

Outline of Traditional Essay Form

Note: this outline is not meant to suggest that writing an essay is a fill-in-the-blanks kind of activity. Instead, what's presented here shows a common general structure that most effective essays use. Many variations are possible, depending upon the writer's audience and purpose.

"Introduction"

Introductory paragraph(s) is one of the most important to your essay. It gets the interest of the reader, shows what you will be discussing, gives the general organizational pattern of your essay and presents your thesis. See handout on introductions for style suggestions.

- *One or more paragraphs that draw the reader into the topic (Generally, avoid just announcing the thesis.)*
- *Thesis statement, as the final sentence of the introduction.*

"Body" (multiple paragraphs)

Middle paragraphs usually consist of the essay's main point or points broken down into paragraphs containing the following:

- *Topic sentence: States the main point of the paragraph(s) and makes clear how it/they relate(s) to the thesis. Often a transition is used. The topic sentence is the first sentence of the paragraph.*
- *Examples/evidence/ explanation supporting the topic sentence.*
- *Concluding statement (not always included in the paragraph, but often is).*

"Conclusion"

The conclusion consists of one (or more paragraphs, if a lengthy paper), that closes the essay without just stopping. The conclusion should leave the reader with a sense of closure. Many variations are possible. See conclusion handout for style suggestions. This is the last thought you leave the reader with, so make it a strong one.