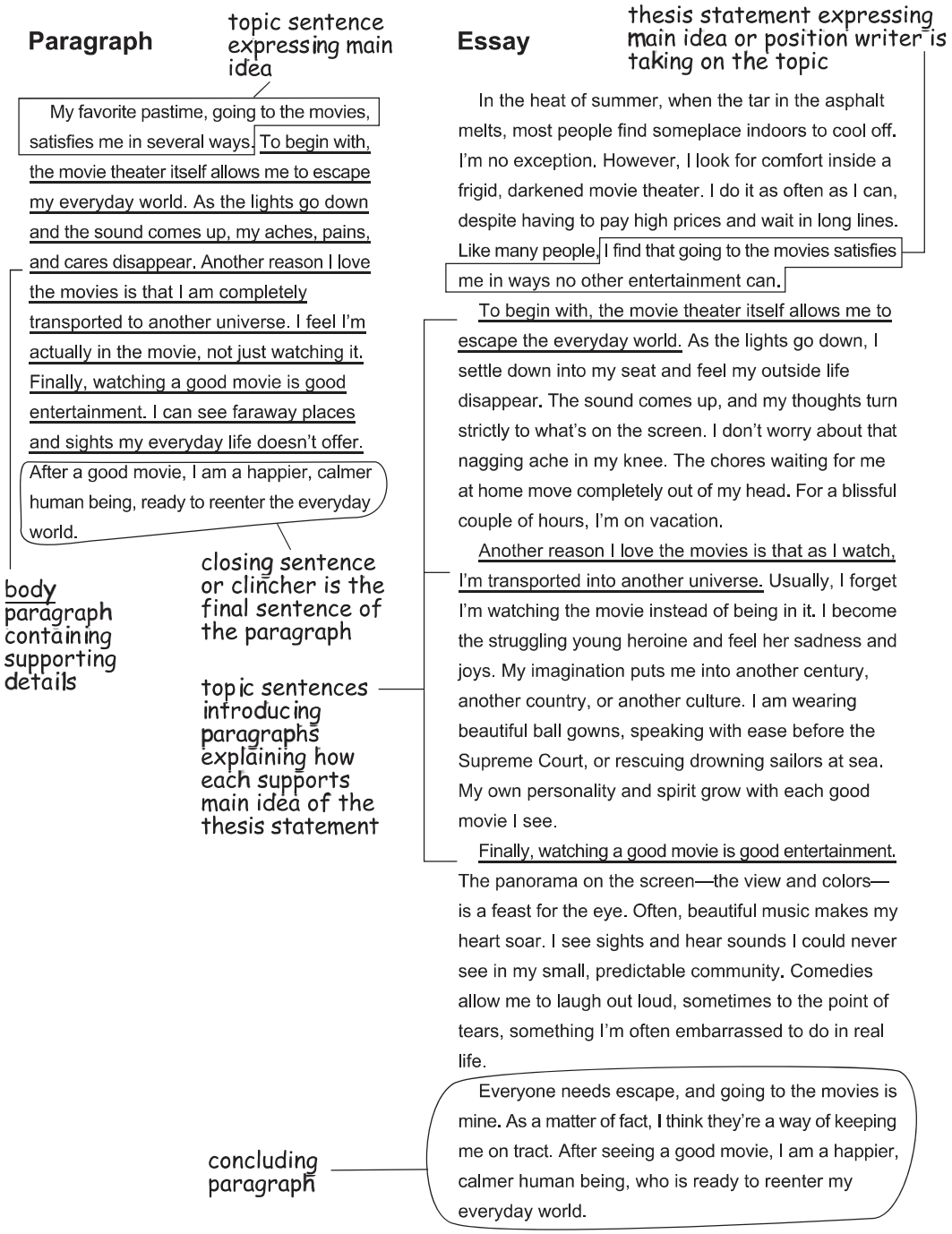
In order to build an effective essay, you will need to strengthen and expand the writing skills you already have.

In order to build an effective essay, you will need to strengthen and expand the writing skills you already have. The instruction and practices in this unit will help you do this. As you work through these exercises, you will plan and write the first draft of an essay. When you reach the final page of this unit, you will have a product in hand.

However, this product will not be finished. It will be a first draft. Keep this in mind as you write. You want to write your best, but you don't want to think of your work as be□ *set in stone*. In Unit 4, you will produce a more finished project.

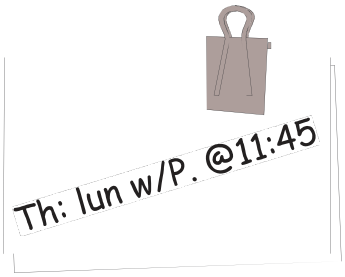
Comparing a Paragraph and an Essay

The following example shows you how a **paragraph** and an **essay** about the same information are both similar and different.



Two Kinds of Writing: Writing for Yourself and Writing for Others

Imagine a day just like this one. Your day begins early and starts to speed along the instant you open your eyes. By lunch time, your mind has already started to fill to near capacity with algebra equations, important facts in history, and data from your biology lab. Between classes your friend Patrick asks you to have lunch next Thursday at 11:45 a.m. You don't want to miss this occasion, so you jot it down in your schedule book or on a piece of scrap paper. Perhaps this note to yourself looks like the note here.



With some time and luck, someone could translate these letters and numbers into sense. However, this note has been written by you and to you. It was not intended to be read by any other audience or reader.

Writing to and for yourself is an important kind of writing. You may write brief notes filled with abbreviations to yourself. You may also write journal entries in which you ponder things that trouble you. You may write about your relationships with others—your parents, your siblings, your best friend, your boyfriend or girlfriend. You may write about your future and what you imagine it will include. You may describe your feelings and thoughts about the new mall that is replacing the huge field where you played all day as a kid.

When you write to yourself, you may want to make sure that you can understand the information you are writing down. However, you may not care if others understand what you have written because no one else is involved in this writing situation. You are free to write as you please.

This is not the case when writing for others. You write for others in many different writing situations. You may want to write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper on that new mall that is going to fill your childhood playground. You may need to write a cover letter and fill out an application for a job. You may need to write a research *essay* for your English or history class. You may want to write a novel or poem, or you may need to compile **summaries** or reports on your job.

When you write for others, you make unspoken agreements with your readers. You promise to tell readers early in your writing what your **subject** and **purpose** is, unless your writing is a work of **fiction** or **poetry**. You promise to write clearly and concisely. You promise to write to keep the readers interested.

Agreements Made with Your Readers: What Your Readers Expect

Your reader has the right to expect your writing to follow certain guidelines. You would be shocked if you got on a city bus only to find that the driver did not follow the right route and did not drive to the right destination. In a similar way, your reader is getting aboard your writing and expects you to tell him where you are going and to take him to that destination in an orderly way. In short, your reader expects you to give him writing that has value.

Listed below are a few of the major agreements between writer and reader, along with explanations and examples.

- You have agreed to tell your reader the *topic* of your writing.

  Begin in your title to explain the topic and focus of your writing. A title should tell more than just your general *subject*. The title "Survival" does not tell very much. The title "Survival in the Wilderness" is better. However, if your essay explains how to make a warm bed out of the earth, leaves, and newspapers, then you should narrow your title even further: "Surviving a Cold Night in the Wilderness."

  Your introductory *paragraph* should continue to clarify and narrow your topic. Explain to your readers the situation: You are lost in the woods on a cold night with only the clothes on your back and a newspaper you were reading. After reading your title and introductory paragraph, any reader should be able to say, "I know what this essay will discuss and explain." A reader could then decide whether this essay would be of value or interest to her.

- You have agreed to stay focused on the your topic and not to drift away from it.

  The remainder of your essay should discuss and explain the topic you have announced and narrowed in your title and introductory paragraph. A sudden switch to Friday's high school football game will only confuse your reader. Your reader will have a hard time getting the information she wants if she has to sift out **sentences** and paragraphs that are not related to surviving a cold night in the wilderness.

  However, if your essay is on the experience of getting lost one night in the woods, your content may be different. Perhaps you spent that cold night in the woods wondering if you would live to see Friday's football game. This kind of **detail** would be a good one if your topic was "The Cold Fear I Felt While Lost in the Woods."

- You have agreed to write as clearly as you can, using words and *sentences* your reader can understand.

  Always remember your audience—the readers for whom you are writing. Hardly any piece of writing is intended for readers of all ages and all backgrounds. Younger readers or readers with less formal education need simpler sentences and words. Readers in high school and above are able to read complex sentences and more difficult words. For example, consider the following sentences.

  > *My intention had simply been to stroll in the woods until I found a sunny spot to recline and scan the newspaper until dusk. Little did I know that a sprained ankle would imprison me in the cold dark woods until the dawn.*

  This sentence was written for a reader like yourself who can make sense of longer sentences. If you were writing for an elementary school student, a better piece of writing would look like the following.

  > *I only wanted to walk in the woods and find a sunny spot to sit. I wanted to read my newspaper until the sun went down. Little did I know that I would sprain my ankle. Unable to walk, I would have to spend the cold night in the woods.*

- You have agreed to support your claims and explain your points.

  Think back to a discussion you had about a controversial issue. One of the speakers kept saying that we should not recycle containers and paper. You kept asking why—why shouldn't we? Your friend went on repeating himself: "Because we shouldn't!" You were left unconvinced. Even worse, you felt as if your friend were wasting your time. He was making a claim (we shouldn't recycle), but he could not offer **reasons**. Claims that are not supported with *reason* and evidence are useless. When you write for others, you are agreeing not to waste their time. You are agreeing to offer them something of value, such as a well-supported claim.

  Similarly, an essay intended to explain something needs to do so. For example, imagine turning to an article with the title "How to Fix a Flat Tire in Two Minutes." You follow the article as you attempt to fix your flat tire. However, you quickly learn that the article ends after explaining how to remove a flat tire. There is no explanation included on how to change your tire. This writer has not met his part of the agreement.

- You have agreed to follow grammar and **punctuation** rules.

  Some of the rules of grammar and *punctuation* may seem to have no reason. However, without grammar, we would not be able to make sense of writing. Consider the following sentence which describes Mary going to a store on her way home.

  Mary stop at store on their way home.

  This sentence does offer some meaning. We know that Mary stopped at a store. However, even this bit of information is difficult to fully understand because in formal English the **verb** *stop* is in the wrong tense: it should be in the past tense—*stopped*. So the reader has to slow down here and fix the mistake in his or her mind. In addition, the **pronoun**

their does not agree with the **noun**, *Mary*. So the reader would be confused: Was Mary alone or was at least one other person with her? The sentence should read,

Mary stopped at a store on her way home.

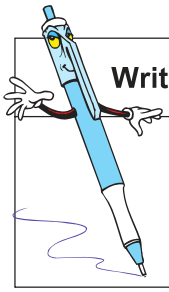
Writing without using correct grammatical choices is like playing basketball without rules. Imagine watching a basketball game in which players did whatever they liked. You would not be able to follow the game very well.

The following are a few of the major agreements a writer makes with his or her reader.

- You have agreed to tell your reader the topic of your writing.
- You have agreed to stay focused on your topic and *not* to drift away from it.
- You have agreed to write as clearly as you can, using words and sentences your reader can understand.
- You have agreed to support your claims and explain your points.
- You have agreed to follow grammar and punctuation rules.

Purposeful Writing: Reasons for Writing

There are many different reasons for writing. Being aware of your purpose for writing can help you plan well, make good decisions as you collect information and ideas, and get your message across when you write. For example, if your purpose for writing is to explain the game of basketball, you would focus on the rules and strategies of the sport. In contrast, if your purpose is to describe the game of basketball, you would tell readers what the players do as they play the sport.



Writers generally point to five different purposes in writing:

- to explain
- to describe
- to tell a story
- to persuade
- to compare

To Explain: Using Words to Give Information or Instruction

Some writing is done to give instruction or information to the reader. The writer may tell the reader how something works, why something is the way it is, or what something is. Any writing that tells *how*, *why*, or *what* is writing that explains. For example, you might be explaining *how* an engine, gasoline, and transmission combine to move a car down an interstate at 70 m.p.h. You might explain *why* the grass is green and the sky is often blue. You might want to explain *what* your opinion is on an issue, or whether your high school should offer courses in film making or architecture of the Ancients.

Writing that explains is also called **expository writing**. Think of all the things you know well now and will know well in the future. You will want to be able to pass your valuable knowledge along. Unfortunately, knowing something well does not necessarily mean you will be able to write about it. In this unit you will learn the skills necessary to explain something, and then you will write an expository essay. Good writers of *expository writing* understand what their readers know and what they need to know. Awareness of **audience** is one of the key ingredients in this kind of writing.

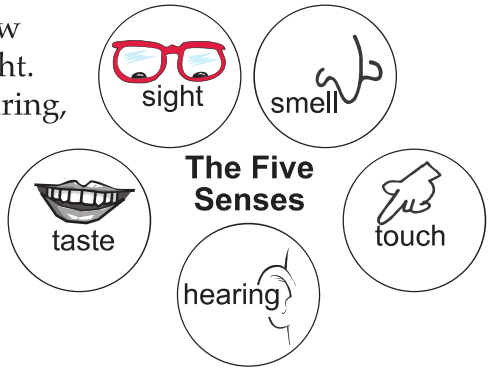
Many writers find it helpful when writing an expository essay to choose a topic they are already familiar with or already have an interest in. You need not be an expert on the topic, but your natural interest will help fuel your research, thinking, and writing.

To Describe: Using Words to Paint Pictures

In **descriptive writing**, the writer paints a picture in words. The purpose often varies. The writer may intend to thoroughly describe another person. This type of writing is called *characterization*. Another purpose for *descriptive writing* is to describe a place so completely, the reader is able to see everything about it. Still another reason for writing descriptively is to relate an event. This type of writing is called *narration*.

All of these types of description have several things in common. First, descriptive writing requires writers to be good observers. They must learn to be somewhat of a *walking camera*: to see and remember even small *details*. With practice, writers not only become good at description, but they learn to enjoy it.

Secondly, good descriptive writers know that description involves more than sight. All five senses—sight, smell, touch, hearing, and taste—are involved with memory. Recreating that memory means recreating sounds, textures, smells, and sometimes tastes. These *sensory details*, if presented well, usually have your readers nodding their heads. They think, "How true, how true!" and really envision the scene you are attempting to portray.



All five senses—sight, smell, touch, hearing, and taste—are involved in descriptive writing.

Finally, a writer skilled at description knows the difference between description and opinion. Often, we think that words such as *pretty*, *exciting*, *tall*, or *short* are descriptive. In fact, these words offer *opinion*. The writer's idea of a pretty girl might vary drastically from his readers'. If the writer is a young woman who is less than five feet tall, she might think a young man standing 5 feet 6 inches is tall. However, if her reader is over 6 feet tall himself, he would disagree with her.

Each of the descriptive essays offer details to help you *see* the writer's vision. Pay attention to the details that help you do this.

To Persuade: Using Words to Convince Readers

Persuasive writing is done to convince the reader to accept the writer's point of view. This point of view can include a number of things: supporting a political candidate, taking a particular stand on a social issue, buying a specific product. Editorials in newspapers are examples of *persuasive writing*, and so are advertisements in magazines and newspapers.

The writer's position, no matter how well it is supported, is still the writer's *opinion*. Most people hold strong opinions on a wide variety of subjects. Beliefs and principles may give us definite ideas about certain subjects. For this reason, people usually have little trouble choosing a topic for a persuasive essay. However, having strong feelings on an issue does not necessarily mean you will be able to write well about it. Often, just the opposite is true. Your strong feelings make you forget that others may have opposite, yet equally strong, ideas.

Beliefs and principles may give us definite ideas about certain subjects.

A well-written persuasive essay contains **facts** and reasons to help support the writer's views. Using *facts* and reasons will encourage the reader to consider your opinion carefully and seriously. Persuasive writers will also gain more serious consideration if they consider and address any possible objections or opposing arguments.

To Compare: Using Words to Describe Similarities and Differences

We make many comparisons in our everyday experience. We compare two outfits to wear to school; two thrillers playing at the movies; two restaurants for dinner. Comparison writing often works toward an evaluation. It intends to show which of the compared items is better and offers more value.

Finding similarities and differences between things gives us a better understanding of them. Two items may seem identical at first. However, upon close inspection, we often find more and more differences between them. For example, you may think that all peop from a part of the country are the same. You might feel the same about people who practice a certain religion. Usually, though, if you observe them closely, you will become aware of their differences. Similarly, you may think people who live on the opposite ends of the Earth have different values. You often find, after looking more closely, that there are more likenesses than you thought possible.

After looking more closely, you may find there are more likenesses than differences in people.

A lot of writing is done to share a real or imagined experience. This type of story-telling essay is called **narrative writing**. Movies, novels, and short stories all require this kind of writing. A story may be told to get across a certain point or moral. Other stories may be told just for entertainment. Many *narrative writing* attempts to accomplish both.

A *narrative* or *story* usually tells about a number of events happening over a period of time. Most narratives have a beginning, a middle, and an end. You most likely have told many narratives or stories in your life. You surely have seen many on television and have read them in books. Your personal experiences can be used to make writing narratives enjoyable and meaningful to you.

Combining Purposes: Using More Than One Form

It is true that most of the writing you do for readers should have a single purpose. Knowing your purpose will help you make the right choices about your content, organization, and language. Quite often, however, you will use more than one kind of writing and purpose in any essay or document you create. For example, imagine that you are trying to *persuade* readers that your childhood playground should not be turned into a shopping mall. Because your purpose here is to persuade, you will present arguments in favor of your position and answer any objections to your position. You may also want to move your readers' emotions by showing them the joy of young children as they romp in the playground on a beautiful spring day. To do this you would *describe* the children as they use the playground.

…you may want to explain what will happen to the birds…

In addition, you may want to *explain* what will happen to the birds in the woods surrounding the playground if it is flattened so the mall can be built. In this section of your essay, you would *explain* the damage that would occur to the environment.

As you can see, often you will have one guiding purpose in your writing. In the example above, the guiding purpose is to *persuade*. However, to accomplish that purpose you may use other kinds of writing and purposes within your essay or document. In the example above, *descriptive* writing and *expository* writing are used to help *persuade* readers.

The Essay: Building a Communication TOWER

One of the origins of the word *essay* is a Latin word that means *to examine*. When you write an essay, you are examining a topic. In other words, you are using all of your resources to find out all you can about your chosen subject. Sometimes, this means doing a bit of research. This could mean a trip to the media center, library, or an Internet search. Other times, you will sit and search your mind for what you already know about the topic.

In some writing situations, you are assigned a topic. Your teacher may say, "Write an essay about the effects of the Crusades." A specific writing prompt may ask you to argue why physical education should or should not be required in high school.

Other times, you are left to select your own topic. Usually, you are asked to write a particular type of essay. However, you will be given the choice of selecting a particular topic that you find interesting. For example, your teacher migh□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ something to someone who knows nothing or very little about it. It may be anything from how to make a peanut butter sandwich to adjusting the valves on your car." In this case you have only been given a reason for your writing: to explain. The topics from which you choose are only limited by your knowledge and imagination.

Earlier in this unit, you were given examples of different types of writing. Once you know your reason for writing, you should look back over these examples. The chart on the following page is a quick review of these reasons.

Review of Reasons for Writing	
To Explain	If your reason for writing is *to explain*, your readers should understand the information or instructions you present. If your purpose is *to explain* the gasoline engine, do your readers *understand* how an engine safely explodes gas to turn crankshafts and move a vehicle? Do they *understand* how an engine turns energy into motion?
To Describe	If your reason for writing is *to describe*, your readers should see, feel, hear, or taste exactly what you want them to see, feel, hear, or taste. If your purpose is *to describe* walking through your school hallways the minute after the bell rings to dismiss class, do your readers *feel* the surge of hundreds of students pushing in one direction or the other? Do they *hear* the beehive-like buzz of hundreds of conversations? Can they *imagine* the scene from above looking like an anthill that has just been stepped on?
To Persuade	If your reason for writing is *to persuade*, your readers should be convinced that your position on an issue has value. If your purpose is *to persuade* readers to support a recycling program at your school, do your readers find your argument *convincing*? Are they *moved* by your reasoning and evidence? Have you *presented your side* of the issue and *shown the flaws in the other side* of the issue?
To Compare	If your reason for writing is *to compare*, your readers should get a clear and fair evaluation of the two things you are comparing. If your purpose is to show how people in cold climates live *differently* than those in warm climates, are your readers *convinced* of your point? Have you used the same criteria *to compare* the people in these two climates? Have you, for example, *analyzed* the diets, hobbies, or professions of both groups of people being compared?
To Tell a Story	If your reason for writing is *to tell a story*, your readers should feel entertained and find your point striking. If your story is about an *adventure* in a new city, do readers want to know *what is going to happen* to the main character? Do readers feel that one event builds on another? Do they find the conflict important and the climax suspenseful?

No matter what your reason for writing, you will need a plan to organize your thoughts before beginning. You need a strategy that helps you get from the beginning of your essay to its completion. One very good strategy is called TOWER.

THINK of a topic and jot down your ideas and the main points to be made about it.

ORDER your ideas and thoughts by grouping them into categories or subtopics which are related to the topic.

WRITE a paragraph about each of the subtopics.

EDIT and revise the composition, checking content, and language, and for correct capitalization, good overall appearance, punctuation, and spelling.

REWRITE the composition, correcting any errors.

*The Theme Writing Strategy (TOWER) summarized in this document is based on the work of Dr. Jean B. Schumaker of the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning (KU-CRL). This strategy is a part of the Strategic Instruction Model (SIM). To optimize student performance, teachers should first receive formal training in the use of the strategy from a certified SIM trainer.

In this unit, you will focus on the ***T*** (**T**hink), ***O*** (**O**rder), and ***W*** (**W**rite) in **TOWER**. The ***E*** (**E**dit) and ***R*** (**R**ewrite) will be addressed in the next unit. Note how the Think and Order steps look in the **graphic organizer** below.

TOWER

THINK • ORDER IDEAS • WRITE • EDIT • REWRITE

T(hink)

Topic

Thoughts & Ideas

O(rder)

Subtopic 1	Subtopic 2	Subtopic 3

The *structure* of an essay is the way it has been put together, or its design. Most effective essays have three parts:

1. the introduction
2. the body
3. the conclusion.

This basic structure will apply to an essay of any length. However, in this unit, we will focus on the **five-paragraph essay**.

1. The *introduction* is the *first paragraph* in an essay. It introduces the subject and states the thesis. The *thesis statement* tells readers the main point of the essay. The most effective introductions usually place the *thesis statement* at the end of the introduction.

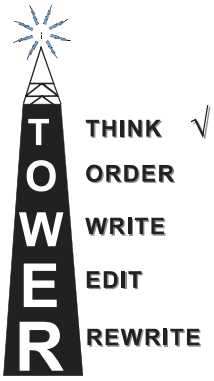
2. In a *five-paragraph essay*, the *body* consists of the *second, third, and fourth* paragraphs. These support, explain, or illustrate the thesis statement. Each body paragraph focuses on a **subtopic**. Sometimes each body paragraph can offer a reason why your thesis is true. Other times, each of these paragraphs will give an example that illustrates your thesis. The contents of the body paragraph will depend on your reason for writing. However, all body paragraphs need to contain very specific reasons and details; not just repeated statements of opinion.

3. The *conclusion* is the *last paragraph* in the essay. It may summarize the essay and bring the writing to a close.

From this point through the rest of this unit, you will be building your own **TOWER**. First, you will think of a topic and narrow it into a **useful topic** by limiting points to something specific about the *general topic*. Then you will generate ideas about your *useful topic*. These ideas will become the content of your essay. With your useful topic and ideas in hand, you will be ready to write the **first draft** of your essay.

The *T*hink in Your TOWER: Think of a Topic and Create Ideas

The first step in the writing process is to decide what you are going to write about. This step is called *selecting the writing topic*. In many cases, you will be given a **prompt**. A *prompt* provides a general topic for your writing—rather like a "wide-angle shot" with a camera. For example, a teacher might give you the general topic, "write about careers." This wide-angle shot includes hundreds, even thousands, of careers. You must narrow this topic into a *useful topic*. This process may take more than one step. For example, you may have an interest in a career in teaching students with handicaps or impairments. However, the topic "teaching students who have impairments" is still too general; there are many different kinds of impairments. A teacher of students who have visual impairments would need different training and skills than a teacher of students with auditory impairments. In the end, you might decide on the useful topic, "teaching students who have visual impairments."



In some instances, your teacher may ask you to choose a topic. For example, your teacher may ask you to write an expository essay, an essay in which you explain something. The subject you choose to explain is up to you.

Gathering Information

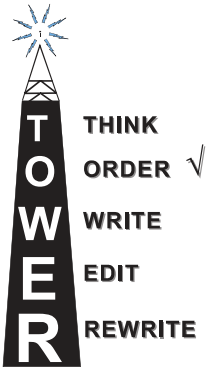
James recently completed an essay. His assignment was to explain a topic with which he was very familiar to someone unfamiliar with this subject. Since James is a pizza addict, he decided to write about pizza. James knew all the details he needed to write the essay. He had firsthand personal experience as to where to find the best pizza and what different types of pizza are available. He even knew in what portions pizza is available. James did not need to research his topic; he simply needed to collect his thoughts about it. Like James, you will often be asked to write about personal experiences and knowledge. You (again, like James) will know exactly what to say.

Since James is a pizza addict, he decided to write about pizza.

For other assignments, you will know very little. You will need to gather details in order to write. This involves collecting information and planning how you will use these details. The following three steps—*collecting your thoughts*, *researching*, and *evaluating details*—will help you generate the information you need for your essay.

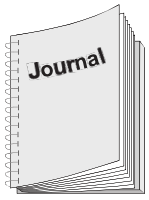
The *O* in Your TOWER: Order and Organization

Collecting Your Thoughts



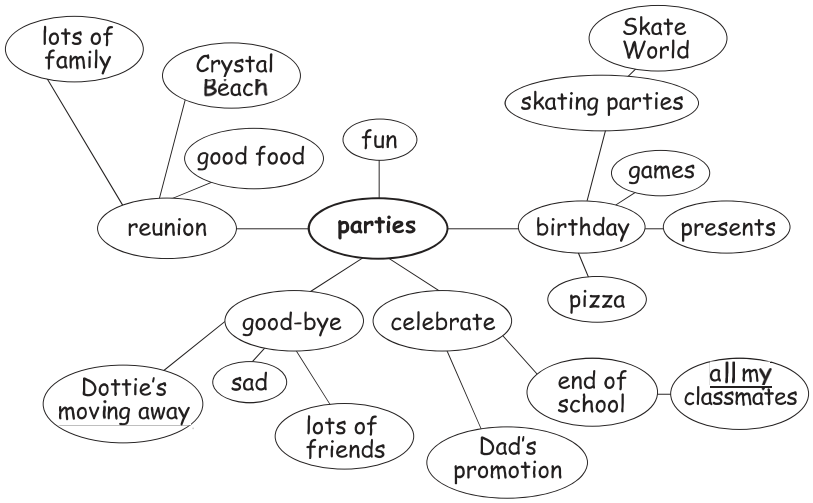
Think about your topic: What do you actually know? Often, you will be surprised. You sometimes know much more than you thought. Other times, you know very little. Use the following prewriting strategies to help organize your ideas.

- **Keeping a Journal:** Each week write in a personal journal. Write about what you do each day. Write about how you feel. Reread these entries. Underline ideas you would like to write more about. Add any new ideas that come to mind as you read these entries.



- **Clustering or Webbing:** Think of your topic. Choose a focus word. This should be a general word that relates to your assignment. Write down the focus word. Then think of other related words and phrases. Cluster these related words and phrases as in the Cluster or Web Model below.

  As you can see below, clustering or webbing is an excellent way to organize information. Clustering helps you to picture how words and phrases connect to a topic.



Cluster or Web Model

  Cluster words for about five minutes. Scan your cluster. Are any terms similar? If so, can you group them under one word? As you look over your cluster, can you think of other words to add? If so, add them. You will probably find several possible topics.

- **Listing:** Think of your topic. Write down details you already know. Write down any questions you have. Add as many details as you can.

- **Freewriting:** Begin writing with your topic in mind. Write nonstop for five to 10 minutes. Look back over your writing. Underline any ideas you would like to develop.

- **Analyzing:** Ask the following types of questions about your topic:

  1. What parts does it have?
  2. How does it look, sound, or feel?
  3. What is it like? What is it not like?
  4. What can I do with it?
  5. What is good about it? What is bad?

- **Asking the 5W-How Questions:** Who? What? Where? When? Why? How? Answering these questions will give you basic information. This will also help you go from a broad subject to a specific topic.

Researching

At one time, researching meant reading. It still includes reading. However, researching now means much more. It now also includes watching videos, digital versatile discs (DVDs), and television programs. It also includes listening to tapes or compact discs (CDs) about your topic. Surfing the Internet will also provide a wealth of information. (See Unit 1.)

Researching now means much more than reading.

Researching also includes making notes. Once you have good notes, you can organize the information. Good notes lead to good organization. This, in turn, leads to a well-written paper.

Good notes should be readable. They should also include all important information about your topic. Finally, they should be as brief as possible. Use the following tips when taking notes.

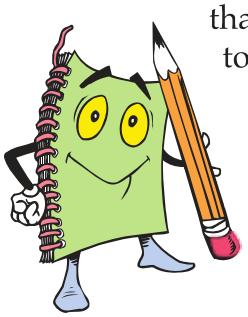
- Reread material before making notes. Read a selection the first time to get an idea of its contents. Read it a second time for more specific information.
- Keep your topic in mind. Select only information that relates to that topic. Do not write down everything there is to write.
- Write complete sentences only if you want to use a quotation. If you are going to quote the sentence, you must give credit to the source. Remember to write down:

1. the author's name
2. title of the book
3. publishing company
4. city of publication
5. date of publication
6. page number(s) where quote is found.

If you are quoting an Internet or electronic reference you must also give credit to the source. See Unit 1 pages 41-43 for the information you should obtain to give credit to the source.

Evaluating Details

Now your research is finished. You have taken notes on your topic. You have also organized these notes. You probably have more information than you need. Now you need to choose details. You need to write your paper.



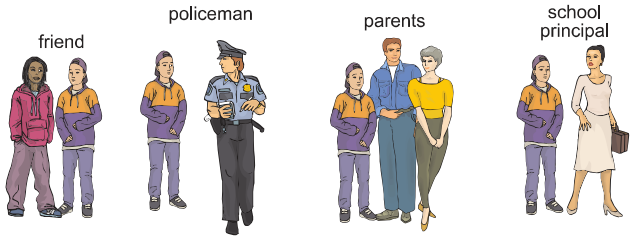
You need to write your paper.

Look back over your initial **Inventory Chart** on page 225. Did you find the answers to your questions? Did you find the details you needed? If so, write these details on your new **Research Inventory Chart** on the following page. Put them in the "What I Learned" column. Make sure to write down where you found each fact.

Take another look at your **Research Inventory Chart** on the following page. Do you have *enough* information to write your paper? If you do, you are ready to begin. If not, you will need to do *more* research.

Writing to an Audience: Reaching Out to Your Readers

After you have developed a focus for writing and generated your ideas, you must next consider a very important person before beginning to write. That person is the reader, or your audience. Think for a minute about the various people you see and speak to each day. Do you deal with every person in the exact same way? Most likely, how and what you say will change with the situation and the "receiver" of your messages. For example, would you use the same language, same tone of voice, or the same type of humor when speaking to your friend as you would if you were speaking to a policeman?—or your parents?—or the school principal?



Would you use the same language, same tone of voice, or the same type of humor when speaking to your friend as you would if you were speaking to a policeman?—or your parents?—or the school principal?

Writing works very much in the same way. Effective writers know that if they want readers to be interested, they must write directly to them —not to some anonymous (unknown) person. Considering and engaging the reader's interest ("hooking" the reader, the way you might hook a fish) shows a certain respect for the reader. If your writing is dull and predictable, the reader will think you don't really care about the subject or him. But, if you write engagingly and consider the reader's interests, the reader will eagerly read and enjoy your writing.

The information you include in your writing will depend on the reader. For example, if you were writing about the dangers of smoking, you wouldn't include the same information for a group of nonsmokers as you would for smokers. Since nonsmokers do not smoke, information on how smoking damages the lungs would be of little use to them, while information on how they could protect themselves from secondhand smoke when they find themselves around smokers would be of greater interest.

As you begin to select details, focus on your readers. Imagine you are actually sitting across from them and speaking to them as you write. Keeping them in mind as you outline and write will help you choose information and ideas that are fresh and helpful to your readers.

Before actually writing, ask yourself these questions, then keep the answers in mind as you write.

- What is my purpose in writing? What do I want to accomplish?
- Who is the reader(s)?
- How well do I know the reader?
- What is his or her age? background? profession?
- What are the reader's interests?
- What is the reader's opinion about the topic likely to be?
- How much will the reader probably know about the topic?

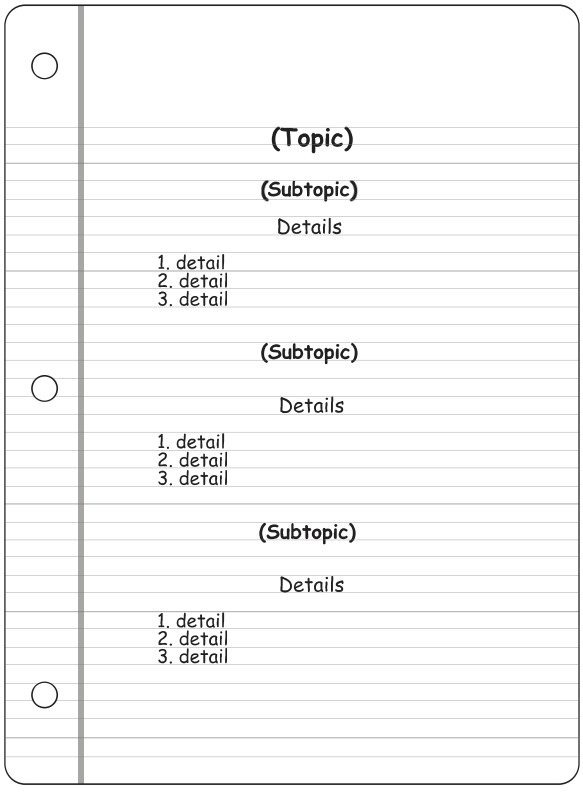
Outlining is an organized list of what you plan to write about. It is a sketch of what your writing will be. It's also a guide to keep you focused as you write your first draft. Outlines are mainly used for the body of your writing. Opening and closing paragraphs are not generally included in an outline. Outlines can change as the writer progresses through the process of developing a paper.

An outline covers a topic or an overall subject. A topic should be broad enough to have subtopics, and the subtopics should all relate to the main topic. A topic or subtopic can be broken down again and again in many different ways.

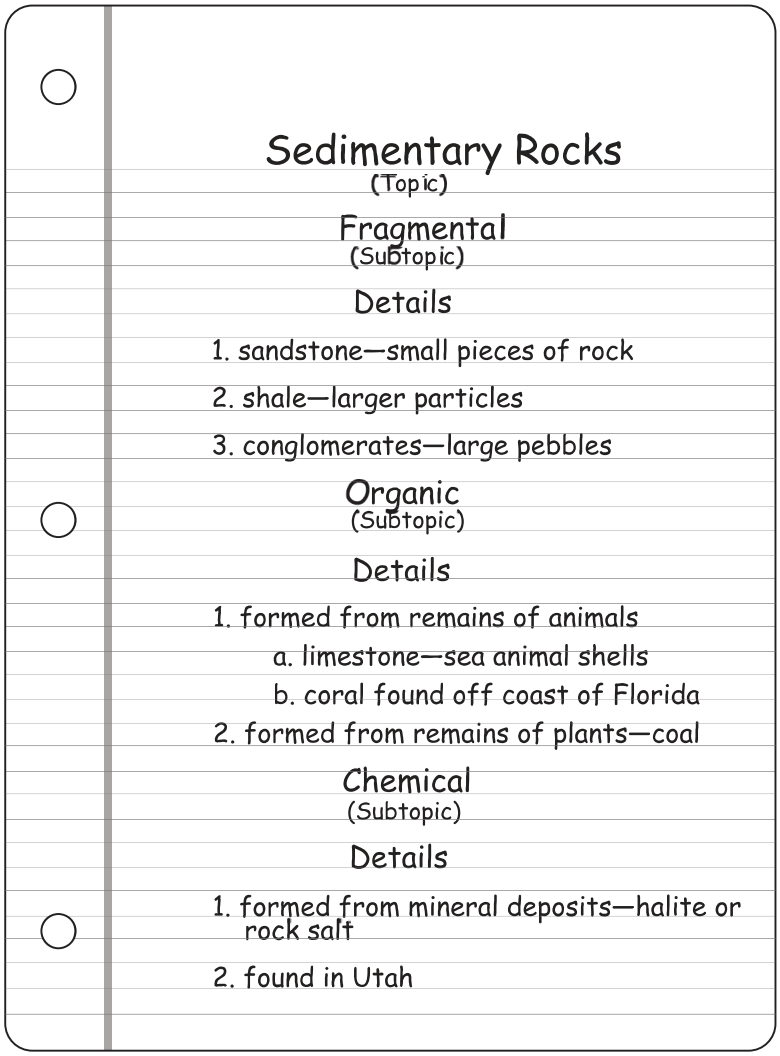
There are many different types of outlines that can be used in the writing process. The **topic outl** is one type of outline often found to be helpful.

A *topic outline* is a listing of the ideas you want to cover in your writing. Ideas are usually listed in words and phrases instead of sentences. These are especially useful for timed essays.

Below is an example of a topic outline.



Below is an actual example of a topic outline for the essay *Sedimentary Rocks* on the following page.



Sedimentary Rocks
(Topic)

Fragmental
(Subtopic)

Details

1. sandstone—small pieces of rock
2. shale—larger particles
3. conglomerates—large pebbles

Organic
(Subtopic)

Details

1. formed from remains of animals
   a. limestone—sea animal shells
   b. coral found off coast of Florida
2. formed from remains of plants—coal

Chemical
(Subtopic)

Details

1. formed from mineral deposits—halite or rock salt
2. found in Utah

The main topic of the outline is *Sedimentary Rocks*, and the subtopics are *Fragmental*, *Organic*, and *Chemical*. After each subtopic the details are supplied and sometimes even broken down further. For example, the subtopic *organic* is broken down into the details *formed from remains of animals*. The detail formed from remains of animals is then broken down further into *limestone—sea animal shells, coral found off coast of Florida*, and *formed from remains of plants—coal*. The following is an example of a paper written based upon the above outline.

Sedimentary Rocks

The surface of the Earth is constantly being broken into smaller pieces through a process called weathering. Broken pieces such as rocks, gravel, pebbles, sand, and clay are rock fragments. These rock fragments move from place to place through erosion and will settle into one place and pile up. The fragments forming these piles are called *sediments*. Over time, sediment can harden to form sedimentary rocks. Sedimentary rocks are divided into three groups according to where the sediments came from and how the rocks were formed.

Rock fragments move from place to place through erosion.

The first group of sedimentary rock is made from pieces or fragments of rocks and is called *fragmental rocks*. Fragmental rocks are further classified by the size of the pieces of rock in them. Those made of small, sand-sized grains of rock are called sandstone. They become cemented together when water, containing minerals, flows over them. Shale is made from clay or mud which has somewhat larger particles than sandstone. The particles in shale are flat and easily broken apart into flat pieces. Some fragmental rocks have large pebbles mixed with mud and sand. They are called *conglomerates*.

A second type of sedimentary rock is called *organic*. It forms when the remains of plants and animals harden into rock. Limestone is formed from the shells of sea animals. The coral reefs off the coast of Florida are also formed from sea animal remains. Coal is another rock formed from plants that lived millions of years ago.

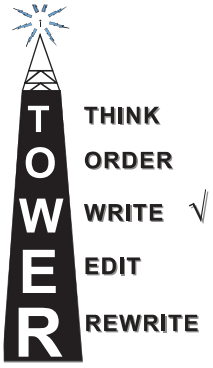
Sedimentary rock is plentiful on the surface of the Earth.

The third type of sedimentary rock is *chemical*. Chemical rocks are formed when water evaporates and leaves behind mineral deposits. Halite or rock salt is a chemical rock. Many chemical rocks are found near the Great Salt Lake in Utah.

Sedimentary rock is plentiful on the surface of the Earth. The processes by which they are formed have given each of the three types different traits. The different textures have given the rocks a variety of useful qualities that humans have put to good advantage. Fragmental rocks, such as *shale*, helped early humans make weapons. Organic rocks, such as *limestone*, are still used in construction projects. Another commonly used sedimentary rock is referred to as *rock salt*, often used to make homemade ice cream.

The Win Your TOWER: Write a First Draft

So far in this unit, you have created a useful topic, generated ideas on your topic, and grouped your ideas into subtopics. You have also learned to consider your audience in selecting your topic and the particular ideas you include in your essay. You are now ready to write a first draft.



Most first drafts are messy. When you write a first draft, you take your organized notes and mold them into sentences and paragraphs that make sense to the reader. It is almost impossible to get this perfect the first time you try! You will find that as you are writing a first draft, you will think of changes to make your document better. The first draft is the perfect way to try out different words, sentences, and details. Some of the words, sentences, and details in your first draft will work and end up in your final draft. Those parts that do not work can be refined or changed until you are satisfied, or else discarded.

In writing your first draft, you are shaping your ideas in much the same way a □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ them together to produce your working tower. There are two structures to be shaped in an essay. One key structure is the paragraph. The other key structure is the essay itself.

Developing a Paragraph: Lead with a Topic, Follow with Details

A *paragraph* is a group of words, phrases, and sentences that develops a central idea. Although the length of a paragraph can vary greatly, a standard paragraph is usually made up of four or more related sentences. (However, paragraphs may be shorter or longer.) There are different kinds of paragraphs, but the type that you will most often use in your writing is called a *topic sentence paragraph*. One of the sentences in a topic sentence paragraph tells what the paragraph is mainly about. This sentence is called the *topic sentence*. It is usually found at the beginning of the paragraph.

The topic sentence is usually followed by detail sentences. These detail sentences use definitions, descriptions, examples, facts, statistics, and reasons to develop the topic sentence or the main idea of the paragraph.

Many of these support items will come from the brainstorming ideas, mapping, and clustering that were part of the prewriting process. You only need to review your notes and choose relevant details to support, explain, or illustrate your topic sentence.

Many paragraphs also have a *concluding sentence* that summarizes the paragraph by restating the central idea. The topic sentence and the concluding sentence are the most general statements in a paragraph.

Details give readers the information they need to understand the central idea of a paragraph. The message you want to convey and the audience to whom you are writing will point you to the right details to use in your paragraphs.

There are many different ways to provide details in a paragraph. The categories below are some of the most common and effective ways of developing detail sentences.

Common and Effective Ways to Develop Detail Sentences

1. Definitions
2. Descriptions
3. Examples
4. Facts
5. Statistics (numbers or percentages)
6. Reasons or Causes

1. **Definitions.** Use a definition to define a word, a process, or a concept.

   Example: A decade means 10 years.

2. **Descriptions.** Use a description to explain what something looks like, feels like, sounds like, tastes like, etc.

   Example: The rotting fish was covered with algae.

3. **Examples.** Use an example to give readers a specific instance.

   Example: A ball tossed into the air shows the force of gravity.

4. **Facts.** Use a fact to support an opinion or claim you are making.

   Example: The timer on the security camera shows that they got home before 8:00 p.m.

5. **Statistics (numbers or percentages).** Use statistics to support a claim you are making.

   Example: Twenty percent of the class got an "A" on the test.

6. **Reasons or Causes.** Use a reason to justify a statement.

   Example: You should not drive under the influence of alcohol because it increases your chances of causing an accident.

Sometimes writers have a hard time including enough details to support a main idea. If this happens to you, check the list above for ideas on the kinds of details you could add to your paragraph.

Remember: Readers need clear and accurate details to understand what you have written.

Study the example below of a paragraph that has a topic sentence followed by detail sentences. The topic sentence is italicized.

> *Until about 150 years ago, most parents thought of and treated their children as younger adults*. Many children worked right beside their parents as soon as they were old enough to work. If the father was a cobbler, his children most likely helped to make and fix shoes. Parents who worked in factories thought themselves lucky if they could get their children jobs working right beside them. Children did not have lengthy childhoods as we might imagine.

Notice that the *topic sentence* clearly states the main idea of the paragraph. It helps readers prepare for what follows: Readers expect that the sentences that follow, *the detail sentences*, will discuss, explain, and support how children were treated as "younger adults." Read the paragraph again and note how each detail sentence refers to and develops the topic sentence.

The Five-Paragraph Essay: The Introduction, the Body, and the Conclusion

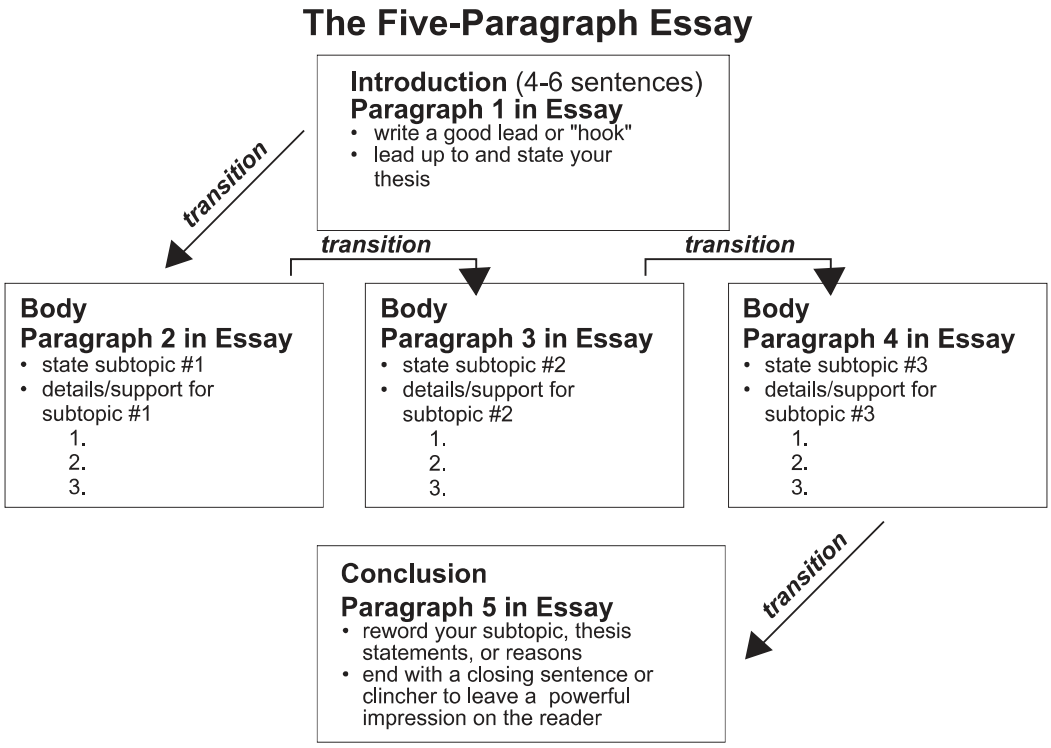
There are many good structures on which to develop an essay. One essay structure that millions of students have used to develop their papers is the *five-paragraph essay*. The five-paragraph essay has five paragraphs divided into three parts:

Paragraph 1: The introduction

Paragraphs 2, 3, and 4: The body

Paragraph 5: The conclusion

This kind of structure works well because it organizes your ideas into a form your readers can easily follow. In the first paragraph, it tells your readers the topic of your essay. In the second, third, and fourth paragraphs, it develops your topic. In the fifth paragraph, it sums up what you've said or adds a final statement of interest.



Paragraph 1: The Introductory Paragraph

A key element to effective writing is the introductory or opening paragraph. The introductory paragraph is, in one sense, a preview of what your paper will be about.

An introductory or opening paragraph should do the following:

- clarify your topic to the reader
- spark the reader's interest; "hook" your reader
- commit you to a certain kind of language (tone)
- establish the pattern or organization of the rest of your essay.

An introductory or opening paragraph is the paragraph that will either grab the reader's attention and make him or her want to read on, eager for every word, or make the reader decide to just skim through the remaining paragraphs.

An introductory or opening paragraph should include the following:

- an intriguing introduction to your topic
- a thesis statement that includes three ideas or subtopics about the topic that you plan to develop or expand in the body paragraphs.

Some possible starting points for an interesting introduction are the following:

- begin with a brief, funny story (to set a humorous tone)
  Example: One day, not so long ago, I was walking my dog when a stray dog appeared from nowhere. Certain these two growling dogs were about to fight, I held the leash tightly. Suddenly the two dogs got up on their two back legs, held each other with their two front legs and began to dance a waltz.
- challenge the reader with a thought provoking question
  Example: Did you know that every 30 minutes in this country someone dies in an alcohol-related car accident?

- offer a "preview" of your conclusion to grab the reader's attention
  Example: A well-organized person can work eight hours, work out for two hours, do housework for an hour, cook for another hour, and still have three hours of leisure time every day of the week.

- provide a dramatic or eye-opening statement
  Example: It's up to the residents of this city: We either stop the proposed new mall from being built or lose the only playground we have left!

- come up with a new angle about the topic
  Example: Although many farmers think technology and expensive machinery are the only way they can make a living, some farmers are learning that returning to a horse-drawn plow can increase their profits.

- if you are writing from a prompt, reword the prompt or topic
  Example: (Prompt: Everyone faces rude people. Explain how you respond to rude people and why you use this response.) Rude people are a part of everyone's life, but the important thing when interacting with them is to not also act rudely.

Here's how to construct a good introductory paragraph.

Your introductory paragraph should have the shape of a V or a funnel. That is, you want to begin your discussion in a general way and then gradually narrow your focus to your *thesis statement*. Your thesis statement, then, will be the *last sentence* of your introductory paragraph.

Opening sentence of your introductory paragraph: Choose one of the starting points from the list above. Of course, not just any of these will do. Select one which fits your thesis statement. If your thesis statement is about crime in high schools,

Introductory Paragraph

then a dramatic or eye-opening statement may work. For example, imagine that your thesis statement is the following:

> "Only by teaching nonviolent ways to resolve conflicts, increasing suspensions for students who commit violence, and increasing counseling for students who are victimized by crime can we return schools to students who want to learn."

A good opening sentence for this thesis would be,

> "Last year Valerie missed 42 days of school, 12 days while she recovered from a beating and 30 days while she overcame her fear of the place she once loved to go."

Sentences 2, 3, 4 of your introductory paragraph: Move from your opening statement and begin to focus in on your thesis statement. If you had written the thesis statement and opening sentence in the example above, you would then ask yourself: "How do I move smoothly from my opening sentence to my thesis statement?"

Here is an opening sentence, thesis statement, and the sentences one writer used to get from one to the other:

> (*Opening sentence*) Last year Valerie missed 42 days of school, 12 days while she recovered from a beating and 30 days while she overcame her fear of the place she once loved to go. (*Sentence 2*) Valerie is just one student of over one-half million who has been a victim of violence. (*Sentence 3*) How can Valerie or any other student pay attention to an algebra equation or to the causes of the Civil War when she is worried about her own safety? (*Sentence 4*) If we want to improve education in our country, we must start by bringing peace to the halls of our schools.
>
> (*Thesis statement*) Only by teaching nonviolent ways to resolve conflicts, increasing suspensions for students who commit violence, and increasing counseling for students who are victimized by crime can we return schools to students who want to learn.

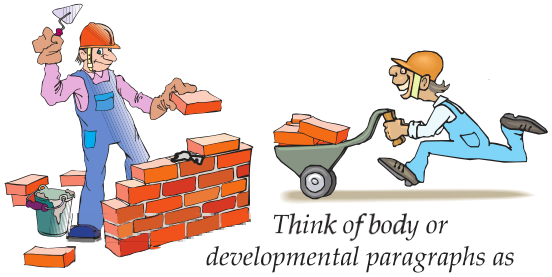
Thesis statement or last sentence: Your thesis statement should include the three *subtopics* of your essay. Look again at the sample thesis statement with each subtopic numbered:

> "Only by (1) teaching nonviolent ways to resolve conflicts, (2) increasing suspensions for students who commit violence, and (3) increasing counseling for students who are victimized by crime can we return schools to students who want to learn."

Note that the focus of each body paragraph has already been stated. The second paragraph of the essay or body paragraph #1 will focus on the subtopic of teaching nonviolent ways to resolve conflicts. The third paragraph of the essay or body paragraph #2 will focus on the subtopic of increasing suspensions for students who commit violence. The fourth paragraph of the essay or body paragraph #3 will focus on the subtopic of increasing counseling for students who are victimized by crime.

Paragraphs 2, 3, and 4: Body Paragraphs

Body or developmental paragraphs are the heart of an essay. Each paragraph must be considered both as an independent unit as well as a part of the whole essay. Think of these paragraphs as building blocks or bricks. Each brick must first incorporate sand, water, and heat with other necessary elements to hold together as a single brick and, at the same time, each brick must work together with other bricks to create a stable brick wall.



Think of body or developmental paragraphs as building blocks or bricks.

Each body paragraph should cover a subtopic. If you wrote your thesis statement, you already have the three subtopics or key pieces of supporting evidence to back your thesis statement.

Think of each body paragraph as a mini-essay. Your topic sentence is much like your thesis statement. Your topic sentence states the focus of your paragraph. Like your thesis statement, your topic sentence needs support and development. Try to discover at least three details or supporting evidence to describe, support, or illustrate your topic sentence. You may well already have these supporting pieces from your prewriting activities such as listing, freewriting, and clustering activities.

Body paragraphs must be arranged in the best possible way to make your point. They must also flow smoothly from one to the next. To create this flow, make sure the first sentence in each paragraph effectively links to the previous paragraph with the use of **transitional** words, phrases, and sentences such as *additionally*, *as well*, *even so*, *for instance*, *recently*, *again*, and *since*. You can also see a list of transitions and connecting words on pages 349-350 and in Appendix A.

Paragraph 5: The Concluding Paragraph

The concluding paragraph is often overlooked or under-appreciated by writers. Writers may feel that they have said all they have to say on their topic in the introductory and body paragraphs. However, without a well-developed concluding paragraph, your essay is not finished—it is only abandoned. A concluding paragraph should remind your readers of what you have said in a new way. It should not repeat what you have said; it should emphasize what you have said. In addition, a concluding paragraph can give your reader something interesting to take with him. Your good-bye to the reader may include, for example, something to think about. Your concluding paragraph should, however, always leave your reader feeling satisfied…feeling as if nothing was missing and the amount of discussion was just right.

A concluding paragraph should do the following:

- summarize, or tell your readers, again, your main point(s)
- present one new thing about your topic or present a new angle on your topic
- bring your essay to a close, much the way you would bring a car to a stop.

A concluding paragraph should include the following:

- a summary or retelling of your main point(s) without using the exact sentences, phrases, or words you used in your introductory or body paragraphs
- a final statement that leaves your reader feeling that your discussion has been finished rather than abandoned.