



## What is an Essay?

You write an essay when you have more to say than can be covered in one paragraph.

- An essay has a main point called a *thesis*.
- The thesis is supported by the topic sentences
- Each paragraph in the body of the essay supports its topic sentence.

## Organizing an Essay

When you write an essay of more than one paragraph, the thesis is the focus of your entire essay.

***It is the major point of your essay.***

The other important points that are part of the thesis are in the topic sentences that follow it.

*Thesis:* People should invest in a post-secondary education (**argument**) as it provides further learning opportunities (**support 1**), increased social skills (**support 2**) and career advancement (**support 3**).

*Topic Sentence:* There are many useful academic activities students can take part in at College, such as work training and co-operative placements.

*Topic Sentence:* In College, students can learn how to effectively debate and participate in respectful discourse.

*Topic Sentence:* Attaining a diploma and real work experience are ways that students will further their careers after taking College courses.

\*These sentences are simply ideas; they would be rewritten in the essay.

***Notice that the thesis expresses a bigger idea than the topic sentences following it, and it is supported by the topic sentences.***



## The Thesis Statement

- Introduces the topic that will be presented
- states the main idea(s)/argument developed on a specific topic and identifies the writer's approach
- provides focus, unity and coherence
- introduces three aspects/supports for the argument

## Writing the Thesis

There are several characteristics of a thesis:

1. ***It is expressed in a sentence:*** A thesis is not the same as the topic of an essay, or as the title of the essay:

topic:	Quitting smoking
title:	Why I Quit Smoking
thesis:	People should quit smoking because it has negative effects on one's health, one's family and friends, and the environment.

2. ***A thesis does not announce:*** It makes a point about the subject:

announcement: <b><i>(incorrect)</i></b>	This essay will explain the reasons why young adults should not watch what they eat.
--	--

thesis:	Young adults should watch what they eat so they can live energetic lives, limit their impact on the healthcare system and prevent future problems.
---------	--

3. ***A thesis is not too broad:*** Some ideas are just too big to cover well in any essay. A thesis that tries to cover too much can lead to a superficial or boring essay.

<b><i>too broad:</i></b> <b><i>(incorrect)</i></b>	People all over the world should work on solving their interpersonal communications problems
---	--



*acceptable:* People can improve communications at the workplace by understanding their co-workers, cultivating effective listening skills and creating good team building skills practices.

*\*Make sure to use parallel structure (understanding, cultivating, creating) in your thesis\**

4. **A thesis is not too narrow.** Sometimes a very specific and precise thesis will not allow the writer to expand from it.

*too narrow:* My sister pays forty dollars/week for special formula.  
**(incorrect)**

*acceptable:* My sister had no idea of the additional costs that would result from buying special formula such as... reasons (1), (2), and (3).

## Essay Components:

### Topic and Thesis

- **Topic** is narrow enough to be discussed in the essay
- **Thesis** provides direction, stance and parts of the argument

### Introductory Paragraph

- captures the reader's interest with an example, quote, fact, definition or other appeal
- expresses the thesis statement and introduces the three supports of the topic which support the thesis

### First Supporting Paragraph

- expresses a topic sentence related to the thesis
- provides major and minor details to support the topic sentence, including quotes and paraphrases
- includes transition word at start

### Second Supporting Paragraph

- expresses a topic sentence related to the thesis
- provides major and minor details to support the topic sentence, including quotes and paraphrases
- includes transition word at start

### Third Supporting Paragraph

- expresses a topic sentence related to the thesis
- provides major and minor details to support the topic sentence, including quotes and paraphrases
- includes transition word at start
- *(will often include several supporting paragraphs after this)*

### Concluding Paragraph

**completes** the essay by:

- giving advice or a recommendation
- restating the main idea of an essay or
- presenting the results of the information in the essay



## SAMPLE ESSAY OUTLINE

### I Introductory Paragraph (Paragraph 1)

*(Includes hook, background information and thesis statement)*

(#1) (#2)

Thunder Bay is a good place to live because of its **population size, its recreational activities,** and (#3) **the natural beauty of the surrounding area.** *(This sentence is located near the end of the first paragraph)*

### II With a population of approximately 115,000, the city is a pleasant place to dwell.

#### A (Paragraph 2)

little heavy industry

1. good air quality (evidence: direct quote)
2. limited waterways pollution (evidence: paraphrase)
3. no congested major freeways (evidence: paraphrase)

#### B (Paragraph 3)

fewer “big city” environmental problems

1. better sanitation (evidence)
2. less crowded areas (evidence)
3. lack of crime (evidence)

**Sources: Maclean’s magazine, City of Thunder Bay Website, online journal**

### III Another reason that people are attracted to Thunder Bay is the recreational opportunities that the region offers.

#### A (Paragraph 4)

year-round sports opportunities

1. three types of skiing: downhill, cross-country, ski jumping
2. swimming – in lakes and in world class facilities (pools)
3. golfing – outdoor and indoor

#### B (Paragraph 5)

many outdoor adventures

1. Camping/rying at national parks
2. rock climbing, geocaching
3. Fishing (different types)

**\*Make sure to provide a piece of evidence (quote, paraphrase, etc.) for each reason (18 minimum)**

**Sources: Canadian Tourism Magazine article, 2010, online journals (library database).**

### IV A (Paragraph 6)

### B (Paragraph 7)

### V Concluding Paragraph (Paragraph 8)

*(Includes final thoughts (conclusion and resolution), [do not introduce any new information], restated thesis and last sentence)*



## Some Hints for Outlining

### Check the Topic Sentences

- the topic sentence in each body paragraph should support the thesis statement

### Include Some Details

- fill in the details at the outline stage
- the more details you put into your outline, the more detailed and effective your draft essay will be

### Stay on One Point

- check the outline of each body paragraph to see if each paragraph stays on one point

## Checklist for Revising the Outline of an Essay

- **Unity:** Do the thesis and topic sentences all lead to the same point? Does each paragraph make one, and only one, point? Do the details in each paragraph support the topic sentence? Does the conclusion unify the essay?
- **Support:** Do the body paragraphs have enough supporting details?
- **Coherence:** Are the paragraphs in the most effective order? Are the details in each paragraph arranged in the most effective order?