

A Basic American Essay Format

What precedes the thesis is typically the old, familiar information that the reader needs in order to understand the conversation that the thesis joins. The old information is in **THE PROBLEM OR QUESTION** that the thesis addresses.

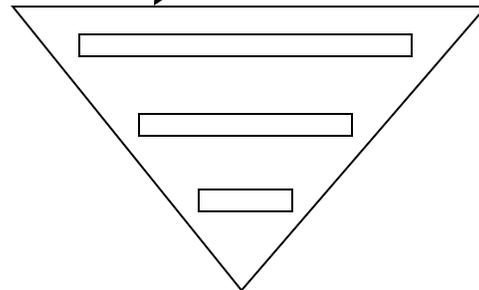
PROBLEM → **THESIS**
(old information) (new information)



Introduction

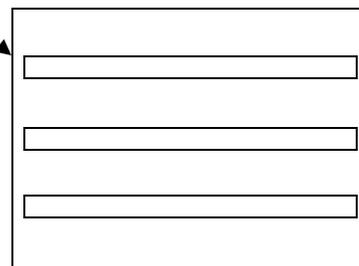
- Opens with an attention-grabber (Also known as a “hook” or “lead”)
- Explains the question/ problem being investigated
- Includes background information (perhaps a definition of key terms, summary of events leading up to the problem, etc)
- Introduces a thesis statement
- May include a mapping statement.

Begins with a hook, develops to a thesis



Body/Support Paragraphs

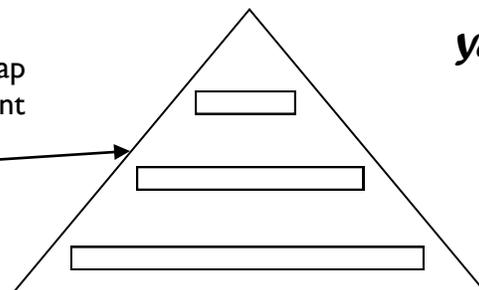
- Each paragraph supports the thesis
- Each paragraph includes a topic sentence
- Each paragraph provides specific evidence (sense details, facts, quotations, statistics) that support the main idea and the essay’s thesis.



Conclusion

- Complements the introduction
- Often answers the question “So what?” to indicate the essay’s significance
- Helps the reader move from the parts of the essay to the big picture.
- May include a restated thesis
- Brings a sense of completeness and closure to the piece.

Broadens to “wrap up” your argument



(Insert coffee break here. You deserve it.)

Nutshell Your Argument

“The six exercises in this figure cause you to look at your argument from different perspectives, helping you clarify the question you are addressing, articulate the kind of change you want to make in your audience’s view of your topic, and directly state your purpose, thesis, and tentative title” (Ramage et al 507).

Exercise 1 What puzzle or problem initiated your thinking about X ?

Exercise 2 (*Paradigm: Many people think X, but I am going to argue Y*)

Before reading my paper, my readers will think this about my topic:

_____.

But after reading my paper, my readers will think this new way about my topic:

_____.

Exercise 3 The purpose of my paper is

_____.

Exercise My paper asks the following question

_____.

Exercise 5 My one-sentence summary answer to the above question is this:

_____.

Exercise 6 A descriptive title for my paper is this:

_____.