

ACADEMIC ESSAY WRITING Lecture 1: Notes

VIDEO CONTENTS

Video 1A

- 5 paragraph structure
- The job of each paragraph
- Various components of each paragraph
- The introduction

Video 1B

- The introduction
- Links
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Video 1C

- Cover page
- Headers and Footers
- First Impressions
- Introduction revisited
- Topic sentences preview
- Links
- Grammar – common errors
- Vocabulary - relevant to the topic
- Vocabulary – Academic / non-Academic

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO BEFORE YOUR NEXT CLASS



1. Watch each video and complete the associated tasks.
2. Read pages 2 – 7 below and complete associated tasks.

CHAPTER

4

From Paragraph to Essay



Egyptian hieroglyphs

An **essay** is a piece of writing several paragraphs long. It is about one topic, just as a paragraph is. However, because the topic of an essay is too complex to discuss in one paragraph, you need to divide it into several paragraphs, one for each major point. Then you need to tie the paragraphs together by adding an introduction and a conclusion.

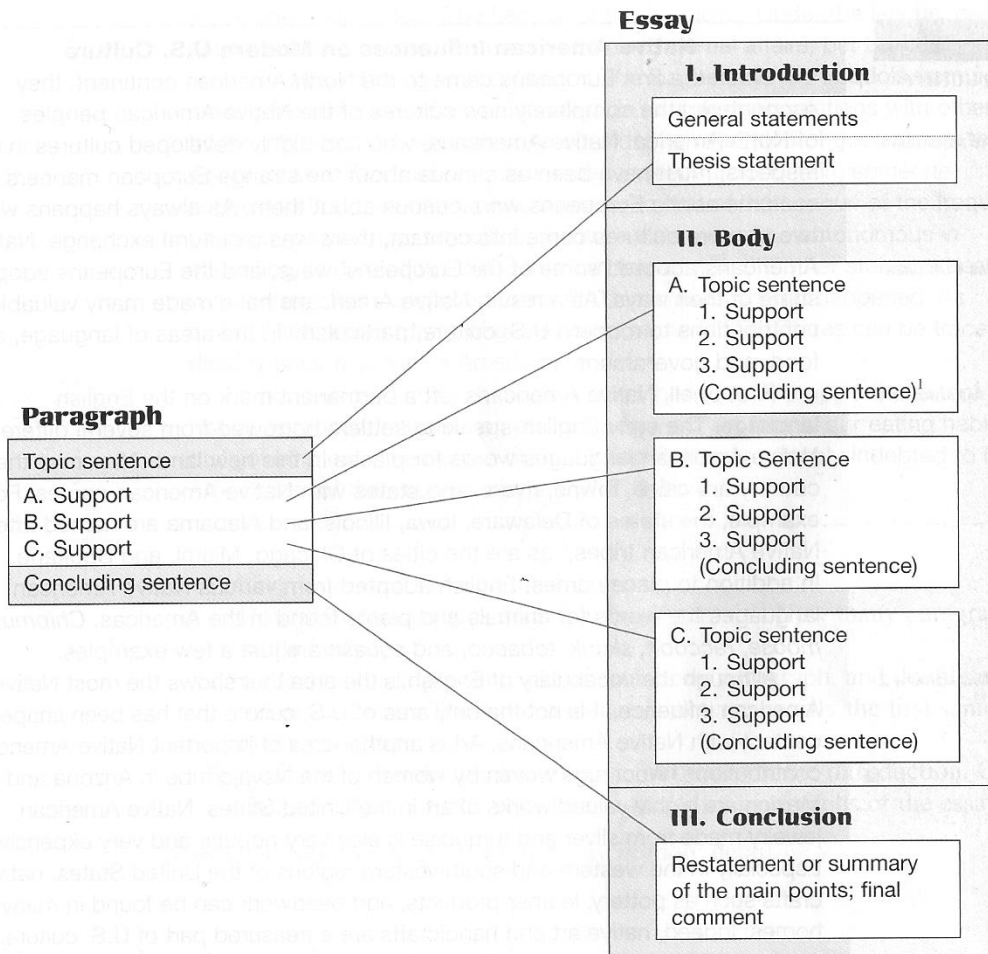
Writing an essay is no more difficult than writing a paragraph except that an essay is longer. The principles of organization are the same for both, so if you can write a good paragraph, you can write a good essay.

The Three Parts of an Essay

An essay has three main parts: an **introduction** (introductory paragraph), a **body** (at least one, but usually two or more paragraphs), and a **conclusion** (concluding paragraph).

The following chart shows you how the parts of a paragraph correspond to the parts of an essay.

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An essay **introduction** consists of two parts: a few general statements to attract your reader's attention and a **thesis statement** to state the main idea of the essay. A thesis statement for an essay is like a topic sentence for a paragraph: It names the specific topic and gives the reader a general idea of the contents of the essay. The **body** consists of one or more paragraphs. Each paragraph develops a subdivision of the topic, so the number of paragraphs in the body will vary with the number of subdivisions or subtopics. The **conclusion**, like the concluding sentence in a paragraph, is a summary or review of the main points discussed in the body.

An essay has **unity** and **coherence**, just as a paragraph does. **Transition signals** and the **repetition of key nouns** link the paragraphs into a cohesive whole.

¹Concluding sentences for body paragraphs in an essay are not always necessary, especially when the ideas in consecutive paragraphs are closely related.

58 Part II | Writing an Essay

Study the model essay about the influence of Native Americans¹ on modern U.S. culture and notice its structure.

MODEL**Essay Structure**

INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH

THESIS STATEMENT

BODY PARAGRAPH 1

BODY PARAGRAPH 2

BODY PARAGRAPH 3

BODY PARAGRAPH 4

Native American Influences on Modern U.S. Culture

When the first Europeans came to the North American continent, they encountered the completely new cultures of the Native American peoples of North America. Native Americans, who had highly developed cultures in many respects, must have been as curious about the strange European manners and customs as the Europeans were curious about them. As always happens when two or more cultures come into contact, there was a cultural exchange. Native Americans adopted some of the Europeans' ways, and the Europeans adopted some of their ways. As a result, Native Americans have made many valuable contributions to modern U.S. culture, particularly in the areas of language, art, food, and government.

First of all, Native Americans left a permanent mark on the English language. The early English-speaking settlers borrowed from several different Native American languages words for places in this new land. All across the country are cities, towns, rivers, and states with Native American names. For example, the states of Delaware, Iowa, Illinois, and Alabama are named after Native American tribes,² as are the cities of Chicago, Miami, and Spokane. In addition to place names, English adopted from various Native American languages the words for animals and plants found in the Americas. *Chipmunk*, *moose*, *raccoon*, *skunk*, *tobacco*, and *squash* are just a few examples.

Although the vocabulary of English is the area that shows the most Native American influence, it is not the only area of U.S. culture that has been shaped by contact with Native Americans. Art is another area of important Native American contributions. Wool rugs woven by women of the Navajo tribe in Arizona and New Mexico are highly valued works of art in the United States. Native American jewelry made from silver and turquoise is also very popular and very expensive. Especially in the western and southwestern regions of the United States, native crafts such as pottery, leather products, and beadwork can be found in many homes. Indeed, native art and handicrafts are a treasured part of U.S. culture.

In addition to language and art, agriculture is another area in which Native Americans had a great and lasting influence on the peoples who arrived here from Europe, Africa, and Asia. Being skilled farmers, the Native Americans of North America taught the newcomers many things about farming techniques and crops. Every U.S. schoolchild has heard the story of how Native Americans taught the first settlers to place a dead fish in a planting hole to provide fertilizer for the growing plant. Furthermore, they taught the settlers irrigation methods and crop rotation. Many of the foods people in the United States eat today were introduced to the Europeans by Native Americans. For example, corn and chocolate were unknown in Europe. Now they are staples in the U.S. diet.

Finally, it may surprise some people to learn that citizens of the United States are also indebted³ to the native people for our form of government. The Iroquois, who were an extremely large tribe with many branches called "nations," had

¹Native Americans: American Indians

²tribes: groups of native people

³indebted: owing gratitude

developed a highly sophisticated system of government to settle disputes that arose between the various branches. Five of the nations had joined together in a confederation called “The League of the Iroquois.” Under the league, each nation was autonomous⁴ in running its own internal affairs, but the nations acted as a unit when dealing with outsiders. The league kept the Iroquois from fighting among themselves and was also valuable in diplomatic relations with other tribes. When the 13 colonies were considering what kind of government to establish after they had won their independence from Britain, someone suggested that they use a system similar to that of the League of the Iroquois. Under this system, each colony or future state would be autonomous in managing its own affairs but would join forces with the other states to deal with matters that concerned them all. This is exactly what happened. As a result, the present form of government of the United States can be traced directly back to a Native American model.

CONCLUDING PARAGRAPH

In conclusion, we can easily see from these few examples the extent of Native American influence on our language, our art forms, our eating habits, and our government. The people of the United States are deeply indebted to Native Americans for their contributions to U.S. culture.

Writing Technique Questions

1. How many paragraphs does this essay contain? How many paragraphs are in the body?
2. Underline the topic sentence of each body paragraph, and double underline the topic. (*Note:* The topic sentence is not necessarily the first sentence in every paragraph.)
3. Notice which noun phrase appears four times in the introduction. Circle each repetition of this key noun in the other paragraphs of the essay.

Now let's examine the parts of an essay in more detail.

The Introductory Paragraph

An introductory paragraph has two parts, general statements and the thesis statement. **General statements**

- introduce the general topic of the essay.
- capture the reader's interest.

The thesis statement

- states the specific topic.
- may list subtopics or subdivisions of the main topic or subtopics.
- may indicate the pattern of organization of the essay.
- is normally the last sentence in the introductory paragraph.

⁴**autonomous:** independent, self-governing

Notice how the general statements in the introductory paragraph of the model essay introduce the topic. The first sentence is about the arrival of Europeans and their encounter with new cultures. The next sentence points out that there were large differences between European and Native Americans. The next two sentences say that two-way cultural exchange happened, but the direction of the exchange and the specific items are not identified.

When the first Europeans came to the North American continent, they encountered the completely new cultures of the Native American peoples of North America. Native Americans, who had highly developed cultures in many respects, must have been as curious about the strange European manners and customs as the Europeans were curious about them. As always happens when two or more cultures come into contact, there was a cultural exchange. Native Americans adopted some of the Europeans' ways, and the Europeans adopted some of their ways.

The thesis statement is specific; it gives the direction of the exchange (Native American influences on modern U.S. culture) and lists the subtopics (language, art, food, and government).

As a result, Native Americans have made many valuable contributions to modern U.S. culture, particularly in the areas of language, art, food, and government.

Three Keys

Here are three keys to organizing a logical division essay.

1. Divide your topic into subtopics, and then discuss each subtopic in a separate paragraph.
2. Write a thesis statement that indicates logical division.
3. Use transitions between paragraphs to guide your reader from one subtopic to the next.

Thesis Statements for Logical Division of Ideas

The thesis statement of a logical division essay often indicates the number of subtopics:

Native Americans have made valuable contributions to modern U.S. culture in four main areas.

Inflation has three causes.

The thesis statement may even name the specific subtopics:

- a. Native Americans have made many valuable contributions to modern U.S. culture, particularly in the areas of language, art, food, and government.
- b. Inflation has three causes: excessive government spending, unrestrained consumer borrowing, and an increase in the supply of paper money.

Paired conjunctions (*both . . . and, not only . . . but also*) are an especially effective way to list two subtopics:

- c. Young people in my culture have less freedom than young people in the United States **not only** in their choice of lifestyle **but also** in their choice of careers.
- d. Puppies, like children, need **both** love **and** discipline to become responsible members of society.

C. Complete the following thesis statements by adding subtopics to them. Be sure to check your sentences for parallel form.

1. A computer is necessary for college students for three reasons: _____

2. Students have a difficult time taking notes in class due to _____

3. Successful politicians have the following qualities: _____

4. A generation gap¹ exists in my home because of _____

5. To survive a major disaster such as an earthquake requires _____

6. My two sisters are as different as day and night not only in _____
_____ but also in _____
7. Living in a large city has certain advantages over living in a small town:

8. Latino culture has enriched North American culture in several areas:

Thesis Statement Pitfalls

A thesis is the most important sentence in your essay, so write it with special thought and care. Avoid these common problems:

Problem 1: The thesis is too general.

TOO GENERAL	A college education is a good investment.
IMPROVED	A college education is a good investment for four reasons.
TOO GENERAL	Lasers are very useful.
IMPROVED	Lasers have several applications in industry and medicine.

Problem 2: The thesis makes a simple announcement.

ANNOUNCEMENT	I am going to write about sports injuries.
IMPROVED	Avoid sports injuries by taking a few simple precautions.

¹generation gap: difference in attitudes and values between generations, especially between parents and children

EXERCISE

Write a thesis statement for each of the following topics.

1. Fashion at the university.
2. Dangerous drivers.
3. Popular genres of movie.
4. Pollution in Brunei.