

Academic Writing

The Stuff You Need to Know:

Thesis Statements

- A thesis is a concise supportable statement of your central opinion, judgment, or idea about the focused topic
- A thesis is based on your thinking or your research.
- A bad essay comes from a bad beginning—moreover a bad thesis
- An essay is like a debate. You argue one side—Imagine your reader arguing the other.
- The thesis is your essay's life and spirit

- Your thesis should be:

- Significant

- Relevant and meaningful to your topic

- Single

- Focused

- Specific

- Looking at the detail in the question. Answer only the question that is asked!

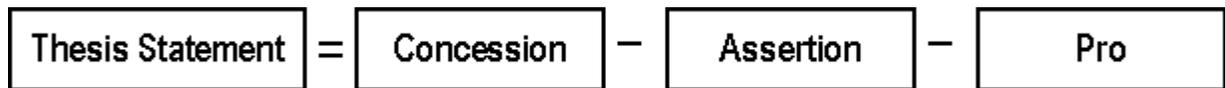
- Supportable

- Can you actually prove your thesis?

Thesis Creation Process

- Thesis construction

oT.S. = C.A.P.



- **Con** – this is your concession to the opposition’s point of view. To put an argumentative edge on your thesis statement, and show the reader you have considered the situation from more than one perspective
- **Assertion** – Come up with a point of view. What’s your opinion on the material at hand?
- **Pro** – this is your reason for this belief. Provide your reader with a reason—one that is broad enough to encompass all of your arguments—for your position

Example: Although some suggest that Chuck Palahniuk’s *Fight Club* is an endorsement of fascism, *Fight Club* is truly a commentary on the dissatisfaction experienced by Generation X in the 1990s and the dangerous places such a malaise could lead.

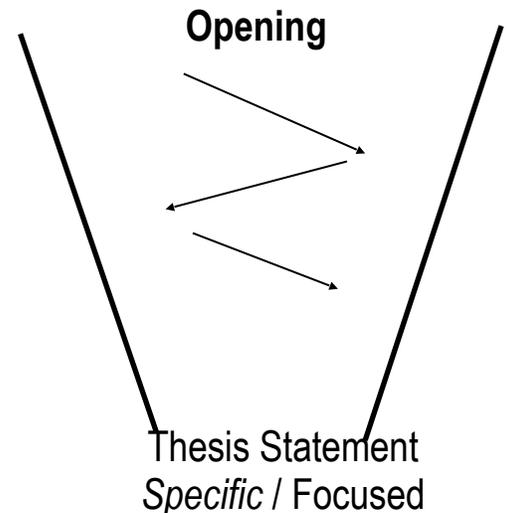
Academic Writing: The Stuff You Need to Know

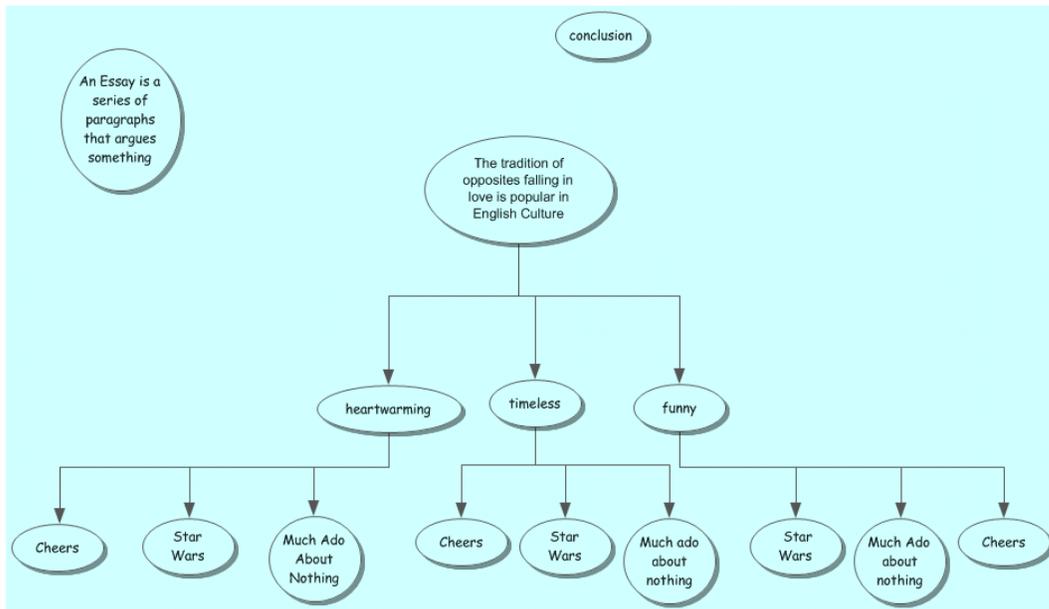
The Introduction or Opening paragraph[s]

- **An Essay is a series of paragraphs that argues something**
- Your Opening Paragraph must contain your main idea—Your thesis Statement
- It should present your thesis to your best advantage
- The most emphatic place for your main idea is the last sentence of your opening paragraph
- Therefore your first sentence should be a general statement piquing the reader's interest

Intro Paragraph Creation Process

- **Generalize** – Start with a subject statement, a kind of open topic sentence for the whole essay
- **Justify** – or give a rationale. Provide background information. Discuss generally why what you are discussing is significant
- **Define** – any terms that are required for the reader's understanding of the essay
- **Indicate** – the direction your essay will take by briefly stating your main points or arguments in the order in which they appear
- **State** – the thesis statement of your essay in a clear sentence. Remember this is what you are trying to prove. Everything that you write in your essay should go toward proving your thesis
- **Expand** – or explain your thesis so the reader is clear about your idea and what you are trying to prove





The tradition of opposites falling in love is popular in English Culture

I. funny

- A. Cheers
- B. Star Wars
- C. Much Ado about nothing

II. heartwarming

- A. Much Ado About Nothing
- B. Cheers
- C. Star Wars

III. timeless

- A. Cheers
- B. Star Wars
- C. Much ado about nothing

Conclusion

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The Stuff You Need to Know:

The Body of the Essay

- The body paragraph is the standard paragraph of an essay. It is like a mini-essay in itself.
- Each body paragraph must declare its allegiance to the paragraphs immediately before and after it
- Each topic sentence must somehow hook onto the paragraph above it, must include some word or phrase to ease the reader's path: *a transition*.
 - You may simply repeat a word for the sentence that ended the paragraph just above
 - You may bring down a thought generally developed
 - Or you may use one to the Transitional Words & Phrases (see the handout)

Body Paragraph Creation Process

- **State** – the argument in a straight forward topic sentence. What is your point?

- **Expand** – or explain the argument fully so that the reader is clear about your point. This may take a few sentences.

- **Support** – Give concrete evidence to sustain the point. This evidence may take various forms including:
 - Primary text quotations
 - Secondary text quotations (From Academics and Scholars)
 - Be sure to cite the source of all ideas, words, concepts, facts that are not your own.

- **Interpret** – Tie the evidence back to your topic sentence. Why is this evidence proof of your argument? Make the interpretation clear. Do not assume that your reader will make the connections that you want.

- **Connect** – The argument back to your thesis
How does the argument further the thesis?
Don't forget you want the reader to be aware of that central idea that you are systematically trying to prove.

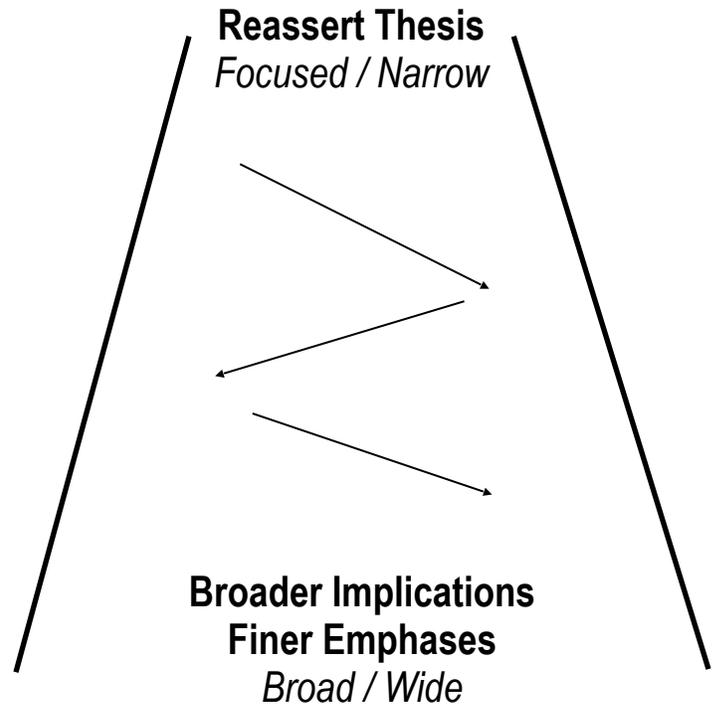
- **N.B.** – **Order your arguments** in a logical and effective sequence. Always begin and end with you best and most forceful arguments and put the weaker ones in the middle. You can then begin and end with a good impression

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The Stuff You Need to Know:

The Conclusion or End Paragraph[s]

- “If you have presented your chain of reasoning clearly your conclusion will arise naturally from the evidence you have presented. It will not merely repeat that evidence, but clarify its significance”



- If the beginning paragraph is a funnel the end paragraph is a funnel upside down
- The thought starts out moderately narrow and pours out broader and broader implications
- The conclusion answers the “SO WHAT?” question

Conclusion Paragraph Creation Process

- Rephrase – and restate the thesis. Be sure not to repeat it exactly
- Summarize – your main points or arguments
- Broaden – suggest the broader context of your thesis by:
 - Stressing the ramifications, outcome, or greater significance of our findings
 - Move the specific case that you have discussed to the general category to which it belongs
- N.B. – do not add entirely new information you should have prepared your reader for and statements you make at this point.

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The Stuff You Need to Know:

The Whole Essay

The Fast and Furious Tips:

broadening and
enhancing your thesis

- Sharpen your thesis statement in one sentence
- Put your weaker points in the middle
- Your beginning paragraph should seem like a funnel
- Your middle paragraphs should seem like mini essays with their own beginnings and ends
- The final paragraphs should work like an inverted funnel

*Picture the
Structure!*