

6. HAFTA

HOW TO WRITE AN ESSAY

THE ELEMENTS OF GOOD WRITING

Not everyone is a naturally gifted writer. Fortunately, writing is a skill that you can practice and master. In some ways, writing is like driving a car. If you have ever driven in another country, you know that some of the rules of the road may be different. Just as the rules for driving differ from country to country, the conventions for writing may change from language to language.

Writing in English involves more than mastering its vocabulary and grammar. Language, including written language, is a reflection of the thought patterns of native speakers. In order to write well in English, it is important to understand the **way native speakers organize their thoughts**. That is why it **rarely works to write something in your native language and then translate it into English**. The words may be in English, but the **logic, organization, and thought patterns reflect those of your native language**.

To write effectively in English, **you need to conform to the accepted patterns of organization**. Practicing these patterns will put you on the road to becoming a better writer.

WHAT IS ACADEMIC WRITING?

Academic writing is the kind of writing used in high school and college/university classes. Academic writing is different from creative writing, which is the kind of writing you do when you write stories. It is also different from personal writing, which is the kind of writing you do when you write letters or e-mails to your friends and family. Creative writing and personal writing are informal, so you may use slang, colloquial (daily) language, abbreviations, and incomplete sentences. However, **academic writing is formal**, so you should **not use slang or contractions**. Also, you should take care to write **complete sentences and to organize them in a certain way**.

FROM PARAGRAPH TO ESSAY

Parts of a paragraph

A **paragraph** is a **group of sentences** that all relate to a **single topic**. A paragraph consists of three parts: a topic sentence, several supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence.

A **topic sentence** is the most important sentence in a paragraph because it contains the main idea/topic of the paragraph. It is the first sentence in a paragraph.

Supporting sentences explain the topic sentence with examples, statistics, facts etc. • And usually, **a concluding sentence** is a restatement of the topic sentence. Notice these three parts in Model Paragraph 1 below.

Look at this model paragraph. What is the purpose of each shaded part?

Model Paragraph 1

Man's Best Friend

Topic sentence Supporting Sentence Conclusion

There are three main relationships that people have with dogs.** First, we have working dogs. These dogs, such as Siberian huskies and collies, serve people almost like employees. To a sheep farmer, for example, a good sheep dog is his most valuable partner. Other dogs are known primarily for their excellence in sports. The sleek and extremely fast greyhound is used in dog races, and many hunting dogs, such as setters, retrievers, and pointers, often compete in hunting trials. Third, many people enjoy dogs as companions. All kinds of dogs can be excellent companion, but a few breeds are kept only for this purpose. Some examples are the toy dogs, such as Chihuahuas or Lhasa apsos. In short, **because of the relationships they have with people, dogs are often called “man’s best friend.”

When you want to write about a topic in more detail, you can turn your paragraph into an essay. Writing an essay is a lot like writing a paragraph. Similar to a paragraph, an **essay** is composed of **three sections**. These sections are the **introductory paragraph**, the **body paragraphs**, and the **concluding paragraph**. Paragraphs can be easily expanded to essay length. Here is Model Paragraph 1 expanded into an essay.

Model Essay 1

Man's Best Friend

The dog is generally considered the first domesticated animal. It is believed that the direct ancestor of the domestic dog is the wolf, originally found throughout Europe, Asia, and North America. Archaeologists have found remains of dogs that are 10,000 years old. In these ancient societies, as well as in our modern one, there are three main relationships that people have with dogs.

Introduction
Paragraph
(Expansion of
Topic
Sentence)

First, there are working dogs. These dogs, such as Siberian huskies and collies, serve people almost like employees. The dogs help pull heavy loads, round up cattle, and keep a sharp eye out for strangers. To a sheep farmer, for example, a good sheepdog is his most valuable partner. Sheepdogs, such as Border collies, standard collies, and Shetland sheepdogs, are very intelligent and can learn to respond to hand signals as well as spoken words. Sheepdogs in Scotland, for instance, move sheep along with just a glance from the farmer. As a result, working dogs know their worth to their master, and they are proud of it.

1st Body
Paragraph
(Expansion of 1st reason)

Other dogs are known primarily for their excellence in sports. For example, the sleek and extremely fast greyhound is used in dog races. These races take place on specially prepared tracks where the competitors chase a mechanical rabbit. People gamble on these athletes' performance. Next, special hunting dogs often compete in hunting trials. Bird dogs are a type of hunting dog. Setters and pointers, for example, recognize a bird's scent long before it makes a sound and show their owner where the bird is by standing very still. Retrievers, such as golden retrievers or Labrador retrievers, will throw themselves into an icy cold lake to pick up the bird their owner has shot. Clearly, sporting dogs are the athletes of the dog world.

2nd Body
Paragraph
(Expansion of 2nd reason)

Third, many people enjoy dogs as companions. All kinds of dogs can be excellent friends. Both the working dogs and the hunting dogs have great patience and are very good with small children. Most of these dogs will allow children to climb all over them and are great baby-sitters because of their loyalty to their owner and their family. A few breeds are kept only for the purpose of being a companion. Some of these are the toy dogs, such as Chihuahuas or Lhasa apsos. Since these dogs are so tiny, they are great to have if you live in a small apartment. In short, all dogs, including the toy dogs, are wonderful companions.

3rd Body
Paragraph
(Expansion of 3rd reason)

In summary, although there are a great many breeds of dogs, they can be classified into these three main types by their relationships to their owners. Even if you have no interest in sports and no farm, you can have a great companion in a dog. Because of the relationships they have with people, dogs are often called "man's best friend."

Concluding
Paragraph
(Expansion of Concluding
Sentence)

The topic sentence of the paragraph becomes the thesis statement of the essay, which comes at the end of the introductory paragraph. The supporting sentences of the original paragraph expand into three separate body paragraphs in the essay. In other words, each major supporting sentence and its supports in the Model Paragraph 1 become one body paragraph in the corresponding essay. Finally, the concluding sentence is made into a concluding paragraph.

Topic sentence Thesis statement
Supporting sentences Body paragraphs
Concluding sentence Concluding paragraph

ESSAY FORMAT

When you write an essay in English, you must use the correct essay format. Create an original title and place it in the centre of the page. Also, leave a blank line between each line of writing. The first line of each paragraph should be indented.

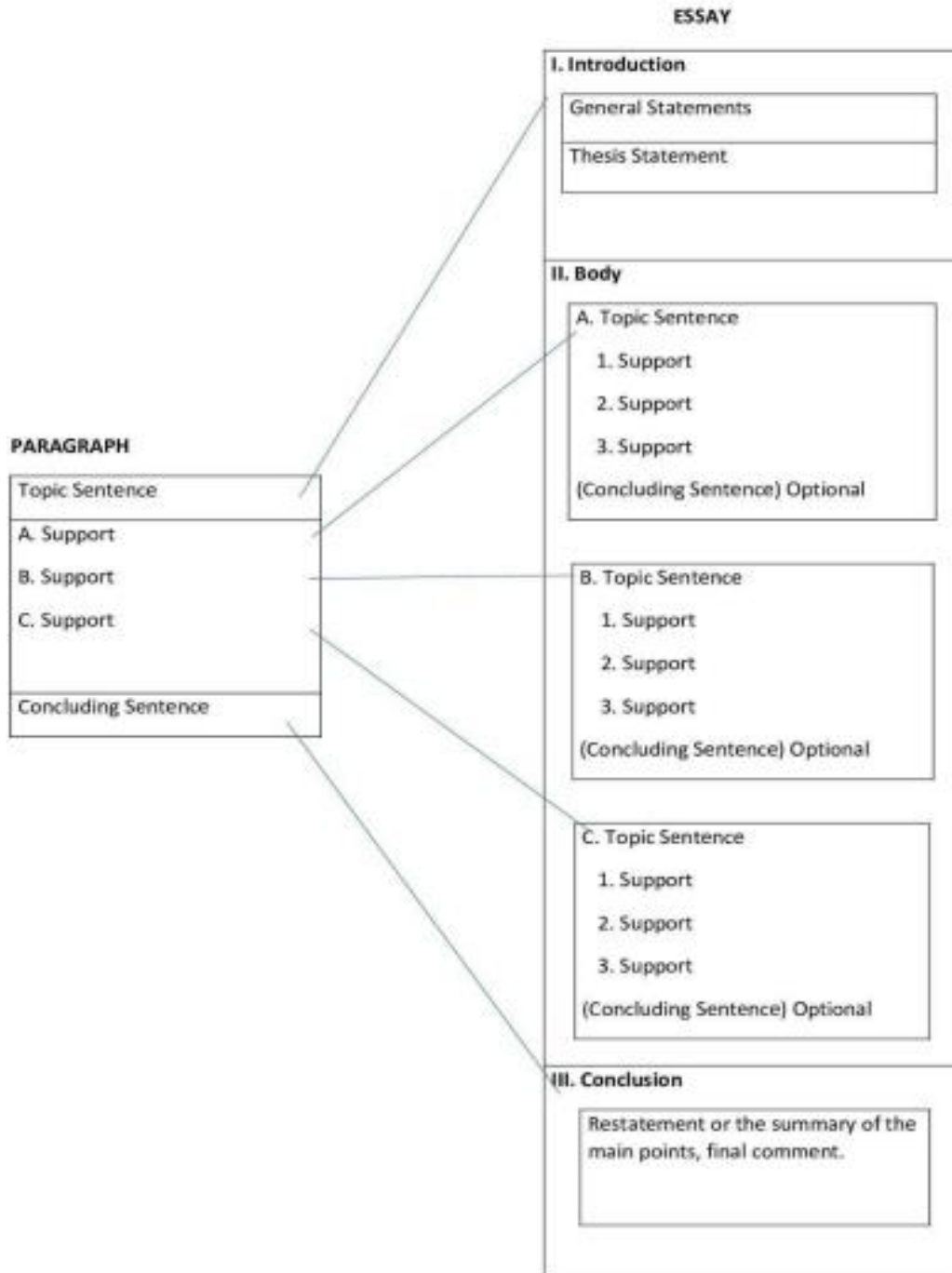
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(The essay continues)

Man's Best Friend

INTRODUCTION TO WRITING AN ESSAY



ESSAY ORGANIZATION

There are three parts in an essay: introduction, body, and conclusion. An essay **introduction** consists of two parts: general statements to provide background information and a thesis statement to state the main idea of the essay. A thesis statement for an essay is like a topic sentence for a paragraph: It names the specific topic and gives the reader a general idea of the contents of the essay. The **body** consists of two or more paragraphs (preferably three).

Each paragraph develops a reason to support the main argument in the thesis statement. The **conclusion**, like the concluding sentence in a paragraph, is a summary or review of the main points discussed in the body. An essay has **unity** and **coherence**, just as a paragraph does. **Connectors** and **the repetition of key nouns** link the paragraphs into a cohesive whole.

1. INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH

The introductory paragraph, or introduction, is the first paragraph of an essay. It has three functions:

- It attracts the reader's attention.
- It provides background information.
- It states the main idea of the essay in a thesis statement.

Moving from General to Specific

There are several kinds of introductory paragraphs. In this booklet, you will learn to write a kind known as **moving from general to specific**.

This introduction has two parts: several general statements and one thesis statement. The **general statements** give the reader background information about the topic of the essay. This strategy leads the reader gradually from a very general idea of your topic to a very specific idea. The first general statement just introduces the topic. Each sentence that follows becomes more and more focused on a specific topic. The **thesis statement** is the last sentence in an introductory paragraph. It has three purposes:

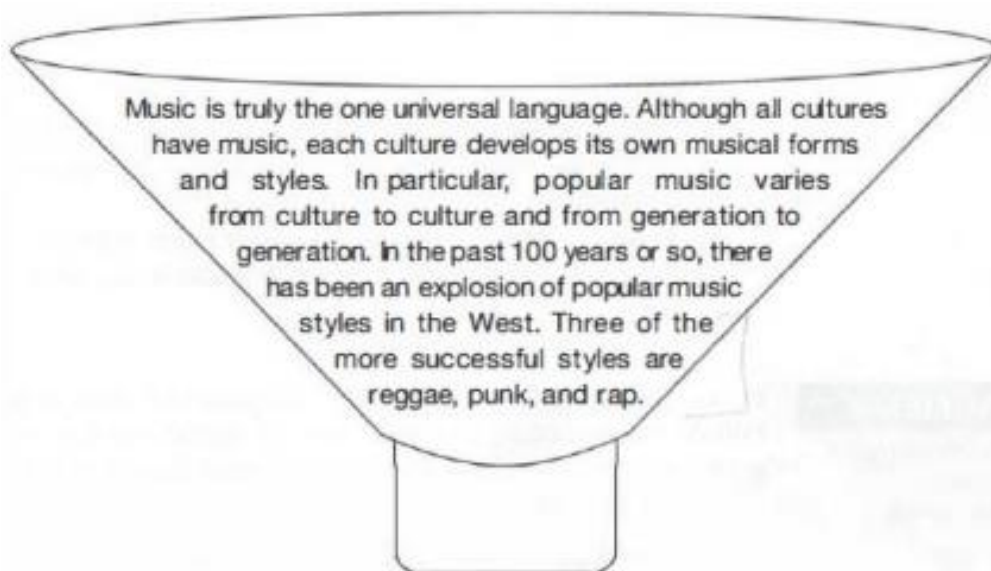
- It states the specific topic of the essay.
- It may list the subtopics of the main topic.
- It may also mention the method of organization.

Example 1: *Read the example introduction and notice how the sentences gradually move from the general topic of dogs to the specific topic, three types of dogs.*

The dog is one of the most popular pets. One very important reason why people love dogs as pets is that they are great fun. They can make you laugh, and they are there at the end of a hard day! Also, they can improve our physical and mental health. Besides these, there are assistance dogs that can actually help: They are special dogs with training to help people with disabilities or special needs. There are several types of assistance dogs, but the most common are guide dogs, hearing dogs, and service dogs.



(OPTIONAL) Example 2: Read the introduction and notice how the sentences gradually move from the general topic of music to the specific topic, three successful styles of popular music.



Thesis Statement

The **thesis statement** is **the last sentence** of your introductory paragraph. It contains the focus of your essay and tells your reader what the essay is going to be about. Writing a clear thesis statement is essential for a good essay. Like a topic sentence, a thesis statement has two main parts: **a topic (T.)** and **a controlling idea (C.I.)**. The topic is the subject of the essay or what the essay is about. The controlling idea is what you are going to say about the topic.

Cats are better than dogs for some reasons.

T.

C.I.

I think that there are some solutions to the traffic problem in Istanbul.

C.I.

T.

The Predictor

Some thesis statements may also have a third part called **a predictor**. The predictor of a thesis statement can tell the reader how many body paragraphs there will be in the essay and/or what their content will be.

For example:

Blindness can improve other senses, especially touch and hearing.

In this thesis statement, the topic is blindness. The controlling idea is that it can improve other senses. The third part of this thesis statement lists two senses that the writer is going to discuss: touch and hearing. This is called the predictor because *it predicts the number and content of the body paragraphs*. In this case, there will be two body paragraphs, one about the sense of touch and the other about the sense of hearing.

NOTE: Make sure that the **predictors** that you use are in **parallel in their forms**. A

colon (:) is often useful before lists of two, three, or more predictors in a thesis statement:

Young people in my culture have less freedom than young people in the United States in three areas: where they live, whom they marry, and what their job is.

The Father of Psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud, believed that the human mind had three separate parts: the id, the ego, and the superego.

Practice 1: Look at the example thesis statement. The topic of the thesis statement is underlined, the controlling idea is written in italics and predictors are in bold.

The movie was fun to watch because of **its visual effects, scenario, and actors**.

Answer the questions about the following thesis statements.

1. Losing the sense of taste can cause difficulties in a person's social, professional and family life.

a. What is the topic? _____

b. What is the controlling idea?

c. If there is a predictor, what is it? _____

2. Toy ads on TV teach children to be competitive and greedy.

a. What is the topic?

b. What is the controlling idea?

c. If there is a predictor, what is it? _____

Practice 2: Complete the following thesis statements by adding predictors to them.

1. International students have a difficult time taking notes in class due to

2. Poverty creates negative consequences for society such as

3. A computer is necessary for college students for three reasons:

4. My two sisters are as different as day and night not only in but also in ____

Practice 3: Read the introduction paragraphs from different essays. Write a thesis statement for each of them. Compare your statements with your partners.

1. Topic: Why should students eat breakfast every day?

A lot of people, especially young people, go through the day without having breakfast. Many people believe that it is not necessary, or they say that they do not have time for that and begin their day with no meal. ____

2. Topic: Write about your travelling choices.

On hearing the word vacation, most people react positively. It can be a weekend trip, a last minute getaway, or a trip around the world. Prospective travellers spend days, if not weeks, researching their travel destination. While the destination has a lot to do with the success of a trip, there are other factors to consider. Experienced travellers will argue that more important than where they go on vacation is who they go with.

Practice 4: *Work in groups or in pairs and write introductory paragraphs for the thesis statements below.*

1. _____

_____. In my opinion, young people who live at home have several advantages: saving money, getting emotional support and learning life skills.

NOTE: For this introductory paragraph, you will write “Topic Sentences”, in Practice 2, exercise 1 on page 16. **(OPTIONAL)**

2. _____

_____. The three biggest ways I waste time are by watching TV, talking on the phone and daydreaming.

3. _____

In my opinion, learning a foreign language offers us the chance to travel more widely, to communicate with more people and to read literary works in the original language.