

# 8

# Academic Writing

*from paragraph to essay*



## 8: *The Structure of the Essay*

Essay (definition) : an essay is a group of paragraphs about a single topic and a central idea.

Group= 3 or more; though 5 is a common (typical) number In academic writing

# *THE MAIN PARTS OF AN ESSAY*

Three parts:

1- **Introduction** = the first paragraph

2- **Main Body** = second ( or second, third, fourth, etc.)

3- **Conclusion** = last paragraph

# The Introduction

- 1- Shorter than any main body paragraphs
- 2- Starts with what is called “attention grabber”
- 3- Explains the topic with general ideas; no details are given
- 4- Includes the thesis statement
- 5- The thesis statement may be followed by a ‘transitional sentence’

# The Main Body

- 1- May be one or more paragraphs
- 2- Explains and supports the *thesis statement*
- 3- Longer than both the introduction and conclusion
- 4- located between introduction and conclusion
- 5- Each of its paragraphs develops a 'main idea' which clarifies an aspect or a point **implied** or **stated** in the thesis statement.

# The Conclusion

- 1- The last paragraph
- 2- Shortest paragraph
- 3- Similar to 'concluding sentence' in '**independent paragraph**'
- 4- **Summarizes** or **restates** the thesis and supporting ideas
- 5- May end up with a suggestion, a comment, an invitation, etc.

# The Thesis Statement

1-T.S. (def.): It is the sentence that tells the main idea of the whole essay.

2- Similar to 'topic sentence' of 'independent paragraph'

3- Put at or near the end of the 'introduction'

4- It can overtly state the main ideas to be explained in the body (See Koala essay, for e.g.), or imply them (e.g. a number of reasons for something)

Before I travelled to the UK last year, I thought that British food was just fish and chips, roast beef, apple pie, rice pudding and endless cups of tea. These foods are popular in Britain, but during my travels, I discovered that there is so much more to eating in the UK. People from all over the world have made their home in Britain, and they have brought with them their own food. Even in small towns, you can find Chinese, Indian and Italian restaurants, amongst others. The UK can be divided into different regions that each has its own characteristic foods influenced by the culture of the people who live there.



Everybody knows the koala, that sweet Australian animal that resembles a teddy bear. Although koalas look like toys, they are actually strong climbers and spend their days in the treetops. Mother koalas carry their babies around from tree to tree in a pouch, or pocket, on their stomach. Although there were millions of koalas in Australia in the past, they are now a protected species of animal. As a result of human population growth, deforestation and hunting, the number of koalas has declined.



Taoism is an ancient philosophy from Asia that places great importance on the natural world. Taoists believe that spirit can be found in every person or thing, living or non-living. For the Taoist, even a mountain or a stone contains spirit. Lao Tsu, a Taoist writer and philosopher, said, 'People follow earth. Earth follows heaven. Heaven follows the Tao. The Tao follows what is natural'. For thousands of years in China and other Asian countries, gardens have been an important way to create a place where people can feel the spirit of the natural world. Creating a Taoist garden is an art. No two Taoist gardens are exactly alike, but all Taoist gardens include four essential elements: water, mountains, buildings and bridges.

# WRITING A STRONG THESIS STATEMENT

A strong T.S.= Clear opinion &/or important idea

e.g.1- The private sector is the only solution to solve the unemployment crisis.

2-Getting married nowadays is much harder than it used to be forty years ago.

3- There are three things to check when deciding whether an outline is good enough or not.

# Weak Thesis Statements

## A thesis statement is weak if:

1- it is a mere fact about a topic; facts cannot be discussed or argued for.

2- it does not show which side of an opinion it supports; a thesis statement should not state two sides of an argument equally.

The following statements are weak:

Iraq depends mostly on oil for its economy. (fact only)

To be a teacher has both advantages and disadvantages.

( no clear opinion is given)

## Revising the above weak statements

1- For Iraq to depend on oil only for its economy is a huge drawback for several reasons.

2- Though being a teacher may be tiring, it is the best job one can have.

4 Read these thesis statements below. Write **(S)** strong T.S.), **F** (fact only=a weak T.S., or **N** (no clear opinion= a weak T.S.).

A- (**F= Weak T.S.**) The top government official in my country is the prime minister.

B- (**N= Weak T.S.**) Some people prefer digital cameras, while others like traditional cameras.

C- (**F= Weak T.S.**) India became an independent country in 1947.

D- (**S**) To be a successful student, good study habits are more important than intelligence.

E- (**N= Weak T.S.**) There are several advantages of owning a car, but there are also many disadvantages.

F-(**F= Weak T.S.**)Half of the families in my country own a house.

G-(**S**)Using public transport would be one of the best ways to solve the traffic and pollution problems in cities around the world.

H- (**N= Weak T.S.**)While travelling, staying in a hotel offers more comfort, but sleeping in a tent is less expensive

I-(**F= Weak T.S.**)Classical music concerts are very popular in my country

J- (**S**)In order to create a successful advertisement, it is necessary to consider three issues: who should be targeted, where the advert should be placed, and what type of advert should be made.

# Revising some of the weak statements

A- The top government official in my country should not be the prime minister.

B- Though some people prefer digital cameras, I will always continue to use traditional cameras.

C- India's getting independence in 1947 was never easy.

F- Although half of the families in my country own houses, these are hardly suitable for living!



# *Writing thesis statements*

The paragraphs in the main body of an essay should always explain the thesis statement.

In addition, each paragraph in the main body should discuss *one* part of the thesis.

Look at the following thesis statement.

The topics to be discussed are underlined:

*To create a successful advertisement, it is necessary for advertisers to answer three questions: What are we selling?, Who are we selling it to?, and How can we make people want to buy it?*

Possible topic sentences for each paragraph in the main body:

- 1. The first step in creating a successful advertisement is to completely understand the product that is being sold and how it can be used.*
- 2. A second important part of creating an advertisement is deciding who is expected to buy the product.*
- 3. Finally, a way must be found to create an ad that will make people want to buy the product.*

**Look at the introductory paragraphs in exercise 3 on page 58.  
What should the paragraphs in the main body discuss for  
each thesis statement?**

a. Main body paragraphs: one paragraph per region, describing what the food and culture in each region is like and how it is different from the others.

b. Main body paragraphs: three paragraphs that each discusses one of the three causes for koala bears' numbers decline- human population growth, deforestation, and hunting.

c. Main body paragraphs: four paragraphs that each discusses one of the four elements- water, mountains, buildings, and bridges.

# How to Develop a Thesis Statement

- 1-Write an opinion about the topic.
- 2- Start with “I think that”
- 3- Remove “I think That”
- 4- What remains could be a possible T.S.
- 5- Repeat that to get the best T.S.
- 6- Try to avoid facts or ‘no clear opinion’ statements.

6- For each of these topics, write two or three opinions you have, starting with I think that.

A- exercise:

~~I think that~~ exercise is the best way to keep a healthy body. → Exercise is the best way to keep a healthy body.

B- University study:

~~I think that~~ university study is the only chance to get a respectable job in Iraq. → University study is the only chance to get a respectable job in Iraq.

C- the internet

~~I think that~~ the internet can be very dangerous for young children. —————> The internet can be very dangerous for young children.

D- Music:

~~I think that~~ music is the best way to get a peaceful mind. —————> Music is the best way to get a peaceful mind.