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in line at a bagel place. Shari had apparently left Ariel's doll at our local community center, where the girls had just finished a late morning class. Now all hell threatened to break loose.

2 Then, as I watched, Shari pulled a cellular phone from her purse, pretended to dial the center, and embarked on a make-believe conversation with the "lady at the desk."

3 "You see my daughter's doll on the table? Oh, good. We'll come pick it up in a little while. Thank you. Bye! . . . You see, Ariel, they'll hold Baby for us until later." Ariel smiled broadly. Her whole body seemed to relax. Satisfied with her mom's fib, she was content enough now to sit down to lunch.

4 "That sure did the trick!" I commented.

5 "I'm the queen of white lies." Shari smiled, but she looked slightly embarrassed. "Anyway, I know exactly where we left the doll. I'm not worried about finding it later."

6 "Oh, you don't have to explain," I told her. "I've used white lies with Anna."

7 In fact, most parents can empathize with another mother's or father's decision to tell a "little white lie" to avoid an unpleasant scene with their preschooler, particularly in public. "It's important to pick your battles," more than one parent told me. And telling an occasional untruth seems like a small price to pay for family harmony.

Length and Placement

How much background information to provide depends upon the length of the essay and the strategy the writer uses to get the reader prepared for the thesis. In general, an essay of five paragraphs should include three to six sentences of background *before* the thesis. *All* the background information must come before the thesis is presented to point the reader toward the main idea that the essay will develop.

“ In my essay about the newspaper (page 95), I was nervous about making the background too long because my essay is only five paragraphs. I wanted to begin with an attention-getter and decided to start by setting the scene of the paper arriving and people reading it at different times of the day. Then I explained why this topic should be important to the reader. I gave all the background information before I presented my thesis.

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Peer Example

Dan

Thesis or Thesis Statement

The thesis or thesis statement of the essay presents the main idea that the essay will develop. The thesis creates a focus for the essay and should not be too broad or too narrow for the assignment. A thesis that is too broad is a statement that is too large to be adequately developed in the length essay you have been assigned. A thesis that is too narrow is a statement that is not large enough to be developed into an essay. A well-focused thesis presents a