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APPROACHING THE WRITING TOPIC

ESSAY WRITING (PART ONE)

An essay consists of three different **components**: an **introductory paragraph**, a number of **body paragraphs**, and a **concluding paragraph**. In this unit, you will learn how to write the introductory paragraph, and in the next unit, you will practice how to devise body paragraphs and the concluding paragraph.



THE INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH

The first paragraph in an essay is called the introductory paragraph. Without an introductory paragraph, your essay seems too **abrupt** meaning rude & unprepared to the reader. An introductory paragraph starts by introducing the general idea of the topic and then narrows to the specific idea of the **thesis statement**.

The **thesis statement** carries the main idea of the essay. As the topic sentence is the main idea of a paragraph, the **thesis statement** is the main idea of the essay. In fact, a **thesis statement** summarizes what the entire essay is about. It contains the topic and the controlling idea for the whole essay. The topic is the theme or subject matter of the essay. The controlling idea defines the purpose of the essay and sets its direction.

Here is an example of an introductory paragraph:

We all dream about our wedding celebration, but when it happens, we do not know what to expect. I met my husband on a student trip to **Honduras** and after four years of letter writing and visits, we finally announced our **engagement** and planned for the event. My wedding day was the most **thrilling** day of my life.

In the previous introductory paragraph, there is a **thesis** statement containing a topic and a controlling idea:

Thesis statement:	My wedding was the most thrilling day of my life.
Topic:	my wedding
Controlling idea:	being the most thrilling day of my life

Activity

Find the **thesis** statements in the following introductory paragraphs, and then **analyze** each **thesis** statement into its topic and controlling idea.

Paragraph 1

It was a sunny day in the summer of 1998 when my family moved out of the city to the **suburbs**. I did not like leaving because I would lose my friends and the places where I had had so much fun. It was very sad for me to see my friends standing in front of the old house as we said our last goodbyes. Little did I know that this move would **turn out** to be one of the best moments of my life.



Thesis statement: *Being one of the best moments of my life*

Topic: *Our movement to suburbs*

Controlling idea: *turning out to be one of the best moments of my life*

Paragraph 2

The Romans kept **geese** on their **Capitol Hill** to **cackle** alarm in the event of attack by night. Modern Americans, despite their technology, have hardly improved on that old system of protection. According to the latest Safety Council report, almost any door with a standard lock can be opened easily with a common plastic **credit card**.



Thesis statement: *Any door with a standard lock can be opened easily with a common plastic credit card*

Topic: *System of protection*

Controlling idea: *the possibility of being opened easily with a plastic credit card*

Paragraph 3

A two-hundred-pound teenager quit school because no desk would hold him. A three-hundred-pound chef who could no longer stand on his feet was **fired**. A three-hundred-fifty-pound truck driver broke furniture in his friends' houses. All these people are now living healthier, happier, and thinner lives, thanks to the remarkable **intestinal bypass surgery** first developed in 1967.



Thesis statement: All these people are now living healthier, happier & thinner lives. Thank to the

Topic: Obese people

Controlling idea: living healthier, happier & thinner lives.

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