

## From Paragraph to Essay

### The Structure of an Essay

#### What is an essay?

An essay is a group of paragraphs written about a single topic and a central main idea. It must have at least three paragraphs, but a five-paragraph essay is a common assignment for academic writing.

#### The three main parts of an essay

##### The introduction

This is the first paragraph of an essay. It explains the topic with general ideas. It also has a thesis statement. This is a sentence that gives the main idea. It usually comes at or near the end of the paragraph.



##### The body

These are the paragraphs that explain and support the thesis statement and come between the introduction and the conclusion. There must be one or more body paragraphs in an essay.



##### The conclusion

This is the last paragraph of an essay. It summarizes or restates the thesis and the supporting ideas of the essay.



### Thesis statements

#### What is a thesis statement?

The thesis statement is the sentence that tells the main idea of the whole essay. It can be compared to a topic sentence, which gives the main idea of a paragraph. It usually comes at or near the end of the introductory paragraph.

**1** In these introductory paragraphs, underline the thesis statement. Then circle the topic and draw another line under the main idea in each thesis statement. Share your answers with a partner.

**a.**  
Before I traveled to the U.S. last year, I thought that American food was just hamburgers and French fries, hot dogs, steaks, pizza, apple pie, and cola. These foods are popular in the States, but during my travels, I discovered that there is so much more to eating in America. People from every country in the world have made their home in the U.S.A., and they have brought with them their native foods. Even in small towns, you can find restaurants serving the foods of China and Mexico, Italy and Vietnam. The United States can be divided into six general regions that have their own characteristic foods influenced by the cultures of the people who live there.

**b.**  
Everybody knows the koala, that cute Australian animal that resembles a teddy bear. Although koalas look like toys, they are actually strong climbers and spend their days in the treetops. Mother koalas carry their babies around from tree to tree in a pouch, or pocket, on their stomach. Although there were millions of koalas in Australia in the past, they are now a protected species of animal. As a result of human population growth, deforestation, and hunting, the number of koalas has declined.



**c.**  
Taoism is an ancient philosophy from Asia that places great importance on the natural world. Taoists believe that spirit can be found in every person or thing, living or non-living. For the Taoist, even a mountain or a stone contains spirit. Lao Tzu, a Taoist writer and philosopher, said "People follow earth. Earth follows heaven. Heaven follows the Tao. The Tao follows what is natural." For thousands of years in China and other Asian countries, gardens have been an important way to create a place where people can feel the spirit of the natural world. Creating a Taoist garden is an art. No two Taoist gardens are exactly alike, but all Taoist gardens include four essential elements: water, mountains, buildings, and bridges.

### Writing a strong thesis statement

A thesis statement gives the author's opinion or states an important idea about the topic. It should give an idea that can be discussed and explained with supporting ideas:

*The qualifications for entering a university in my country are unreasonable.*

*When studying a second language, there are several ways to improve your use of the language.*

A thesis statement should not be a sentence that only gives a fact about the topic:

*In the Northern Hemisphere, the summer months are warmer than the winter months.*

This is not a strong thesis statement. It cannot be discussed or argued about.

A thesis statement should not state two sides of an argument equally:

*There are advantages and disadvantages to using nuclear power.*

This could be a topic sentence, but it is not a thesis statement. It gives two sides of an argument without giving a clear opinion of support or disagreement. It could be revised like this:

*Although there are some advantages, using nuclear power has many disadvantages and should not be a part of our country's energy policy.*

This is a strong thesis statement. It clearly gives the writer's opinion about nuclear power.

**2** Read these thesis statements below. Write ✓ (strong thesis statement), F (fact only - a weak thesis statement), or N (no clear opinion - a weak thesis statement).

- a. .... The top government official in my country is the prime minister.
- b. .... Some people prefer digital cameras, while others like traditional cameras.
- c. .... Bangladesh became an independent country in 1971.
- d. .... To be a successful student, good study habits are more important than intelligence.
- e. .... There are several advantages of owning a car, but there are also many disadvantages.
- f. .... Half of the families in my country own a house.
- g. .... Using public transportation would be one of the best ways to solve the traffic and pollution problems in cities around the world.
- h. .... While traveling, staying in a hotel offers more comfort, but sleeping in a tent is less expensive.
- i. .... Classical music concerts are very popular in my country.
- j. .... In order to create a successful advertisement, it is necessary to consider three issues: who should be targeted, where the ad should be placed, and what type of ad should be made.

### How to connect the thesis statement and the essay

The body paragraphs of an essay should always explain the thesis statement. In addition, each body paragraph should discuss one part of the thesis. Look at the following thesis statement. The topics to be discussed are underlined:

To create a successful advertisement, it is necessary for advertisers to answer three questions: What are we selling? Who are we selling it to? and How can we make people want to buy it?

#### Possible topic sentences for each body paragraph:

- 1. The first step in creating a successful advertisement is to completely understand the product that is being sold and how it can be used.
- 2. A second important part of creating an advertisement is deciding who is expected to buy the product.
- 3. Finally, a way must be found to create an ad that will make people want to buy the product.



**3** Look at the introductory paragraphs a, b, and c. What should the body paragraphs discuss for each thesis statement? Write your ideas and then compare your answers with a partner.

#### How to develop a thesis statement

One way to develop a thesis statement for an essay is to write opinions you have about the topic. Begin, I think that ... and complete the sentence with your opinion. Then remove I think that ... and the remaining words make a possible thesis statement.

#### Topic: diet/food

~~I think that~~ a vegetarian diet is one of the best ways to live a healthy life.

~~I think that~~ governments should restrict the use of chemicals in agriculture and food production.

After you have written several opinion statements, choose the one that would make the best thesis. Remember to decide if the sentence gives a clear opinion, states a fact, or presents two sides without a clear argument.

**4** For each of these topics, write two or three opinions you have, starting with *I think that*.

#### a. Exercise

.....  
.....  
.....

#### b. university study

.....  
.....  
.....

#### c. the Internet

.....  
.....  
.....

#### d. music

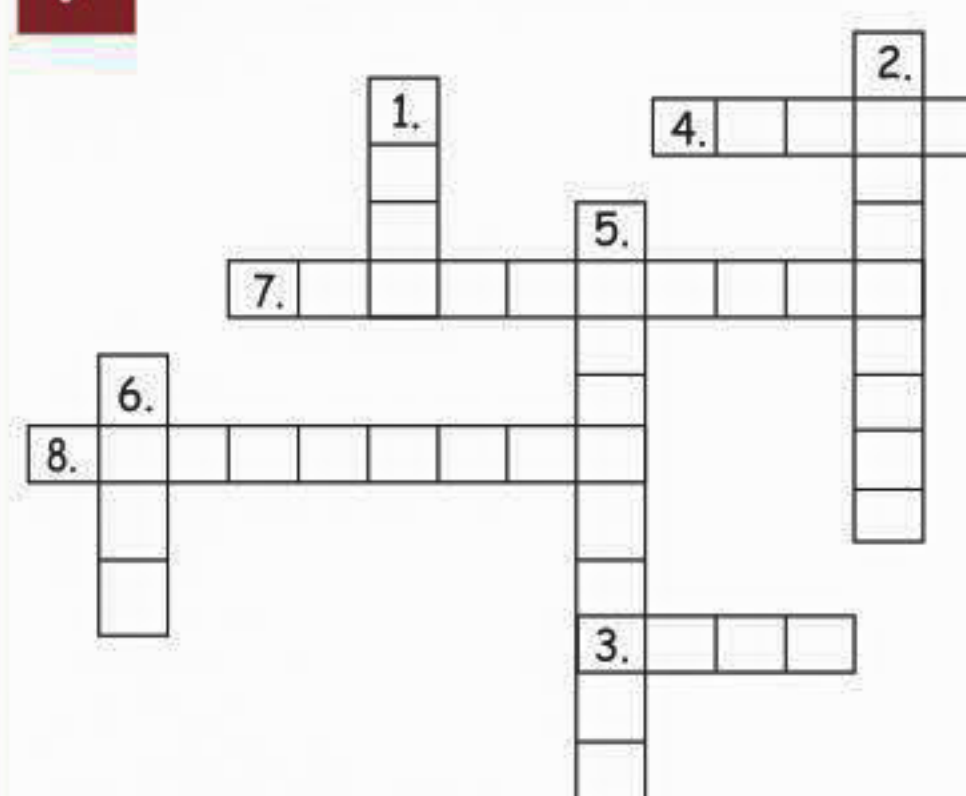
.....  
.....  
.....

**5** Now cross out the *I think that* in the statements you wrote in the exercise above. Choose the best thesis statement for each topic. Share these with a partner. Decide which ones are good thesis statements.

**6** Choose one of your thesis statements from exercise above. Circle the topics that must be explained in the essay. Write a topic sentence for each of the circled ideas.

### Review

**7** Complete the crossword.



The topic sentence gives the 1. m idea of a 2. p..... Likewise, the thesis statement gives the main 3. i of an 4. e..... The 5. s sentences of a paragraph explain the topic sentence, just as the 6. b paragraphs of an essay explain the thesis statement. The last sentence of a paragraph is called the 7. c sentence, and the last paragraph of an essay is called the 8. c.....

the next MONDAY issue Outlining an Essay

**A** Below is a part of a letter Jenny wrote to her brother, describing her terrible week.

Complete the letter using *when, while, during* or *for*.



..... and then on Thursday, I took a new client out to lunch at the French restaurant in the center of town. What a disaster! Everything was fine at first - we got a nice table, but (1) ..... they started playing music, we found we were next to the speakers. We changed tables and ordered our meal. We waited (2) ..... half an hour before the waiter brought the wine, and then (3) ..... he was pouring it he spilt it all over my client's suit.

She said, 'Don't worry,' but I could see she was very angry, so (4) ..... we were having the first course, the atmosphere was quite tense. Then (5) ..... we were waiting for the main course, the couple on the next table started having a loud argument!

The worst thing was (6) ..... the bill came, I realised I'd left my credit card at home. I felt really embarrassed and in the end she had to pay. And that wasn't all - I said goodbye to her and went to the car park and found that someone had stolen my tire (7) ..... the meal.

### B Time for short Dialogues... 2



Use the prompts to write two conversations about accidents. One example is done for you.

*Penny told me you / have / accident yesterday. What / happen?*

Answer: *Penny told me you had an accident yesterday. What happened?*

**A:** We / drive / home and another car / stop / suddenly and we / crash / into the back of it.

**B:** Be / the other car alright?

**C:** What / you / do to your hand?

**D:** Oh no, how?

**E:** Yes, luckily we / not go / very fast.

**F:** I / burn / it.

**G:** I / iron / a shirt and the phone / ring, and I / put / the iron down on my hand by mistake!

### C Test Your Article



Good morning. Let me introduce myself. My name is Tasnim, I'm (1) ..... accountant and I work for (2) ..... medium-sized industrial finance company based in Dhaka. My company Ajanta Enterprise is one of (3) ..... most important manufacturers in (4) ..... country. We produce (5) ..... wide range of goods including plastics for (6) ..... automobile industry. I enjoy my job because it gives me the opportunity to meet lots of interesting people and to travel abroad. (7) ..... only thing I dislike about my job is having to work at (8) ..... weekend.

## FIND THE ANSWERS IN NEXT MONDAY ISSUE

### ANSWER KEY TO THE LAST EIS PAGE ACTIVITIES (DATED NOVEMBER 3, 2014)

#### 9Key:

- a. Can you make this topic stronger?
- b. Did you remember a concluding sentence?
- c. Please explain more about your vacation. Where did you stay? What did you do during the day?
- d. I'm not sure what this part means.
- e. I think this sentence should come before the next one.
- f. I think these two sentences are really saying the same thing.
- g. Your paragraph is about your brother, but this sentence is about your sister. Are you sure it's relevant?
- h. I like your topic sentence because it has a strong main idea. Your example is funny. I wish I could meet your brother

#### 12 Key:

- a. T
- b. T
- c. F can also be a short description or record of an event or anything else.
- d. F No, but restates the main idea in a different way.
- e. F No, it should not introduce a new point.
- f. F No, only pay attention to the content and organization of the paper.
- g. T
- h. F It helps both. Reading others' paragraphs and essays can give the reader good ideas to use in the future.
- i. F No, it means the writing is not clear enough.
- j. T

#### A KEY:

- (1) education (2) examination (3) library (4) uniform (5) idea (6) correct (7) success (8) language (9) composition (10) describe (11) excellent (12) behaviour (13) illegible (14) speak (15) absence

#### B KEY:

To pay her back for the glass eye in his beer, Mr Twit decided he would put a frog in Mrs Twit's bed. He caught a big one down by the pond and carried it secretly in a box.

That night when Mrs Twit was in the bathroom getting ready for bed, Mr Twit slipped the frog between her sheets. Then he got into his own bed and waited for the fun to begin.

Mrs Twit came back and climbed into her bed and put out the light. She lay there in the dark.

Then all on a sudden, she felt something cold and slimy crawling her feet. She started to scream.

#### C KEY:

- (1) were you doing (2) was working (3) did not hear (4) talked (5) went (6) did (7) was (8) Were (9) was training (10) broke (11) spent