Have you ever known a person who was not very good at telling stories? You probably had trouble following his train of thought as he jumped around from point to point, being too brief in places that needed further explanation or providing too many details about a meaningless element. Maybe he told the end of the story first, then moved to the beginning, and later added details to the middle. His ideas were probably scattered, and the story did not flow very well. When the story was over, you probably had many questions.

Just as a personal anecdote can be a disorganized mess, an essay can fall into the same trap of being out of order and confusing. That is why writers need a thesis statement to provide a specific focus for their essay and to organize what they are about to discuss in the body.

Just like a topic sentence summarizes a single paragraph, the thesis statement summarizes an entire essay. It tells the reader the point you want to make in your essay, while the essay itself supports that point. You should form your thesis before you begin to organize an essay, but you may find that the thesis needs revision as the essay develops.

1.1 Elements of a Thesis Statement

For every essay you write, you must focus on a central idea. This idea stems from a topic you have chosen or been assigned, or from a question your teacher has asked. It is not enough merely to discuss a general topic or simply answer a question with a yes or no. You have to form a specific opinion, and then articulate that into a controlling idea—the idea upon which a thesis statement is built.

Remember that a thesis is not the topic itself but rather your interpretation of the question or subject. For whatever topic your professor gives you, you must ask yourself, “What do I want to say about it?” Asking and then answering this question is vital to forming a thesis that is precise, forceful, and confident.

A thesis is one sentence long and can either be the first or the last sentence of your introduction. It is specific and focuses on one to three points of a single idea—points that can be demonstrated in the body of your essay. It forecasts the content of the essay and suggests how you will organize your information. Remember that a thesis statement does not summarize an issue but rather dissects it.

A Strong Thesis Statement

A strong thesis statement contains the following qualities:

Specificity. A thesis statement must concentrate on a specific area of a general topic. As you may recall from Chapter 8, the creation of a thesis statement begins when you choose a broad subject and then narrow down its parts until you pinpoint a specific aspect of that topic. For example, health care is a broad topic, but a proper thesis statement would focus on a specific area of that topic, such as options for individuals without health care coverage.
Precision. A strong thesis statement must be precise enough to allow for a coherent argument and to remain focused on the topic. If the specific topic is options for individuals without health care coverage, then your precise thesis statement must make an exact claim about it, such as that limited options exist for those who are uninsured by their employers. You must further pinpoint what you are going to discuss regarding these limited effects, such as whom they affect and what the cause is.

Ability to be argued. A thesis statement must present a relevant and specific argument. A factual statement often is not considered arguable. Be sure your thesis statement contains a point of view that can be supported with evidence.

Ability to be demonstrated. For any claim you make in your thesis, you must be able to provide reasons and examples for your opinion. You can rely on personal observations to do this, or you can consult outside sources to demonstrate that what you assert is valid. A worthy argument is backed by examples and details.

Forcefulness. A thesis statement that is forceful shows your readers that you are, in fact, making an argument. The tone is assertive and takes a stance that others might oppose.

Confidence. In addition to using force in your thesis statement, you must also use confidence in your claim. Phrases such as I feel or I believe actually weaken readers’ sense of your confidence because these phrases imply that you are the only person who feels the way you do. In other words, your stance has insufficient backing.

Taking an authoritative stance on the matter persuades your readers to have faith in your argument and open their minds to what you have to say. Your opinion is more convincing when you use a firm attitude. In addition, audiences often disapprove of the use of first person in formal academic writing. Avoid phrases such as I feel, I believe, in my opinion, and I think when writing your thesis. These phrases will weaken your credibility and your argument.

EXERCISE 1

On a separate sheet of paper, write a strong, clear thesis statement for each of the following topics. Remember to make each statement specific, precise, demonstrable, forceful, and confident.

Topics:
- Texting while driving
- Legal drinking age in the United States
- Steroid use among professional athletes
- Abortion
- Racism

1.2 Examples of Appropriate Thesis Statements

Each of the following thesis statements meets several of the following requirements:

- Specificity
- Precision
- Ability to be argued
- Ability to be demonstrated
- Forcefulness
- Confidence

1. The societal and personal struggles of Troy Maxon in the play Fences symbolize the challenges faced by black males who lived through segregation and integration in the United States.

2. Closing all US borders for a period of five years is one solution that will tackle illegal immigration.

3. William Shakespeare’s use of dramatic irony in Romeo and Juliet spoils the outcome for the audience and weakens the plot.

4. Breast milk is not the best choice because more infants develop allergies passed through the milk.

5. Compared to a traditional divorce, no-fault divorce is less expensive, promotes fairer settlements, and reflects a more realistic view of the causes for marital breakdown.
6. Exposing children from an early age to the dangers of drug abuse is a sure method of preventing future drug addicts.
7. In today’s crumbling job market, a high school diploma is not significant enough to land a stable, lucrative job.

**Tip**

You can find thesis statements in many places: in the news, in the opinions made by friends, coworkers or teachers, and even in songs you hear on the radio. Become aware of thesis statements in everyday life by paying attention to people’s opinions and their reasons for those opinions. Also, pay attention to your own daily observations when you are making a point or stating an opinion, as these can become material for future essays.

Now that you have read about the contents of a good thesis and have seen examples, take a look at the pitfalls to avoid when composing your thesis. Keep in mind that a weak thesis

- is simply a declaration of your subject or a description of what you will discuss in your essay;
  - **Weak example:** My paper will explain why imagination is more important than knowledge.
- makes an unreasonable or outrageous claim or uses insults against the opposing side;
  - **Weak example:** Ignorant heretics are responsible for all of Earth’s natural disasters, especially Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans and the earthquake in Haiti.
- contains an obvious fact or something that no one can disagree with or provides a dead end;
  - **Weak example:** Advertising companies use sex to sell their products.
- tries to cover too much information for the assignment’s page restrictions;
  - **Weak example:** The life of Abraham Lincoln was long and challenging.

**Exercise 2**

Read the following thesis statements. On a separate sheet of paper, identify each as weak or strong. For those that are weak, list the reasons why. Then revise the weak statements so that they conform to the requirements of a strong thesis.

1. The subject of this paper is my experience with ferrets as pets.
2. The government must expand its funding for research on renewable energy resources in order to prepare for the impending end of oil.
3. Edgar Allan Poe was a poet who lived in Baltimore during the 19th century.
4. In this essay, I will give you lots of reasons why slot machines should not be legalized in Baltimore.
5. Despite his promises during his campaign, President John F. Kennedy took few executive measures to support civil rights legislation.
6. Because many children’s toys have potential safety hazards that could lead to injury, it is clear that not all children’s toys are safe.
7. My experience with young children has taught me that I want to be a disciplinary parent because I believe that a child without discipline can be a parent’s worst nightmare.

For Answers to this Exercise, please see Section 6 at the end of this chapter.

**Writing at Work**

Often in your career, you will need to ask your boss for something through an e-mail. Just as a thesis statement organizes an essay, it can also organize your e-mail request. While your e-mail will be shorter than an essay, using a thesis statement in your first paragraph quickly lets your boss know what you are asking for, why it is necessary, and what the benefits are. In short body paragraphs, you can provide the essential information needed to expand upon your request. Your boss will then have a clear understanding of your request, as well as have the opportunity to see your exceptional writing skills.
1.3 Revising Your Thesis Statement

Your thesis will probably change as you write, so you will need to modify it to reflect exactly what you have discussed in your essay. Remember from Chapter 8 that your thesis statement begins as a working thesis statement, an indefinite statement that you make about your topic early in the writing process for the purpose of planning and guiding your writing.

Working thesis statements often become stronger as you gather information and form new opinions and reasons for those opinions. Revision helps you strengthen your thesis so that it matches what you have expressed in the body of the paper.

Tip

The best way to revise your thesis statement is to ask questions about it and then examine the answers to those questions. By challenging your own ideas and forming definite reasons for those ideas, you grow closer to a more precise point of view, which you can then incorporate into your thesis statement.

Ways to Revise Your Thesis

You can cut down on irrelevant aspects and revise your thesis by doing the following:

1. To reduce vagueness, pinpoint and replace all nonspecific words, such as people, everything, society, or life with more precise words.

   Working thesis: Young people have to work hard to succeed in life.
   
   Revised thesis: Recent college graduates must have persistence to find and maintain a decent job in which their talents are appreciated.

   The revised thesis makes a more specific statement about success and what it means to work hard. The original includes too broad a range of people and does not define exactly what success entails. By replacing those general words like people and work hard, the writer can better focus her research and gain more direction in her writing.

2. Clarify ideas that need explanation by asking yourself questions that narrow your thesis.

   Working thesis: The welfare system is a joke.

   A joke means many things to many people. Readers bring all sorts of backgrounds and perspectives to the reading process and would need clarification for a word so vague. This expression may also be too informal for the selected audience. By asking questions, the writer can devise a more precise and appropriate explanation for joke. The writer should ask himself questions similar to the 5WH. See Chapter 8 for more information on the 5WH. By incorporating the answers to these questions into a thesis statement, the writer more accurately defines his stance, which will better guide the writing of the essay.

   Revised thesis: The welfare system prevents members of low socioeconomic classes from gaining employment.

3. Replace any linking verbs with action verbs. Linking verbs are forms of the verb to be, a verb that simply states that a situation exists.

   Working thesis: Kansas City schoolteachers are not paid enough.

   The linking verb in this thesis statement is the word are. Linking verbs are often weak in thesis statements because they do not express action. Rather, they connect words and phrases to the second half of the sentence. Readers might wonder, “Why are they not paid enough?” But this statement does not compel them to ask many more questions. The writer should ask herself questions in order to replace the linking verb with an action verb, thus forming a stronger thesis statement, one that takes a more definitive stance on the issue. Who is not paying the teachers enough? What is considered “enough”? What is the problem? What are the results?

   Revised thesis: The Kansas City Council cannot afford to pay its educators, resulting in job cuts and resignations where highly qualified teachers are sorely needed.

4. Omit any general claims that are hard to support.

   Working thesis: Today’s teenage girls are too sexualized.

   It is true that some young women in today’s society are more sexualized than in the past, but that is not true for all girls. Many girls have strict parents, dress appropriately, and do not engage in sexual activity at the middle- and high-school level. The writer of this thesis should ask, “Which teenage girls? What constitutes “too” sexualized? Why are they behaving that way? Where does this behavior show up? What are the repercussions?
Revised thesis: Sexual images in music videos condition teenage girls to believe that a woman’s worth depends on her sensuality.

### Exercise 3

In the first section of Chapter 8, you determined your purpose for writing as well as your audience. You then completed a freewriting exercise about an event you recently experienced and chose a general topic to write about. Using that general topic, you then narrowed it down by answering the 5WH, the five questions often asked by journalists: who, what, where, when, why, and how. After you answered these questions, you chose one of the three methods of prewriting and gathered possible supporting points for your working thesis statement.

Now, on a separate sheet of paper, write down your working thesis statement. Identify any weaknesses in this sentence and revise the statement to reflect the elements of a strong thesis statement. Make sure it is specific, precise, arguable, demonstrable, forceful, and confident.

### Writing at Work

In your career, you may have to write a project proposal that focuses on a particular problem in your company, such as reinforcing the tardiness policy. The proposal would aim to fix the problem; using a thesis statement would clearly state the boundaries of the problem and the goals of the project. After writing the proposal, you may find that the thesis needs revision to reflect exactly what is expressed in the body. Using the techniques, such as clarifying your ideas, will help you revise your thesis.

### Key Takeaways

- Proper essays require a thesis statement to provide a specific focus and suggest how the essay will be organized.
- A thesis statement is your interpretation of the subject, not the topic itself.
- A strong thesis is specific, precise, forceful, confident, and demonstrable.
- A strong thesis challenges readers with a point of view that can be debated and can be supported with evidence.
- A weak thesis is simply a declaration of your topic or contains an obvious fact that cannot be argued.
- Depending on your topic, it may or may not be appropriate to use first person.
- Revise your thesis by ensuring all words are specific, all ideas are exact, and all verbs express action.

### 2. Writing Your Body Paragraphs

#### Learning Objectives

1. Select primary support related to your thesis.
2. Recognize how to support topic sentences more effectively.

If your thesis gives the reader a road map to your essay, then your body paragraphs should closely follow that map. The reader should be able to predict what follows your introductory paragraph by simply reading the thesis statement.

The body paragraphs present the evidence you have gathered to confirm your thesis. Before you begin to support your thesis in the body, you must find information from a variety of sources to support and give credit to what you are trying to prove.
2.1 Select Primary Support Related to Your Thesis

Without primary support, your argument is not likely to be convincing. **Primary support** can be described as the major points you choose to expand on your thesis. It is the most important information you select to argue for your point of view. Each point you choose will be incorporated into the topic sentence for each body paragraph you write. Your primary supporting points are further supported by supporting details within the paragraphs.

**Tip**

Remember that a worthy argument is backed by examples. To construct a valid argument, good writers conduct lots of background research and take careful notes. They also talk to people knowledgeable about a topic in order to understand its implications before writing about it.

**Identify the Characteristics of Good Primary Support**

To fulfill the requirements of good primary support, the information you choose must have the following traits:

- **Specific.** The main points you make about your thesis and the examples you use to expand on those points need to be specific. Use specific examples to provide the evidence and to build upon your general ideas. These types of examples give your reader something narrow to focus on and, if used properly, they leave little doubt about your claim. General examples, while they convey the necessary information, are not nearly as compelling or useful in writing because they are too obvious and typical.

- **Relevant to the thesis.** Primary support is considered strong when it relates directly to the thesis. Primary support should show, explain, or prove your main argument without scattering into irrelevant details. When faced with lots of information that could be used to prove your thesis, you may think you need to include it all in your body. But effective writers resist the temptation to lose focus. Choose your examples wisely by making sure they directly connect to your thesis.

- **Detailed.** Remember that your thesis, while specific, is not supposed to be very detailed. The body paragraphs are where you develop the discussion that a thorough essay requires. Using detailed support shows your readers that you have considered all the facts and chosen only the most precise details to enhance your point of view.

**Prewrite to Identify Primary Supporting Points for a Thesis Statement**

Recall that when you prewrite you essentially make a list of examples or reasons why you support your stance. Stemming from each point, you further provide details to support those reasons. After prewriting, you are then able to look back at the information and choose the most compelling pieces you will use in your body paragraphs.

**Exercise 1**

Choose one of the following working thesis statements and, on a separate sheet of paper, write for at least five minutes using one of the prewriting techniques you learned in Chapter 8: freewriting, asking questions, brainstorming, idea mapping, and searching the Internet.

- Unleashed dogs on city streets are a dangerous nuisance.
- Students cheat for many different reasons.
- Drug use among teens and young adults is a problem.
- The most important change that should occur at my college or university is __________.

**Select the Most Effective Primary Supporting Points for a Thesis Statement**

After you have prewritten about your working thesis statement, you may have generated a lot of information, which may be edited out later. Remember that your primary support must be relevant to your thesis. Remind yourself of your main argument and delete any ideas that do not directly relate to it. Omitting unrelated ideas ensures that you will use only the most convincing information in your body. Choose at least three of only the most compelling points. These will serve as the topic sentences for your body paragraphs.
When you support your thesis, you are revealing evidence. Evidence includes anything that can help support your stance. The following are the kinds of evidence you will encounter as you conduct your research.

1. **Facts.** Facts are the best kind of evidence to use because they often cannot be disputed. They can support your stance by providing background information on or a solid foundation for your point of view. However, some facts may still need explanation. For example, this sentence—"The most populated US state is California."—is a pure fact, but it may require some explanation to make it relevant to your specific argument.

2. **Judgments.** Judgments are conclusions drawn from the given facts. Judgments are more credible than opinions because they are founded upon careful reasoning and examination of a topic.

3. **Testimony.** Testimony consists of direct quotations from either eyewitnesses or expert witnesses. An eyewitness is someone who has direct experience with a subject; he adds authenticity to an argument based on facts. An expert witness is a person who has extensive experience with a topic. He or she studies the facts and provides commentary based on either facts or judgments, or both. An expert witness adds authority and credibility to an argument.

4. **Personal observation.** Personal observation is similar to testimony but consists of your own testimony. It reflects what you know to be true because you have experiences and have formed either opinions or judgments about them. For instance, if you are one of five children and your thesis states that being part of a large family is beneficial to a child’s social development, you would use your own experience to support your thesis.

### Writing at Work

In any job where you devise a plan, you will need to support the steps you lay out. This is an area in which you would incorporate primary support into your writing. Choosing only the most specific and relevant information to expand upon the steps will ensure that your plan appears well thought out and precise.

### Tip

You can consult a vast pool of resources to gather support for your stance. Citing relevant information from reliable sources ensures that your reader will take you seriously and consider your assertions. Use any of the following for your essay: newspapers or news organization websites, magazines, encyclopedias, and/or **scholarly journals**, which are periodicals that address topics in a specialized field.

### 2.2 Supporting Topic Sentences

Each body paragraph contains a **topic sentence** that states one aspect of your thesis and then expands upon it. Like the thesis statement, each topic sentence should be specific and supported by concrete details, facts, or explanations.

Each body paragraph should be composed of the following elements.

**Topic sentence + supporting details (examples, reasons, or arguments)**

As you read in Chapter 8, topic sentences indicate the location and understanding of the basic arguments of your essay. These sentences are vital to writing your body paragraphs because they always refer back to and support your thesis statement. Topic sentences are linked to the ideas you have introduced in your thesis, thus reminding readers what your essay is about. A paragraph without a clearly identified topic sentence may be unclear and scattered, just like an essay without a thesis statement.
Tip

Unless your teacher instructs otherwise, you should include at least three body paragraphs in your essay. A five-paragraph essay, including the introduction and conclusion, is commonly the standard for exams and essay assignments.

Consider the following thesis statement:

Author J. D. Salinger relied primarily on his personal life and belief system as the foundation for the themes in the majority of his works.

The following topic sentence is a primary support point for the thesis. The topic sentence states exactly what the controlling idea of the paragraph is. Later, you will see the writer immediately provide support for the sentence.

Salinger, a World War II veteran, suffered from posttraumatic stress disorder, a disorder that influenced themes in many of his works.

EXERCISE 3

In Exercise 2, you chose three of your most convincing reasons to support the thesis statement you selected from the list. Take each point and incorporate it into a topic sentence for each body paragraph.

Supporting point 1:__________
Topic sentence:__________
Supporting point 2:__________
Topic sentence:__________
Supporting point 3:__________
Topic sentence:__________

Draft Supporting Detail Sentences for Each Primary Support Sentence

After deciding which primary support points you will use as your topic sentences, you must add details to clarify and demonstrate each of those points. These supporting details provide examples, facts, or evidence that support the topic sentence.

The writer drafts possible supporting detail sentences for each primary support sentence based on the thesis statement:
The following paragraph contains supporting detail sentences for the primary support sentence (the topic sentence), which is underlined.

"The thesis statement: Unleashed dogs on city streets are a dangerous nuisance.

Supporting point 1: Dogs can scare cyclists and pedestrians.

Supporting details:
1. Cyclists are forced to zigzag on the road.
2. School children panic and turn wildly on their bikes.
3. People who are walking at night freeze in fear.

Supporting point 2: Loose dogs are traffic hazards.

Supporting details:
1. Dogs in the street make people swerve their cars.
2. To avoid dogs, drivers ram into other cars or pedestrians.
3. Children crossing dogs across busy streets create danger.

Supporting point 3: Unleashed dogs damage gardens.

Supporting details:
1. They step on flowers and vegetables.
2. They destroy hedges by urinating on them.
3. They mess up lawns by digging holes.

Salinger, a World War II veteran, suffered from posttraumatic stress disorder, a disorder that influenced the themes in many of his works. He did not hide his mental anguish over the horrors of war and once told his daughter, “You never really get the smell of burning flesh out of your nose, no matter how long you live.” His short story, “A Perfect Day for a Bombardfish” details a day in the life of a WWII veteran who was recently released from an army hospital for psychiatric problems. The man acts questionably with a little girl he meets on the beach before he returns to his hotel room and commits suicide. Another short story, “For Esme – with love and Squalor,” is narrated by a traumatized soldier who sparks an unusual relationship with a young girl he meets before he departs to partake in D-Day. Finally, in Salinger’s only novel, The Catcher in the Rye, he continues with the theme of posttraumatic stress, though not directly related to war. From a rest home for the mentally ill, sixteen-year-old Holden Caulfield narrates the story of his nervous breakdown following the death of his younger brother.
EXERCISE 4

Using the three topic sentences you composed for the thesis statement in Exercise 1, draft at least three supporting details for each point.

Thesis statement:__________
Primary supporting point 1:__________
Supporting details:__________
Primary supporting point 2:__________
Supporting details:__________
Primary supporting point 3:__________
Supporting details:__________

Tip

You have the option of writing your topic sentences in one of three ways: You can state it at the beginning of the body paragraph, in the middle of the paragraph, or at the end of the paragraph. An implied topic sentence occurs when the topic sentence does not appear at all. An implied topic sentence lets readers form the main idea for themselves. For beginning writers, however, it is best to not use implied topic sentences because it makes it harder to focus your writing. Your instructor may also want you to clearly identify your thesis. For more information on the placement of thesis statements and implied thesis statements, see Chapter 8.

Tip

Print out the first draft of your essay and use a highlighter to mark your topic sentences in the body. Make sure they are clearly stated and accurately present your paragraph, as well as accurately reflect your thesis. If your topic sentence contains information that does not exist in the rest of the paragraph, rewrite it to more accurately match the rest of the paragraph.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Your body paragraphs should closely follow the path set forth by your thesis statement.
- Strong body paragraphs contain evidence that supports your thesis.
- Primary support is composed of the most important points you use to support your thesis.
- Strong primary support is specific, detailed, and relevant to the thesis.
- Prewriting helps you determine your most compelling primary support.
- Evidence includes facts, judgments, testimony, and personal observation.
- Reliable sources may include newspapers, magazines, academic journals, books, encyclopedias, and firsthand testimony.
- Topic sentences present one point of your thesis statement while the information in the rest of the paragraph supports that point.
- A body paragraph is composed of a topic sentence plus supporting details.
3. ORGANIZATION TECHNIQUES

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Identify organization techniques that help writers and readers stay focused.
2. Assess the use of chronological order in organizing an essay.
3. Recognize the use of order of importance in organizing an essay.
4. Determine how to use spatial order to organize an essay correctly.

The method of organization you choose for your essay is just as important as its content. Without a clear organizational pattern, your reader could become confused and lose interest. The way you structure your essay helps your readers draw connections between the body and the thesis and also keeps you focused as you plan and write the essay. Choosing your organizational pattern before you outline ensures that each body paragraph works to support and develop your thesis.

This section covers three ways to organize body paragraphs:

1. Chronological order
2. Order of importance
3. Spatial order

When you begin to draft your essay, your ideas may seem to flow from your mind in a seemingly random manner. Your readers, who bring to the table different backgrounds, viewpoints, and ideas, need you to clearly organize these ideas in order to help process and accept them.

A solid organizational pattern gives your ideas a path that you can follow as you develop your draft. Knowing how you will organize your paragraphs allows you to better express and analyze your thoughts. Planning the structure of your essay before you choose supporting evidence helps you conduct more effective and targeted research.

3.1 Chronological Order

In Chapter 8, you learned that the chronological arrangement is used in the following ways:

- To explain the history of an event or a topic
- To tell a story or relate an experience
- To explain how to do or to make something
- To explain the steps in a process

Chronological order is mostly used in expository writing, which is a form of writing that narrates, describes, informs, or explains a process. When you use chronological order, you arrange the events in the order they actually happened or will happen if you are giving instructions. This method requires you to use words such as first, second, then, after that, later, and finally. These transition words guide you and your reader through the steps you take to expand your thesis.

For example, if you are writing an essay about the history of the airline industry, you would begin with its conception and detail the essential timeline events up until present day. You would follow a chain of events using words such as first, then, next, and so on.

Writing at Work

At some point in your career you may have to file a complaint with your human resources department. Using chronological order is a useful tool in describing the events that led up to your filing the grievance. You would logically lay out the events in the order they occurred using the key transition words. The more logical your complaint, the more likely you will be well received and helped.
A method of organization that arranges ideas according to their significance.

**EXERCISE 1**

Choose an accomplishment you have achieved in your life. The achievement could be in sports, schooling, or extracurricular activities. On your own sheet of paper, use chronological order to list the steps you took to reach your goal. Try to be as specific as possible with the steps you took. Pay attention to transition words to focus your writing.

Keep in mind that chronological order is most appropriate for the following:

- Essays containing heavy research
- Essays with the aim of listing, explaining, or narrating
- Essays that analyze literary works such as poems, plays, or books

**Tip**

When using chronological order, your introduction should indicate what information you will cover and in what order, and should also establish the relevance of the information. Your body paragraphs should then provide clear divisions or steps in chronology. You can divide your paragraphs by time (such as decades, wars, or other historical events) or in the order of the event or work you are examining, such as a line-by-line explanation of a poem.

**EXERCISE 2**

On a separate sheet of paper, practice using chronological order by writing a paragraph that describes a process you are familiar with and can do well. Assume that your reader is unfamiliar with the procedure. Remember to use the chronological key words such as first, second, then, and finally.

3.2 Order of Importance

Recall from Chapter 8 that **order of importance** is best used for the following:

- Persuading and convincing
- Ranking items by their importance, benefit, or significance
- Illustrating a situation, problem, or solution

Most essays move from the least to the most important point, and the paragraphs are arranged in an effort to build the essay’s strength. Sometimes, however, it is necessary to begin with your most important supporting point, such as in an essay that contains a thesis that is highly debatable. When writing a persuasive essay, it is best to begin with the most important point because it immediately captivates your readers and compels them to continue reading.

For example, if you were supporting your thesis that homework is detrimental to the education of high school students, you would want to present your most convincing argument first, and then move on to the less important points for your case.

Some key transitional words you should use with this method of organization are *most importantly, almost as importantly, just as importantly, and finally.*

**Writing at Work**

During your career, you may be required to work on a team that devises a strategy for a specific goal of your company, such as increasing profits. When planning your strategy you should organize your steps in order of importance. This demonstrates the ability to prioritize and plan. Using the order of importance technique also shows that you can create a resolution with logical steps for accomplishing a common goal.
3.3 Spatial Order

As stated in Chapter 8, spatial order is best used for the following:

- Helping readers visualize something as you want them to see it
- Evoking a scene using the senses (sight, touch, taste, smell, and sound)
- Writing a descriptive essay

Spatial order means that you explain or describe objects as they are arranged around you in your space, for example in a bedroom. As the writer, you create a picture for your reader, and their perspective is the viewpoint from which you describe what is around you.

The view must move in an orderly, logical progression, giving the reader clear directional signals to follow from place to place. The key to using this method is to choose a specific starting point, and then guide the reader to follow your line of thought as it moves in an orderly trajectory from your starting point.

Pay attention to the following student’s description of her bedroom and how she guides the reader through the viewing process, image by image.

Attached to my bedroom wall is a small wooden rack dangling with red and turquoise necklaces that shimmer as you enter. Just to the right of the rack is my window, framed by billowy white curtains. The peace of such an image is a stark contrast to my desk, which sits to the right of the window, layered in textbooks, crumpled papers, coffee cups, and an overflowing ashtray. Turning my head to the right, I see a set of two bare windows that frame the trees outside the glass like a 3-D painting. Below the windows is an oak chest from which blankets and scarves are protruding. Against the wall opposite the billowy curtains is an antique dresser, on top of which sits a jewelry box and a few picture frames. A tall mirror attached to the dresser takes up most of the wall, which is the color of lavender.

The paragraph incorporates two objectives you have learned in this chapter: using an implied topic sentence and applying spatial order. Often in a descriptive essay, the two work together.

The following are possible transition words to include when using spatial order:

- Just to the left
- Behind
- Between
- On the left/right
- Across from
- A little further down
- To the south
- A few yards away
- Turning left
EXERCISE 4

On a separate sheet of paper, write a paragraph using spatial order that describes your commute to work, school, or another location you visit often. Write at least 10 sentences in your paragraph.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The way you organize your body paragraphs ensures you and your readers stay focused on, and draw connections to, your thesis statement.
- A strong organizational pattern allows you to articulate, analyze, and clarify your thoughts.
- Planning the organizational structure for your essay before you begin to search for supporting evidence helps you conduct more effective and directed research.
- Chronological order is most commonly used in expository writing. It is useful for explaining the history of your subject, for telling a story, or for explaining a process.
- Order of importance is most appropriate in a persuasion paper, as well as for essays in which you rank things, people, or events by their significance.
- Spatial order describes things as they are arranged in space and is best for helping readers to visualize something as you want them to see it; it creates a dominant impression.

4. INTRODUCTION AND CONCLUSION PARAGRAPHS

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Recognize the importance of strong introductory and concluding paragraphs.
2. Determine engaging introductory paragraphs with immediate impact.
3. Identify effective conclusions for essays.

Picture your introduction as a storefront window: You have a certain amount of space to attract your customers (readers) to your goods (subject) and bring them inside your store (discussion). Once you have enticed them with something intriguing, you then point them in a specific direction and try to make the sale (convince them to accept your thesis).

Your introduction is an invitation to your readers to first consider what you have to say, and then follow your train of thought as you expand upon your thesis statement. First impressions are crucial and can leave lasting effects in your reader’s mind, which is why the introduction is so important to your essay. If your introductory paragraph is dull or disjointed, your reader probably will not have much interest in continuing with the essay.

An introduction serves the following purposes:

1. To establish your voice and tone, or your attitude toward the subject
2. To introduce the general topic of the essay
3. To state your thesis to be supported in the body paragraphs

4.1 Methods of Attracting Interest in Your Introductory Paragraph

Your introduction should begin with an engaging statement devised to provoke your readers’ interest. In the next few sentences, you introduce them to your topic by stating general facts or ideas about the subject. As you move deeper into your introduction, you gradually narrow the focus, moving closer to your thesis. Moving smoothly and logically from introductory remarks to your thesis statement can be described using a funnel technique, as illustrated in the following diagram:
FIGURE 9.1 Funnel Technique

![Funnel Technique Diagram]

EXERCISE 1

On a separate sheet of paper, generate and record three broad general statements about the topic for which you formed a thesis in Section 1.

Immediately capturing your readers’ interest increases the chances of having them read what you are about to discuss. You can create interest and curiosity for your essay in a number of ways. Try to get your readers personally involved by doing any of the following:

- Appealing to their emotions
- Using logic
- Beginning with a provocative question or opinion, one that provokes or stimulates the reader
- Opening with a startling statistic or surprising fact
- Raising a question or series of questions
- Presenting an explanation or rationalization for your essay
- Opening with a relevant quotation or incident
- Opening with a striking, written image
- Including a **personal anecdote**, or a brief narrative detailing something you have experienced
Remember that your **diction**, or word choice, while always important, is most crucial in your introductory paragraph. Boring diction could extinguish any desire a person might have to read through your discussion. Choose words that create written images or express action. For more information on word choice, see Chapter 4.

In Chapter 8, you followed Mariah as she moved through the writing process. In this chapter, Mariah writes her introduction and conclusion to the same essay. Mariah incorporates some of the introductory elements into her introductory paragraph, which she previously outlined in Chapter 8. Her thesis statement is underlined.

Play Atari on a General Electric brand television set? Maybe watch Dynasty? Or read old newspaper articles on microfiche at the library? Twenty-five years ago, the average college student did not have many options when it came to entertainment in the form of technology. Fast-forward to the twenty-first century, and the digital age has revolutionized the way people entertain themselves. In today’s rapidly evolving world of digital technology, consumers are bombarded with endless options for how they do most everything—from buying and reading books to taking and developing photographs. In a society that is obsessed with digital means of entertainment, it is easy for the average person to become baffled. Everyone wants the newest and best digital technology, but the choices are many and the specifications are often confusing.

If you have trouble coming up with a provocative statement for your opening, it is a good idea to use a relevant, attention-grabbing quote about your topic.

**Writing at Work**

In your job field, you may be required to write a speech for an event, such as an awards banquet or a dedication ceremony. The introduction to a speech is similar to an essay because you have a limited amount of space to attract your audience’s attention. Using the same techniques, such as a provocative quote or an interesting statistic, is an effective way to engage your listeners. Using the funnel approach also introduces your audience to your topic and then presents your main idea in a logical manner.
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EXERCISE 2

Reread each sentence in Mariah’s introductory paragraph. For each sentence, indicate which techniques she used to attract her readers’ interest.

(1) Play Atari on a General Electric brand television set? (2) Maybe watch Dynasty? (3) Or read old newspaper articles on microfiche at the library? (4) Twenty-five years ago, the average college student did not have many options when it came to entertainment in the form of technology. (5) Fast forward to the 21st century, and the digital age has revolutionized the way people entertain themselves. (6) In today’s rapidly evolving world of digital technology, consumers are bombarded with endless options for how they do most everything—from buying and reading books to taking and developing photographs. (7) In a society that is obsessed with digital means of entertainment, it is easy for the average person to become baffled. (8) Everyone wants the newest and best digital technology, but the choices are many and the specifications are often confusing.

For Answers to this Exercise, please see Section 6 at the end of this chapter.

4.2 Writing a Conclusion

It is not unusual to want to rush when you approach your conclusion, and even experienced writers may fade. But what good writers remember is that it is vital to put just as much attention into the conclusion as in the rest of the essay. After all, a hasty ending can undermine an otherwise strong essay.

A conclusion that does not correspond to the rest of your essay, has loose ends, or is unorganized can unsettle your readers and raise doubts about the entire essay. However, if you have worked hard to write the introduction and body, your conclusion can often be the most logical part to compose.

The Anatomy of a Strong Conclusion

Keep in mind that the ideas in your conclusion must conform to the rest of your essay. To tie these components together, restate your thesis at the beginning or end of your conclusion. This helps you assemble, in an orderly fashion, all the information you have explained in the body. Repeating your thesis reminds your readers of the major arguments you have been trying to prove and also indicates that your essay is drawing to a close. A strong conclusion also reviews your main points and emphasizes the importance of the topic.

The construction of the conclusion is similar to the introduction, in which you make general introductory statements and then present your thesis. The difference is that, in the conclusion, you first paraphrase, or state in different words, your thesis and then follow up with general concluding remarks. These sentences should progressively broaden the focus of your thesis and maneuver your readers out of the essay.

Many writers like to end their essays with a final emphatic, or forceful, statement. This strong closing statement will cause your readers to continue thinking about the implications of your essay; it will make your conclusion, and thus your essay, more memorable. Another powerful technique is to challenge your readers to make a change in either thought or action. Challenging your readers to see the subject through new eyes is a powerful way to ease you and your readers out of the essay. Read the following example of an emphatic statement in a conclusion:

Because unleashed dogs impede traffic, pester bicyclists and pedestrians, and wreck lawns and gardens, they endanger not only our neighbors but our definition of neighborhood. Keep our American neighborhood ideals intact by urging your community and law enforcement to enforce the leash laws.

Tip

When closing your essay, do not expressly state that you are drawing to a close. Relying on statements such as in conclusion, it is clear that, as you can see, or in summation is unnecessary and can be considered trite.

Tip

It is wise to avoid doing any of the following in your conclusion:

- Introducing new material
- Contradicting your thesis
Changing your thesis
Using apologies or disclaimers

Introducing new material in your conclusion has an unsettling effect on your reader. When you raise new points, you make your reader want more information, which you could not possibly provide in the limited space of your final paragraph.

Contradicting or changing your thesis statement causes your readers to think that you do not actually have a conviction about your topic. After all, you have spent several paragraphs adhering to a singular point of view. When you change sides or open up your point of view in the conclusion, your reader becomes less inclined to believe your original argument.

By apologizing for your opinion or stating that you know it is tough to digest, you are in fact admitting that even you know what you have discussed is irrelevant or unconvincing. You do not want your readers to feel this way. Effective writers stand by their thesis statement and do not stray from it.

EXERCISE 3

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following:

- Restate your thesis from Exercise 1 of Section 1.
- Make some general concluding remarks.
- Compose a final emphatic statement.
- Incorporate what you have written into a strong conclusion paragraph for your essay.

Mariah incorporates some of these pointers into her conclusion. She has paraphrased her thesis statement in the first sentence.

In a society fixed on the latest and smartest digital technology, a consumer can easily become confused by the countless options and specifications. The ever-changing state of digital technology challenges consumers with its updates and adds-ons and expanding markets and incompatible formats and restrictions—a fact that is complicated by salesmen who want to sell them anything. In a world that is increasingly driven by instant gratification, it is easy for people to buy the first thing they see. The solution for many people should be to avoid buying on impulse. Consumers should think about what they really need, not what is advertised.

Tip

Make sure your essay is balanced by not having an excessively long or short introduction or conclusion. Check that they match each other in length as closely as possible and try to mirror the formula you used in each. Parallelism, using the same grammatical structure to express equal ideas in a sentence, strengthens the message of your essay.
Writing at Work

On the job you will sometimes give oral presentations based on research you have conducted. A concluding statement to an oral report contains the same elements as a written conclusion. You should wrap up your presentation by restating the purpose of the presentation, reviewing its main points and emphasizing the importance of the material you presented. A strong conclusion will leave a lasting impression on your audience.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- A strong opening captures your readers’ interest and introduces them to your topic before you present your thesis statement.
- An introduction should restate your thesis, review your main points, and emphasize the importance of the topic.
- The funnel technique to writing the introduction begins with generalities and gradually narrows your focus until you present your thesis.
- A good introduction engages people’s emotions or logic; questions or explains the subject; or provides a striking image or quotation.
- Carefully chosen diction in both the introduction and conclusion prevents any confusing or boring ideas.
- A conclusion that does not connect to the rest of the essay can diminish the effect of your paper.
- The conclusion should remain true to your thesis statement. It is best to avoid changing your tone or your main idea, or introducing any new material.
- Closing with a final emphatic statement provides closure for your readers and makes your essay more memorable.

5. END OF CHAPTER EXERCISES

EXERCISES

I. On a separate sheet of paper, choose an example of a proper thesis statement from this chapter (one that interests you) and form three supporting points for that statement. After you have selected your three reasons, write a topic sentence for each body paragraph. Make sure that your topic sentences can be backed up with examples and details.

II. Choose one of the topics from Exercise 1 in Section 1 of this chapter and form a thesis statement based on your perspective on the topic, as well as your reasons. On a separate sheet of paper, write an introduction for an essay based on the thesis statement using the techniques for introductory paragraphs that you learned in this chapter.

III. Open a magazine and read a lengthy article. See if you can pinpoint the thesis statement as well as the topic sentence for each paragraph and its supporting details.

6. ANSWERS TO CHAPTER EXERCISES

Section 1 Exercise 2 Answers:

1. Weak: It only declares the subject or a description of the subject; Ferrets make better pets than the average dog and cat because ferrets are low maintenance, easy to train, and entertaining. 2. Strong 3. Weak: It contains an obvious, indisputable fact and leads to a dead end; Edgar Allan Poe, a 19th century poet who lived in Baltimore, was the best of his time because of his poems’ mysterious and macabre themes. 4. Weak: It contains unnecessary language (in this essay and I will give you lots) and tries to cover too much information; Slot machines should not be legalized in Baltimore because their legalization will increase crime and poverty. 5. Strong 6. Strong 7. Weak; It contains the phrase I believe; My experience with young children has taught me that disciplinary parenting is most effective.
Section 4 Exercise 2 Answers:
Sentences 1, 2, and 3: raising a question or series of questions. Sentence 4: opening with a startling statistic or surprising fact. Sentence 5: using logic. Sentence 6: opening with a striking written image. Sentence 7: appealing to audience emotions. Sentence 8: presenting an explanation or rationalization for the essay.