

1 | Exploring the Essay



OBJECTIVES

- Analyze the structure of an essay
- Write an effective hook
- Recognize thesis statements
- Make a general and a specific outline



National Geographic Explorer Andrea Reid resurfaces after conducting a Scuba survey of the Solomon Island coral reefs to track the elusive bumphead parrotfish. This research is part of a project that explores how well this endangered fish species is being safeguarded by marine protected areas (MPAs).

FREEWRITE

Look at the photo and read the caption. On a separate piece of paper, write what you think of when you hear the word *exploration*. You can write words, phrases, or sentences.

ELEMENTS OF GREAT WRITING

What Is an Essay?


An **essay** is a collection of paragraphs that presents facts, opinions, and ideas about a topic. Topics can range from the benefits of international travel to an argument for or against wind energy.

Kinds of Essays

There are many kinds of essays. The kind of essay that a writer chooses is often determined by the specific assignment. This book contains examples of five common kinds of essays: **cause-effect**, **comparison**, **argument**, **problem-solution**, and **reaction**. Each of the next five units presents one of these rhetorical styles of essay writing.

Parts of an Essay

An essay has three basic parts: the **introduction**, the **body**, and the **conclusion**. The introduction is the first paragraph, the conclusion is the last paragraph, and the body is made up of the paragraphs in between. One common format of an essay is the five-paragraph essay. In a typical five-paragraph essay, paragraph one introduces the topic and the main idea or thesis statement, paragraphs two through four develop the topic, and paragraph five concludes the essay.

A photograph showing a large flock of birds, likely geese, flying in a V-formation over a field of wind turbines. The birds are in the foreground, and the turbines are in the background. The scene is set in a grassy field with a body of water in the distance.

There are pros and cons to wind energy. Wind is an inexpensive, clean, and renewable energy source, but the turbines can be dangerous for birds.

Introduction

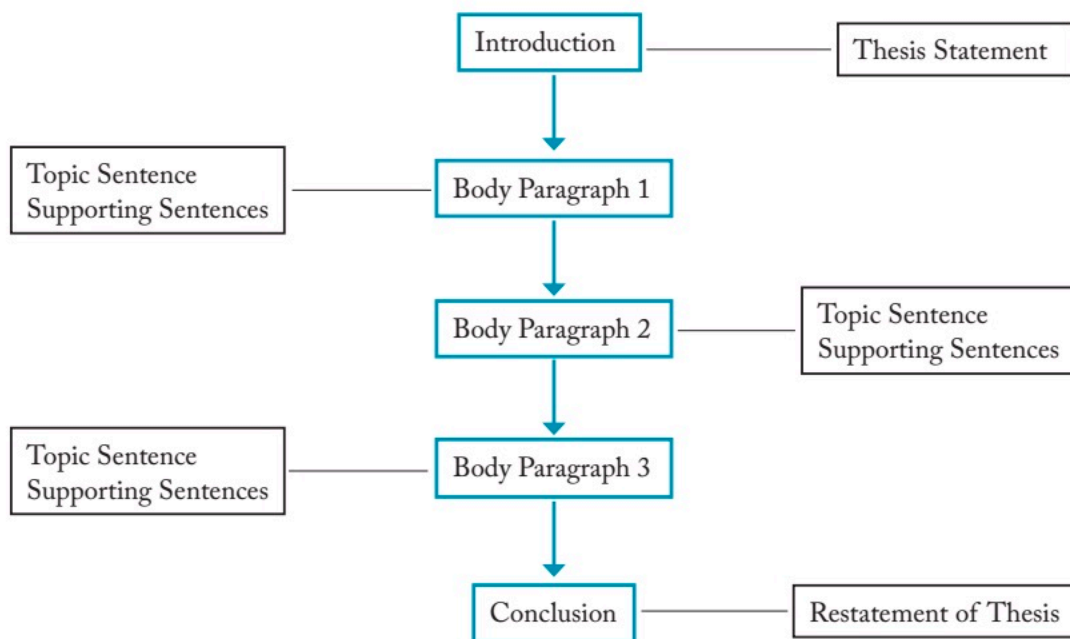
The first paragraph, or **introduction**, introduces the topic and includes the **thesis statement**. The thesis states the main idea of the essay (points of development) and often tells what the organization of the information will be. Typically, the thesis statement is found at the end of the introductory paragraph.

Body

Each paragraph in the **body** of the essay includes a **topic sentence** followed by **supporting sentences**. The topic sentence tells the reader the main topic of the paragraph and the controlling idea, or the particular focus the writer will take on the topic. The topic sentence is often the first sentence of a paragraph. Supporting sentences are directly related to the topic sentence. Common supporting sentences give examples, reasons, facts, or more specific information about the topic.

Conclusion

Finally, it is important for an essay to have a good **conclusion**. The introduction and the conclusion often share some of the same ideas in order to remind the reader of the main idea of the essay. After **restating the thesis**, the conclusion may also present a **suggestion, prediction, question, or opinion** related to the topic to leave the reader with a strong final impression.



ACTIVITY 1 | Analyzing an essay

Read the essay. Then answer the questions that follow.

WORDS TO KNOW Essay 1.1

availability: (n) whether something can be used

concept: (n) an idea; theory; notion

obtain: (v) to get; acquire

primarily: (adv) mainly

tend to: (v) to be likely to; to have a tendency toward something

ESSAY 1.1

Shopping for Everyone

1 A college student needs a new laptop. An upcoming wedding requires people in the wedding party to buy formal dresses. A boss asks her accountant for new computer software. These are all everyday purchases. The question is: How can the consumer best **obtain** these items? Previously, there was one technique—shopping in person. Today, however, consumers have various options and can shop based on their preferences. In fact, there are now three main kinds of shopping: in-person, online, and third-party.

2 When thinking about shopping, the method that immediately comes to mind is “in-person” shopping. For millenia¹, consumers have traveled to their local markets to inspect items firsthand. There they could see and touch the merchandise before they purchased it. To understand the popularity of in-person shopping, one just needs to walk into any mall and see the many shoppers who line up in front of cash registers. In-store shopping offers buyers more than just a shopping experience; it offers an opportunity to study items up close using multiple senses.



The Mall of the Emirates Shopping Center in Dubai offers consumers the in-store shopping experience as well as the opportunity to ski.

3 With advances in technology, online shopping has also become a strong consumer option. Online shopping allows customers to compare trends, **availability**, price, and quality without leaving the comfort of their own homes. This, when coupled with the ever-popular free shipping that many manufacturers offer, has made online shopping a valuable tool for customers. It has also given warehouses² more power to compete with actual storefronts. Online shopping empowers consumers to buy exactly what they want at the price they are willing to pay without wasting time and energy.

4 Finally, there are third-party personal shopping services, which are used **primarily** in the clothing industry. The **concept** is easy enough: Potential buyers fill out a shopping profile and let the shopping service choose items that fit their profile and preferences. In this day and age, consumers **tend to** spend their time working or running errands and often do not have free time. As a result, third-party shopping services have been created to respond to consumer needs and save people precious time. Why should customers spend time looking for goods and services themselves when **they can pay a person** or a company to do their shopping for them? After giving a list to this personal shopper, consumers simply wait for the items to arrive at their homes. People who use third-party shoppers tend to have a more generous budget as they must pay for the convenience of not having to look for anything, either in person or online.

5 There are shopping options for everyone. Those who like to browse³ in person, pick up items, and try them on can do so easily. Those who prefer to shop in the comfort of their own homes have numerous online shopping websites to choose from, and those who trust others to shop for them have access to third-party shopping services. It is amazing to see just how far shopping has come in such a short period of time. It is anyone's guess what the next shopping experience might be.

¹millenia: thousands of years

²warehouse: a large building where products are stored

³browse: to look over in a slow, relaxed way

1. What is the main purpose of this essay? Begin with *The purpose is...*

2. How many paragraphs does this essay have? _____ Which paragraph is the introduction? _____ Which paragraph is the conclusion? _____
Which paragraphs make up the body? _____

3. According to the author of this essay, what are the three types of shopping (the three points of development)?

4. Can you find a sentence in Paragraph 1 that tells readers what to expect in Paragraphs 2, 3, and 4? Write that sentence here. _____
5. What topic is discussed in Paragraph 2? _____
6. In Paragraph 2, the writer gives proof of the popularity of in-person shopping. What does she describe? _____
7. Paragraph 4 suggests that third-party shopping is more expensive than the other two types mentioned. Write that sentence here. _____
8. Look at the last paragraph. Find the sentence that restates the thesis. Write that sentence here. _____

Hook

The introduction paragraph of an essay often begins with a **hook**. The hook is one or more sentences that get the reader's attention. Just as people use a hook at the end of a fishing line to catch a fish, writers use a hook to catch their readers' attention. Writers may use a famous quote, a broad statement, a question, a statistic, an anecdote or short story, or a historical account of the topic. Look for the hook in the next essay.



ACTIVITY 2 | Analyzing a cause-effect essay

Read the cause-effect essay. Then answer the questions that follow.

WORDS TO KNOW Essay 1.2

be concerned about: (v phr) to worry or feel anxious about

lack of: (n) an absence of; deficiency

lead to: (v) to bring about; cause

overall: (adj) including everything; total

permanently: (adv) forever; always

prevalent: (adj) common; observed frequently

risk: (n) the danger of something; hazard