

ORGANIZING ESSAYS

A well-organized essay is not a random collection of paragraphs; it is a unit constructed of definite parts assembled in a logical order to perform specific functions. Essays should have three clearly defined parts in a specific order: an INTRODUCTION, a BODY, and a CONCLUSION.

THE INTRODUCTION

Every good introduction performs the following functions:

It captures the attention of the reader.

It contains the thesis statement.

Ways to Capture the Reader's Attention:

- Ask a question: *How long will you live?*
- Make a startling statement: *All that goes up may never come down.*
- Tell a related story: *At the tenth chime of the clock, my throat locked.*

Attention-getters should not only "grab" the reader; they should also direct the essay toward the thesis. For example, the question *How long will you live?* might be used to introduce a thesis on aging in America. Similarly, *All that goes up may never come down* might be appropriate for an attention-getter thesis about spacecraft. In general, the introduction should consist of three or four sentences before the thesis statement. The thesis statement is usually the last sentence in the introductory paragraph.

The Thesis:

The thesis statement serves two functions:

- It organizes the main topics in logical order so the reader can tell what the essay is about.
- It provides a map for the reader, while controlling the logic and scope of the essay.

THE BODY

The body of an essay should explain and expand, through examples, the thesis of the essay. This function is performed by standard paragraphs, each of which has a topic sentence, transitions, and developing sentences that present concrete evidence. Body paragraphs should contain at least four or five sentences, each of which is logically related to and builds on the topic sentence. Remember that each topic sentence must be related to the thesis.

THE CONCLUSION

The conclusion should perform at least one of these four functions: summarize the major topics; emphasize one or more major topics; give the results of a chain of reasoning; stimulate the reader to act.

The *summarizing essay* reviews all the major topics discussed in the body of the work. In a few words, it reminds the reader what has been covered. Not every essay need conclude with a summary; a summary of a very short essay may insult the reader's intelligence. However, as length increases, so does the usefulness of a summarizing conclusion.

An *emphasizing conclusion* does not repeat ALL the main topics, but selects a few of the most important ones and repeats them as vividly as possible.

The *resulting conclusion* is most appropriate in a work built on a chain of reasoning, such as an argumentative or persuasive essay. A resulting conclusion often begins with a logical transition word, such as THEREFORE or CONSEQUENTLY.

The *stimulating conclusion* is intended to stir the reader to do something; paint the house, buy a product, confess a sin, and so on. It is often characterized by an emotional appeal, a call to action.

A conclusion may combine several of these methods. For example, it may be stimulating, summarizing, and emphasizing. No matter which method is used, all require a conclusion; they should not merely stop.

Most important, the elements of an essay should give the work a sense of unity and completion. Unity depends on good planning, logical organization, and a clear beginning, middle, and end.

ESSAY WORKSHEET

I N T R O D U C T I O N	ATTENTION-GETTING SENTENCE
B O D Y # 1	TOPIC SENTENCE
	EVIDENCE
B O D Y # 2	TOPIC SENTENCE
	EVIDENCE
B O D Y # 3	TOPIC SENTENCE
	EVIDENCE
C O N C L U S I O N	REPHRASE THESIS