Moving From Paragraph to Essay

Tips on Crafting the Basic College Essay
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A paragraph is considered a “mini” essay.

Structurally, paragraphs and essays are similar.

An essay may contain the same points as a paragraph. However, those points are obviously developed in much greater depth.
The topic sentence is usually the first sentence in a paragraph. A well-crafted topic sentence states or implies the direction of further elaboration of paragraph.

Sample topic sentence: *Too much emphasis is placed on grades in society.*

**Topic:** Grades  
**Controlling idea:** Too much emphasis  
**Implied Content:** Paragraph will cite two or three examples of how society places too much emphasis upon grades. Below, those examples are highlighted in yellow:

For Example:

*Too much emphasis is placed on grades in society.* First, *grades are an artificial reflection of one’s intelligence.* [ELABORATE USING FACTS, SPECIFIC DETAILS, QUOTES, ANECDOTES]. Second, *grades reward external conformity and not necessarily internal growth.* [ELABORATE USING FACTS, SPECIFIC DETAILS, QUOTES, ANECDOTES]. Finally, *grades do not measure other important aspects of learning.* [ELABORATE USING FACTS, SPECIFIC DETAILS, QUOTE]
ESSAY STRUCTURE

THESIS STATEMENT  THE TOPIC PLUS THE CONTROLLING IDEA

The thesis statement is typically the last sentence in the introductory paragraph of a basic essay, and usually follows a brief but effective introductory discussion of the topic in general. Sometimes, the thesis statement can suggest (“forecast”) the direction of subsequent ideas in the essay.

Sample thesis sentence: Too much emphasis is placed on grades in society.

Topic: Grades
Controlling idea: Too much emphasis
Implied direction: Essay will probably give examples of how society places too much emphasis upon grades.

In the example on the next screen, those examples are highlighted in yellow.
The classroom was silent as the instructor began passing out the final exam. One by one the students received their packets and glanced at the test. A few of them sighed. Others hunched over their papers and began writing. One or two slouched down in their seats and groaned. It was the end of the first semester, and final exams had begun. At the end of the day, the instructor will read the exams, place a letter on the top of the page, and then prepare her semester grades. Most of her students will pass her class. Some, in fact, will do very well. A few will fail. But the one question that has yet to be answered, the question that wasn’t included on this particular test, is: how important are grades to students learning? The way I see it, too much emphasis is placed on grades in our society for several reasons.

First, grades are an artificial reflection of one’s intelligence. [ELABORATE USING FACTS, SPECIFIC DETAILS, QUOTES, ANECDOTES].

Second, grades reward external conformity and not necessarily internal growth. [ELABORATE USING FACTS, SPECIFIC DETAILS, QUOTES, ANECDOTES].

Finally, grades do not measure other important aspects of learning. [ELABORATE USING FACTS, SPECIFIC DETAILS, QUOTES, ANECDOTES].

To sum up [conclude paragraph by reiterating your thesis and tying together the above points].
THE “BODY” OF THE ESSAY REPRESENTS THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE THESIS STATEMENT AND CAN BE ANYWHERE FROM ONE TO 100 PARAGRAPHS!
INTRODUCTION: An introduction is the first paragraph (or paragraphs) of any written work.

What is the function of an introduction?

• Captures your audience's attention.
• Gives background on your topic.
• Develops interest in your topic.
• Informs your reader about the focus of your paper (i.e., states your thesis)
A thesis statement in an essay is a sentence that explicitly identifies the purpose of the paper or previews its main ideas.

Because the thesis reflects the type of paper a student is writing, there is no one “right” way to craft a thesis.

However, there are guidelines.

The next slides give examples of six different kinds of thesis statements.
A thesis statement is an actual sentence, not a title.

COMPARE:

Title: Social Security and Old Age

Thesis Statement: Continuing changes in the Social Security System makes it almost impossible to plan intelligently for one’s retirement.
A thesis statement is an **assertion**, not a statement of fact or an observation.

**COMPARE:**

**Fact or observation:** People use many lawn chemicals.

**Assertion:** People are poisoning the environment with chemicals merely to keep their lawns clean.
A thesis statement takes a stand rather than announcing a subject.

COMPARE:

Announcement: The thesis of this paper is the difficulty of solving our environmental problems.

Takes a Stand: Solving our environmental problems is more difficult than many environmentalists believe.
A thesis statement has a **narrow focus**, not a broad focus.

**COMPARE:**

**Broad:** The American steel industry has many problems.

**Focused:** The primary problems of the American steel industry have to do with **lack of funds to renovate outdated plants** and **foreign imports taking steel jobs away from qualified American workers.**
A thesis statement is **specific** rather than vague or general.

**COMPARE:**

**Vague:** Hemingway’s war stories are very good.

**Specific:** Hemingway’s stories helped create a new prose style by employing extensive dialogue, shorter sentences, and strong, Anglo-Saxon words.
A thesis statement addresses a single, over-arching idea and then seeks to develop that idea in the essay.

COMPARE:

More than one point: Stephen Hawking’s physical disability has not prevented him from becoming a world-renowned physicist, and his book is the subject of a movie.

One main point: Stephen Hawking’s physical disability has not prevented him from becoming a world-renowned physicist.
TO SUM UP: THESIS STATEMENTS

- A thesis statement explicitly identifies the purpose of the paper or previews its main ideas.
- A thesis statement is the main idea, not the title.
- A thesis statement is an assertion, not a statement of fact.
- A thesis statement takes a stand rather than announcing a subject.
- A thesis statement is narrow rather than broad.
- A thesis statement is specific rather than vague or general.
- A thesis statement addresses one main point rather than several main points.
Now, a word about document preparation!
Prepare your final draft using MLA requirements for document preparation.
Here’s another example that includes pagination in upper right hand header. Learn how to use your word processor tools to format your documents correctly.
ready. set. go!