

# The Structure of an Essay

## Objectives of the Unit 1

In this unit, you will go through the

- Definition of an essay.
- How to format an essay.
- How to write a thesis statement.

### 1. What is an essay?

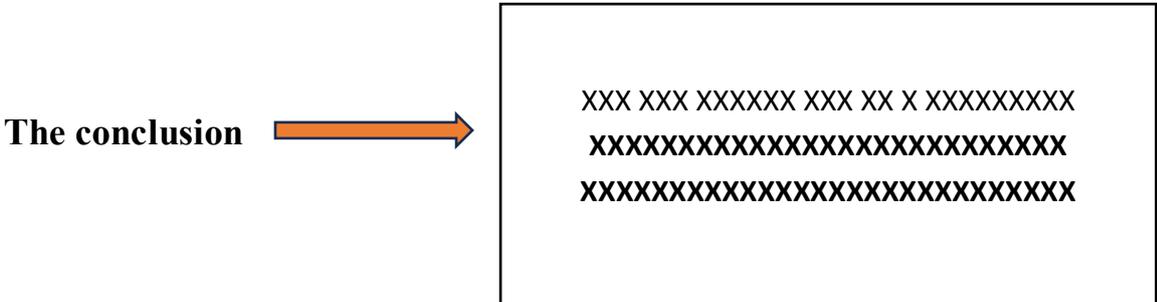
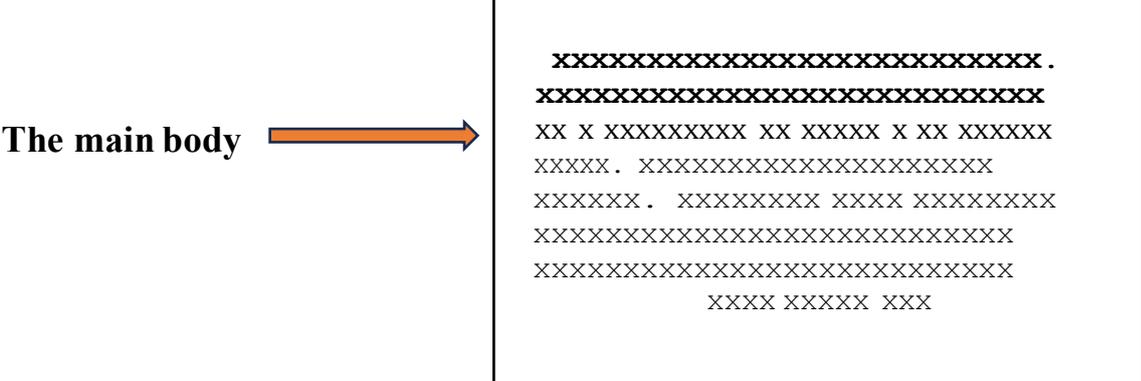
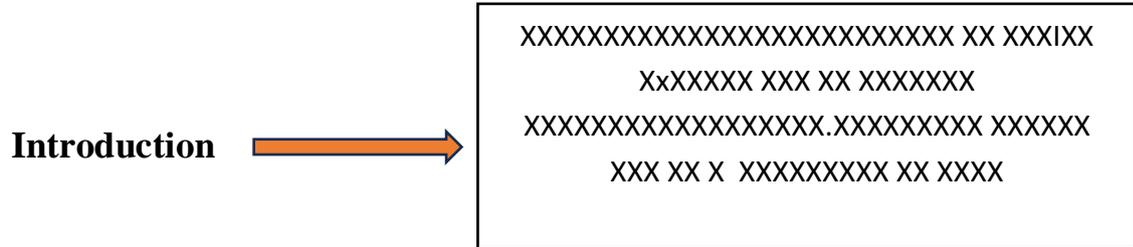
An essay is a group of paragraphs written about a single, general topic and a central main idea. It must have at least three paragraphs, but a five-paragraph essay is a common length for academic writing.

#### 1.1 The Structure of An Essay

<b>Introduction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ The first paragraph of an essay. It explains the topic with general ideas.</li><li>➤ It also has a <i>thesis statement</i>. This is the sentence that gives the main idea of the essay.</li><li>➤ It is placed in or near the end of the introduction.</li></ul>
<b>Body of the Essay</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ These are the paragraphs that explain and support the thesis statement.</li><li>➤ They come between the introduction and the conclusion.</li><li>➤ There must be one or more paragraphs in the main body of an essay</li></ul>

<b>The conclusion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ This is the last paragraph of an essay.</li> <li>➤ It summarises or restates the thesis and the supporting ideas of the essay.</li> </ul>
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Source: Academic Writing: from Paragraph to Essay: Zemach and Rumisek



## 1.2 How to Format an Essay

- Use double spacing (leave a blank line between each line of writing).
- Leave 2.5 centimeters (1 inch) of space on the sides, and the top and bottom of the page. This space is called the margin.
- If you type your essay, start the first line of each paragraph with five spaces (one tab). This is called *indenting*. If you write by hand, indent about 2 centimeters. Alternatively, paragraphs can begin at the left-hand margin with no indentation. However, you must then leave one line space between each paragraph.
- Put the title of your essay at the top of the first page in the centre.

## Practice 1

Label the three parts of this essay: introduction, main body paragraphs, and conclusion.

### Changing English: the African American Influence

If you ask average Americans where their language comes from, they will probably say 'England'. However, English vocabulary has also been influenced by other countries and groups of people. Some words are borrowed from other languages, such as typhoon, which originally came from the Chinese word, 'tai-fung', meaning 'big wind'. Skunk, the name of a small, smelly, black-and-white animal, came to English from a Native American language. African Americans, too, have both contributed new words to English and changed the meanings of some existing words.

African Americans, many of whose ancestors were brought to the States as slaves hundreds of years ago, 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 theory is that slaves in America used a phrase in their own language that sounded like OK to mean '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 jass 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 /azz 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 is, of course, a shape, but it also is used to describe a person who is not cool. This may be because a person who is too old-fashioned and not flexible is like a shape with four straight sides and four corners.

English owes some of its interesting and colourful vocabulary to African Americans. Existing ethnic groups in the United States as well as new 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.

Source: Academic Writing: from Paragraph to Essay: Zemach and Rumisek

## 1.3 Thesis Statement

### 1.3.1 Definition of the 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.

### Practice 2

In this introductory paragraph underline the thesis statement. Next, circle the topic and draw another line under the main idea. Share your answers with a partner.



Source: Google. Com

*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.*

Source: Academic Writing: from Paragraph to Essay: Zemach and Rumisek

### **1.3.2 Writing an Effective Thesis Statement**

In order to write an effective thesis statement, we need to consider the following tips:

- 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 conditions for taking a job interview are very hard to meet.*
- A thesis statement should not be a sentence that only gives a fact about the topic:
  - ✚ *In Australia, people go to the beach in December.*

This is not an effective thesis; it cannot be adequately developed in an essay.

- A thesis statement should not state two sides of an argument equally:
  - ✚ *Doing online business is a double-edged weapon when it comes to success or failure.*

There are two opposing arguments in the same thesis. The writer must focus on one side (success or failure).

### Practice 3

Read these thesis statements below. Write I (strong thesis statement), F (fact only—a weak thesis statement), or N (no clear opinion—a weak thesis statement).

- a. ....the supreme ruler in some countries is the king.
- b. ....Some people prefer digital cameras, while others like traditional cameras.
- c. ....India nad Pakistan used to be one country.
- d. ....More than 19 percent of the population of the country are immigrants.
- e. ....The are several risks of using nuclear power as a source of energy.
- f. ....Going running has many advantages for the body, the mind, and soul.
- g. ....Investing in an unknown business can be risky.
- h. ....While many voters support the President’s reform plan, several others oppose them.

#### 1. 3. 3 Connecting the Thesis Statement to the Essay

The paragraphs in the main body of an essay should always explain the thesis statement. This consists in developing the thesis with supporting ideas (sentences) and providing details (examples). 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:



Source:Google.com

To make an advertisement effective, it is vital for advertisers to consider three main points: what product are they selling? Which category of customers are they targeting? How can they persuade them of buying it? (Blue printed thesis)

### Practice 4

Try to compose three possible topic sentences for the three parts of the thesis

1. ....
2. ....
3. ....

### 1.3. 4 Tips on how to Develop a Strong Thesis statement

One strategy of developing the thesis of an essay is to state your opinion on a topic. Start with *I think* that.....then complete the rest of your opinion. Next, delete *I think* that and your thesis is complete.

➡ Topic Writing a good C V.

**I think that** to make a CV impressive, it must be very clear, concise, and coherent.



