

THE BASICS ON HOW TO CONSTRUCT AN ESSAY

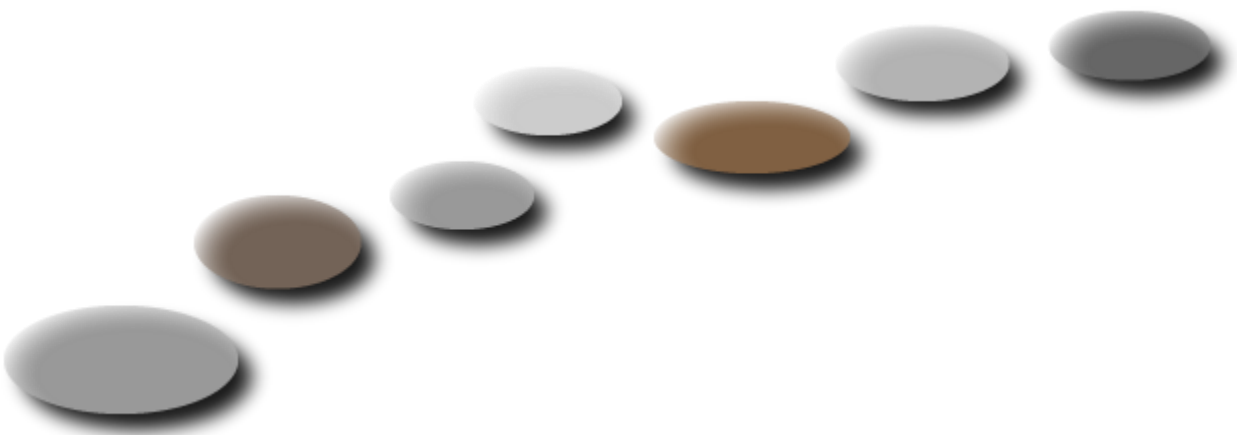
BASIC PARTS

Every essay obviously has an introduction and a conclusion. In the middle you'll find a bunch of paragraphs. So much for the obvious.

What's important is that there is no set rule as to how many paragraphs you can use for any section of your essay. In a long essay, your introduction might take up two or three paragraphs. In a short essay (e.g., 3-4 pages) it makes sense to keep your intro and conclusion sweet and short. You can also have as many middle paragraphs as you like.

In other words, as long as you introduce your topic, argue your case persuasively, and provide some closure, the number of paragraphs is completely irrelevant.

In fact, writing an essay is a bit like crossing a stream. Think of the paragraphs as the stepping stones that let you get to the other side high and dry:

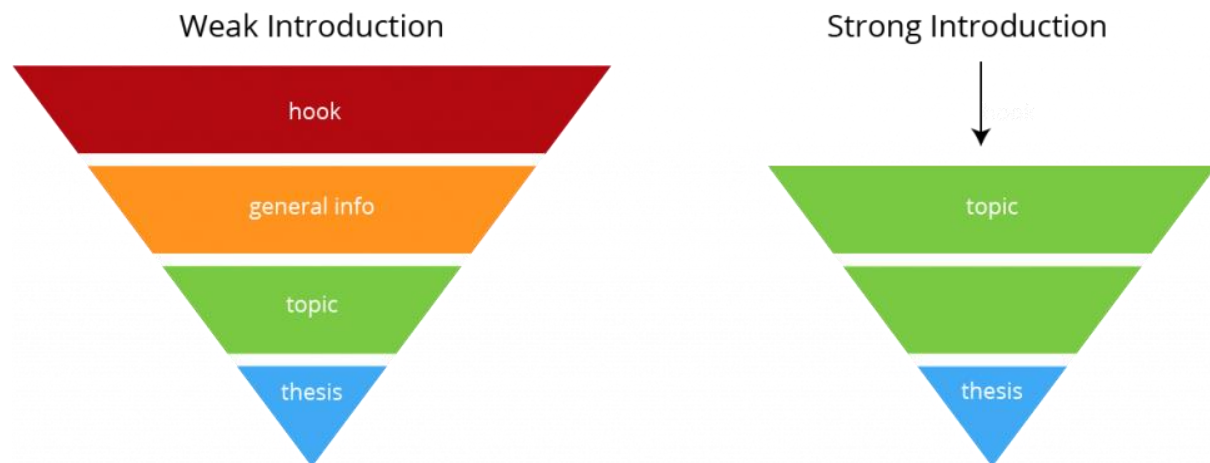


If the stream is wide, you'll need more stepping stones. The same is true for an essay: the longer the essay, the more paragraphs you'll need.

INTRODUCTIONS

Watch the video clip showing how to write an introduction that will keep your read engaged. https://youtu.be/IyJApo_NIxQ

Don't overthink your introduction. There's no need to cram all kinds of things into your introduction. Just introduce the topic and your argument:



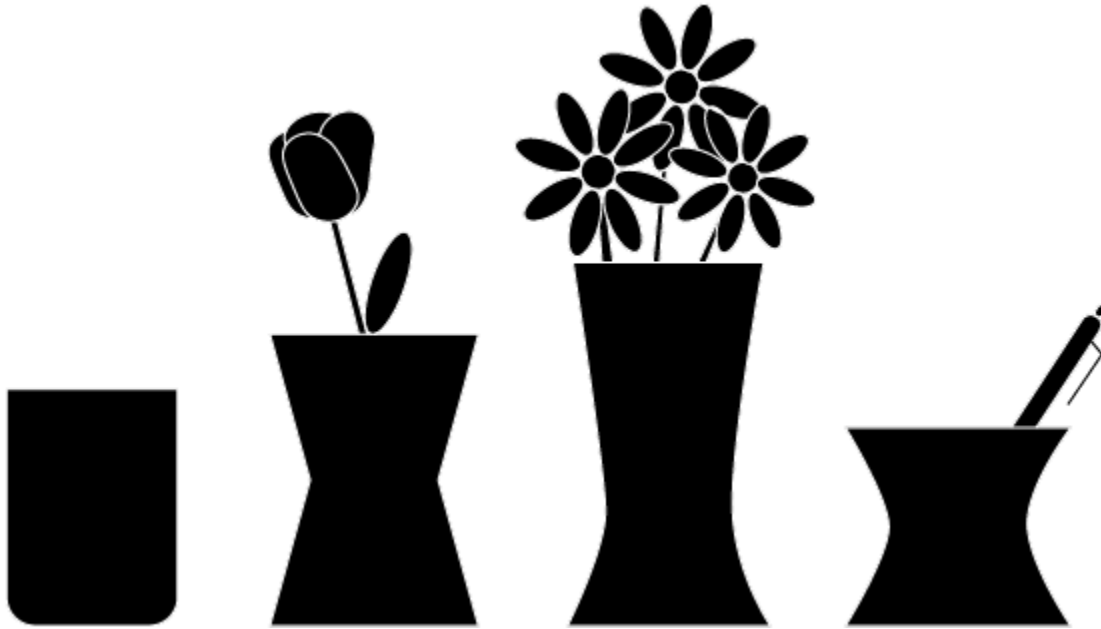
In other words, instead of coming up with some artificial hook (e.g., a quotation or surprising fact), assume that your topic is interesting enough to grab your reader's attention. Focus your effort on explaining the research question or problem that drives your research. Why is your topic significant? Why should people care? If you answer the "why?" question, your reader will care enough to read on. Focus on the big picture first and save many of the details for later.

THE THESIS

The thesis is a succinct statement of your overall argument. It should come at the end of the introduction. Some teachers advise their students to come up with three points for their thesis. While you can have sub-points, **the most important thing is that you come up with one coherent argument that ties together everything in your essay.** If it takes you a few sentences to fully express your argument that's no problem: a thesis doesn't have to be just one sentence long.

BODY PARAGRAPHS

The middle paragraphs form the body of your essay. These paragraphs are a bit like vases: they hold the contents of your essay, and they come in all shapes and sizes:



Like vases, paragraphs tend to be more narrow in the middle. That's where you'll find the specifics of the argument, the quotations and the facts.

The beginning and end of a paragraph are usually more general in scope. The opening sentence (the topic sentence) indicates what the paragraph is about. It also connects the paragraph to what came before.

The trick with writing paragraphs is to remind your reader of the general argument. However, there's no need to conclude every paragraph with a summary of what came before. Just make sure your paragraphs transition nicely from one to the next.

Lastly, **each paragraph should make just one point**. If you're starting to say something new, even if it's just a different aspect of the same point, start a new paragraph!

CONCLUSIONS

Watch the video to see how to wrap up a perfect essay!
<https://youtu.be/P0h3T2T6Z2w>

The difficulty with conclusions is avoiding needless repetition. Don't let your reader zone out when you zoom out.

Try to explain why your findings matter. Point out those nuances and complexities that your thesis only hinted at, but that can now be fully understood. Provide observations that keep your conclusion fresh and interesting. The conclusion is the only place to insert your opinion, if your opinion is called for in the writing prompt.

References

van Dyk, C., 2022. *Essay Writing / The Nature of Writing*. [online] The Nature of Writing. Available at: <<https://natureofwriting.com/courses/essay-writing/>> [Accessed 26 August 2022].

Videos from helpfulprofessor.com

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