

**Figure 17.1: The Structure of an Essay**

## The Components of an Essay

Three types of paragraphs must always be present in an essay: an introductory paragraph, support paragraphs, and a concluding paragraph.

1. The introductory paragraph is the first paragraph of the essay. Its purpose is to be so inviting that the reader will not want to stop reading. This introduction must contain a thesis statement.
2. Support paragraphs (sometimes called body paragraphs) provide the evidence that shows your thesis is valid. An essay normally has at least three well-developed support paragraphs. (You have studied these kinds of paragraphs in Chapter 16.) One paragraph must flow logically into the next. This

is accomplished by the careful use of transitional devices (discussed later in this chapter).

- The concluding paragraph is the last paragraph of the essay. Its purpose is to give the reader a sense of coming to a satisfying ending, a sense that everything has been said that needed to be said.

Figure 17.2 illustrates the components of the essay.

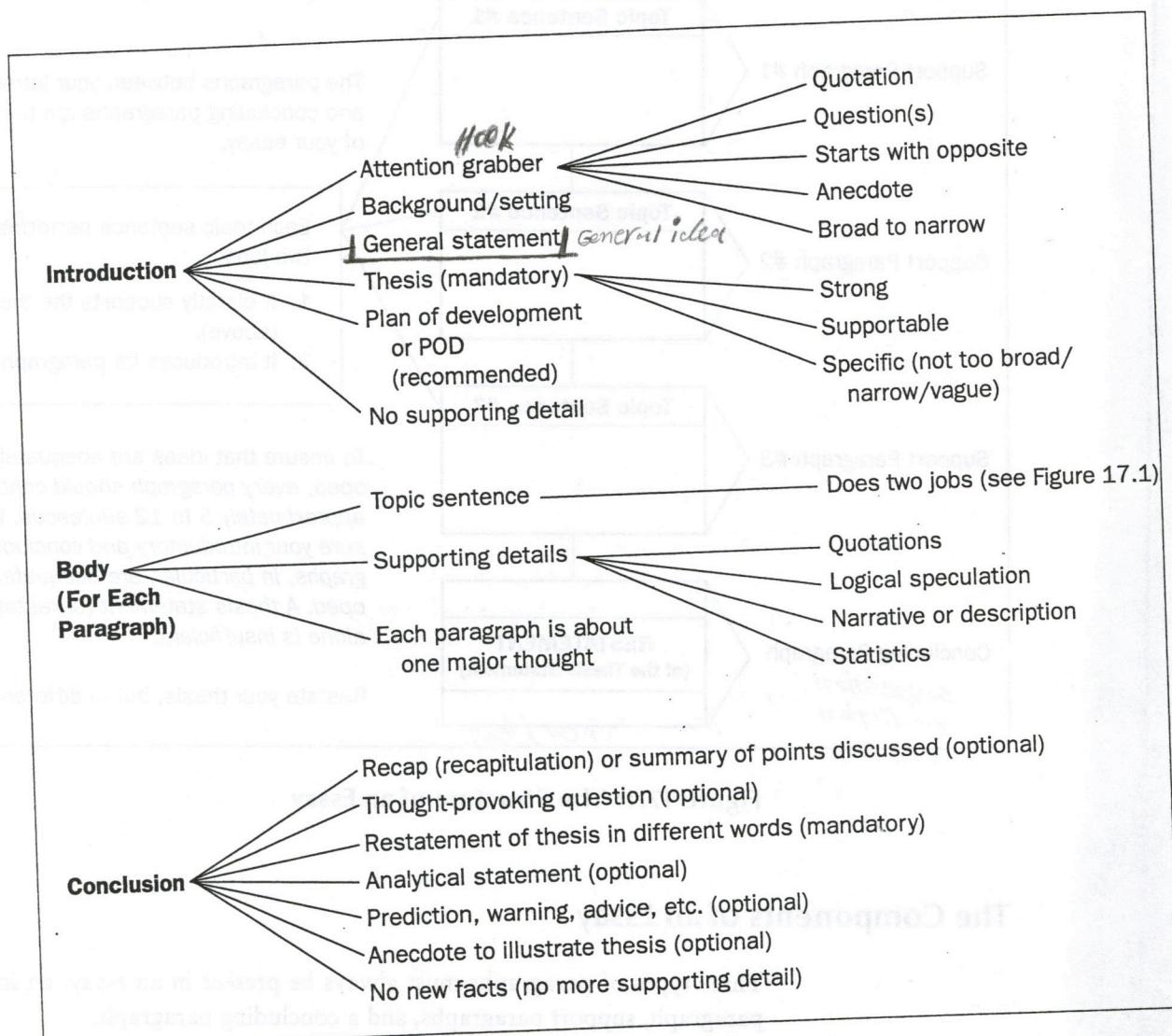


Figure 17.2: Components of the Essay

Before you begin the process of writing your own essays, this chapter will prepare you to understand and work with these special essay features:

Thesis statement

Introductory paragraph

Transitions between body paragraphs

Concluding paragraph

## What Is a Thesis Statement?

*there three options.*

1. thesis
2. thesis and main point together
3. thesis + main point (separate)

### DEFINITION ➤

The **thesis** of an essay is a statement of the main idea of that essay. It usually contains an element of opinion or argument. It is sometimes referred to as the claim that evidence in the rest of the essay is expected to support.

The thesis states what you are going to explain, defend, or prove about your topic. It is usually placed in the middle or at the end of the introductory paragraph.

## Plan of Development or POD

### DEFINITION ➤

A **plan of development or POD** is an introduction to the main points that are intended to support the thesis statement. The best place for this POD is immediately after the thesis in the introductory paragraph.

You might have learned before that a thesis statement itself should contain within it three points that you will discuss throughout the supporting paragraphs of your essay. For purposes of this book, this type of thesis is not necessary. It is recommended here, in fact, that if it's important to you that your main points be introduced in the first paragraph, introduce them after the thesis statement. Either a general or specific introduction to these points, according to Figure 17.2, is referred to as the plan of development (POD). Such separation of the thesis from the points that will be used to support it may enable you to formulate a more forceful and effective thesis statement. That said, if your thesis contains three points and is still clear, brief, and strong, feel free to go with it.

## How to Recognize the Thesis Statement

1. The **thesis statement** is a **complete sentence**. Students sometimes confuse a title with a thesis. Remember that titles are usually phrases rather than complete sentences.

*Title: The Advantages of All-Day Kindergarten*

**Thesis:** Schools should offer parents the option of an all-day kindergarten program for their children, not only for the benefit of mothers who work outside the home, but also for the advantages to the children.

- The thesis statement presents a viewpoint about the topic that will be defended or shown in your essay. It may be based on facts, but it is not itself a fact.

**Fact:** Nearly all kindergartens in Canada offer a half day of instruction.

**Thesis:** Parents know there is more than one reason why most children at five years of age should be in school for only half a day.

### PRACTICE 1

#### Thesis or Fact?

Read each of the following statements. If you think the statement is a fact, mark it with an *F*. If you think the statement is a thesis, mark it with a *T*. Check your answers against those in the Answer Key on p. 466.

F  
T  
T

F

- In Canada, kindergarten is not compulsory.
- Children should begin learning to read in kindergarten.
- Putting a child into kindergarten before he or she is physically or emotionally ready can have several unfortunate effects on a child.
- In some European countries, children do not begin formal schooling until age seven or eight.

### PRACTICE 2

#### Recognizing the Thesis Statement

In the space provided, identify each of the following as (1) a title, (2) a thesis, or (3) a fact that could be used to support a thesis. Check your answers against those in the Answer Key on p. 466.

2

1

3

2

1

3

23

- The personal interview is the most important step in the employment process.
- Looking for a job
- Sixty percent of all jobs are obtained through newspaper advertisements.
- The best time to begin learning a foreign language is in grade school.
- The importance of learning a foreign language
- By the year 2000, the number of students studying foreign languages declined dramatically.
- Most Canadians doing business with Japan do not know a word of Japanese.

why is it not thesis ?

## Writing an Effective Thesis Statement

An effective thesis statement has two and sometimes three parts:

1. It contains a topic that is not too broad. Broad topics must be narrowed down in scope. You can do this by *limiting the topic* (changing the term to cover a smaller part of the topic) or *qualifying the topic* (adding phrases or words to the general term that will narrow down the topic).

**Broad topic:** Swimming

**Limited topic:** Learning to float (Floating is a kind of swimming, more specialized than the term swimming.)

**Qualified topic:** Swimming for health two hours a week (The use of the phrase “for health two hours a week” narrows the topic down considerably. Now the topic concentrates on the fact that the time spent swimming and the reason for swimming are important parts of the topic.)

There are a number of ways to narrow a topic in order to make it fit into a proper essay length, as well as make it fit your experience and knowledge.

2. It contains a controlling idea that you can defend. The controlling idea is what you want to show or prove about your topic; it is your attitude about that topic. The controlling idea is often an adjective, such as *beneficial*, *difficult*, or *maddening*.

Learning to float at the age of 20 was a terrifying experience.

Swimming two hours a week brought about a dramatic change in my health.

3. Optional in a thesis statement is an indication of what strategy for development is to be used. Often you can use words such as the following: *description*, *steps*, *stages*, *comparison*, *contrast*, *causes*, *effects*, *reasons*, *advantages*, *disadvantages*, *definition*, *analysis*, *persuasion*.

Although not all writers include the strategy in the thesis statement, they must always have in mind what major strategy they plan to use to prove their thesis. Professional writers often use more than one strategy to prove the thesis. However, in this book, you are asked to develop your essays by using one major strategy at a time. By working in this way, you can concentrate on understanding and developing the skills needed for each specific strategy.

Study the following thesis statement:

Although a date with the right person is marvellous, going out with a group can have many advantages.

Now look back and check the parts of this thesis statement.

**General topic:** Going out

**Qualified topic:** Going out in a group (as opposed to a single date)

**Controlling idea:** To give the advantages

**Strategy for**

**development:** Contrast between the single date and the group date

### EXERCISE Writing the Thesis Statement

Below are three topics. For each one, develop a thesis statement by (1) limiting or qualifying the general topic, (2) choosing a controlling idea (what you want to explain or prove about the topic), and (3) selecting a strategy that you could use to develop that topic. An example is done for you.

**General topic:** Senior citizens

a. **Limited or qualified topic:**

Community services available to the senior citizens in my town

b. **Controlling idea:**

To show the great variety of programs

c. **Strategy for development** (narration, description, process, comparison or contrast, definition, classification, cause and effect):

Classify the services into major groups.

**Thesis statement:** The senior citizens of New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, are fortunate to have programs available to help them deal with health, housing, and leisure time.

1. Winnipeg (or another city with which you are familiar)

a. Limited or qualified topic:

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b. Controlling idea:

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c. Strategy for development (narration, description, process, comparison or contrast, definition, classification, cause and effect):

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Thesis statement:

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## 2. Shopping

- a. Limited or qualified topic:
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- b. Controlling idea:
- 

- c. Strategy for development (narration, description, process, comparison or contrast, definition, classification, cause and effect):
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Thesis statement:

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## 3. Canadians

- a. Limited or qualified topic:
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- b. Controlling idea:
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- c. Strategy for development (narration, description, process, comparison or contrast, definition, classification, cause and effect):

Thesis statement:

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### Answering a Question in the Form of a Thesis Statement

One of the most effective ways to begin an essay is to start with a thesis statement that directly answers a question. Your thesis statement should include the important parts of the question and should also give a clear indication of the approach you intend to take in your answer.

For example, suppose you were going to write an essay in response to the following question:

Why did the Conservatives under Stephen Harper win the federal election in 2006?

An effective way to begin would be to write the following thesis sentence:

The Conservatives under Stephen Harper won the federal election in 2006 probably for several reasons.