

Lecture 1

What is an Essay? Essay is..

- Several paragraphs long
 - One topic, just as a paragraph
 - Discussing too complex topic in several paragraphs
 - Tying or connect the paragraphs together by introduction and a conclusion
- No more difficult than a paragraph, except it is longer.
- The principles of organization are the same for both (paragraph and essay)

SO IF YOU CAN WRITE A GOOD PARAGRAPH, YOU CAN WRITE A GOOD ESSAY

The Three Parts of an Essay

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 main 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 paragraphs in the main body of an essay.

The conclusion

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

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Hint:

- An essay has **UNITY** and **COHERENCE**, just as a paragraph does.
- **Transition signals** and the **REPETITION OF KEY NOUNS** link the paragraphs into a cohesive whole.
- **Unity**: a paragraph discusses one and only one main idea from beginning to end. For example, if your paragraph is about the advantages of having a Toyota car, discuss only that. Do not discuss the disadvantages. ⌚

Coherence

- **Coherence**: the sentences must hold together; that is, the movement from one sentence to the next must be logical and smooth, without sudden jumps.
- There are two ways to achieve coherence:
 1. Repeated key words
 2. Transition signals

Transition Signals

- To introduce an additional idea: in addition, furthermore, moreover, besides, also, too, and.
- To introduce an opposite idea or contrast: on the other hand, in contrast, however, nevertheless, instead, still, and nonetheless, but, yet, although, while, whereas, though, even though..
- To introduce a choice or alternative: otherwise, or, if, unless.
- To introduce a restatement or explanation: in fact, indeed, that is..
- To list in order: first, second, third, next, last, finally, the first, second, the next, last, final...
- To introduce an example: for example, for instance
- To introduce a conclusion or summary: clearly, in brief, in conclusion, indeed, in short, in summary
- To introduce a result: accordingly, as a result, as a consequent, therefore, consequently, hence, thus, so

Notice: General Statements

When the first Europeans came to the North American continent, they encountered the completely new cultures of the Native American peoples of North America. Native Americans, who had highly developed cultures in many respects, must have been as curious about the strange European manners and customs as the Europeans were curious about them. As always happens when two or more cultures come into contact, there was a cultural exchange. Native Americans adopted some of the Europeans' ways, and the Europeans adopted some of their ways. As a result, Native Americans have made many valuable contributions to modern U.S. culture, particularly in the areas of language, art, food, and government.

Notice how the general statements in the introductory paragraph of the model essay introduce the topic. The first sentence is about the arrival of Europeans and their encounter with new cultures.

The Next sentence points out that there were large differences between European and Native Americans. The next two sentences say that two-way cultural exchange happened, but the direction of the exchange and the specific items are not identified.

The last sentence is the thesis statement. It is specific; it gives the direction of exchange (N. American influences on modern U.S. culture) and lists the subtopics (language, art, food, and government)

Underline the Thesis Statement

Moving to a new country can be an exciting, even exhilarating experience. In a new environment, you somehow feel more alive. Seeing new sights, eating new food, hearing the foreign sounds of a new language, and feeling a different climate against your skin stimulate your senses as never before. Soon, however, this sensory bombardment becomes sensory overload. Suddenly, new experiences seem stressful rather than stimulating, and delight turns into discomfort. This is the phenomenon known as culture shock. Culture shock is more than jet lag or homesickness, and it affects nearly everyone who enters a new culture – tourists, business travelers, diplomats, and students alike.

Although not everyone experiences culture shock in exactly the same way, many experts agree that it has roughly five stages.

2. Dramatic, interesting, or funny story introduction

A dramatic, humorous, or otherwise interesting opening will generate interest in the reader. It is important, after all, to capture the reader's attention. For process papers it is often useful to begin with a description of a scene that establishes the need for a process explanation. Observe here how one student uses a description to set up a process essay.

Underline the Thesis Statement

The rain pours down as if running from a faucet, lightning streaks across the dark restless sky, and thunder pounds the roof and walls of the house. All of a sudden the wind kicks up. Trees sway madly back and forth; loose objects are picked up and thrown all around. The house creaks and moans with every gust of wind. Windows are broken by pieces of shingle from a neighbor's roof or by loose objects picked up by the wind. Power lines snap like thread. The unprepared house and its occupants are in grave danger as the awesome hurricane approaches. Had they prepared for the hurricane, they might not be in such danger. Indeed, careful preparation before a hurricane is essential to life and property.

3. Surprising Statistics or Facts

Introduction

Got high blood pressure? Try a truffle. Worried about heart disease? Buy a bon-bon. It's the best news in years! Studies in two prestigious scientific journals say dark chocolate is good for you. It seems that eating a small piece of dark chocolate regularly can reduce the risk of heart disease because dark chocolate—but not milk chocolate or white chocolate—contains high amounts of flavonoids, powerful cholesterol-fighting compounds. What is the next health food going to be? Ice cream? Sugar cookies? **There are so many conflicting news stories about which foods are good for you that it is often difficult to make the right choices at the supermarket.**

4. Historical Background Introduction

The Pilgrims who arrived in Massachusetts in 1620 came to find religious freedom. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, large numbers of African men and women were brought as slaves to work on large plantations in the South. Immigrants from northern and southern Europe came in the early nineteenth century to escape poor economic conditions at home. Later in the nineteenth century, the first immigrants from China came as contract laborers to build the railroads connecting East and West. In the twentieth century, political and economic refugees arrived from Asia, Eastern Europe, and Latin America. Indeed, the United States has seen immigrants come from many different parts of the world, and they have come for many different reasons. **Their ability to adjust to life in their adopted land has depended on several factors.**

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.

Underline the Thesis Statement

Changing English: the African American Influence

If you ask average Americans where their language comes from, they will probably say "English." However, English vocabulary has also been influenced by other countries and groups of people. Some words are borrowed from other languages, such as *happily*, which originally came from the Chinese word, *ho-fung*, meaning "big wind." *Shank*, the name of a small, sweet, bread-and-butter biscuit, came to English from a Native American language. African Americans, too, have both introduced new words to English and changed the meanings of some existing words.

African American blues and jazz musicians have introduced a number of words to English from languages that they spoke in their native countries. The common English word "OK" is used around the world today, but it was not always part of English vocabulary. One reason that slaves in America used a phrase in their own language that sounded like "oh-ay" or "ah-ey" is "all right." Americans heard the phrase and started using it. Today, almost everyone in the world uses "OK" to mean "all right." Another good example of a new word is the word *jazz*. African American musicians living in the United States began playing jazz music in the city of New Orleans, and they used the word *jazz* or *jazz* to describe the music and certain kinds of dancing. No one is sure where the word originally came from, but as jazz music became more and more popular, the word *jazz* became a common English word.

The meanings of words sometimes change over time. The word *cool* is a good example. *Cool* has been used in English for a long time to describe a temperature that is not warm but not too cold or to describe a person who is calm or unemotional. However, an additional meaning was given to the word *cool* in the past 100 years. Just like the word *jazz*, African American musicians used the word *cool* to describe the music they were playing. For them, *cool* meant "good." As jazz music and other forms of music played by African American musicians became popular, more and more people started to use the word *cool* in conversation. Today, it is still a commonly used word, especially by younger people, to mean "good" or "great." A word with the opposite meaning of *cool* is *square*. *Square*, of course, is a shape, but it also is used to describe a person who is not cool. This may be because a person who is not old-fashioned and not flexible is like a shape with four straight sides and four corners.

English owes some of its interesting and colorful vocabulary to African Americans. Existing ethnic groups in the United States as well as immigrants will surely continue to bring new words to English and give fresh meanings to existing words. Who knows what the "cool" words of tomorrow will be?



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 travelled to the UK last year, I thought that British food was just fish and chips, roast beef, apple pie, rice pudding and endless cups of tea. These foods are popular in Britain, but during my travels, I discovered that there is so much more to eating in the UK. People from all over the world have made their home in Britain, and they have brought with them their own food. Even in small towns, you can find Chinese, Indian and Italian restaurants, amongst others. The UK can be divided into different regions that each has its own characteristic foods influenced by the culture of the people who live there.

British food
Topic

b.

Everybody knows the koala, that sweet 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.



Koalas

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.

Taoist gardens



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 getting into university in my country are unreasonable.

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

These are strong thesis statements. They can be discussed or explained.

- 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 plan.

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

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).

- F The top government official in my country is the prime minister.
- N Some people prefer digital cameras, while others like traditional cameras.
- F India became an independent country in 1947.
- ✓ To be a successful student, good study habits are more important than intelligence.
- N 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.
- ✓ Using public transport would be one of the best ways to solve the traffic and pollution problems in cities around the world.
- N While travelling, staying in a hotel offers more comfort, but sleeping in a tent is less expensive.
- F Classical music concerts are very popular in my country.
- ✓ In order to create a successful advertisement, it is necessary to consider three issues: who should be targeted, where the advert should be placed, and what type of advert should be made.

Writing thesis statements

○ How to connect the thesis statement and the essay

The paragraphs in the main body of an essay should always explain the thesis statement. In addition, each paragraph in the main body 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 paragraph in the main body:

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.*

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.

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

Do The Following Homework!!

Part II: Chapter 4: page 59: Writing Technique Questions

Part II: Chapter 4: page 61: Writing Technique Questions 

Part II: Chapter 4: pages 62 + 63: Practice I

Part II: Chapter 4: page 64: practice 2

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