

The Essay:

Its Parts, Unity and Coherence

13th Lecture

An **essay** is a piece of writing several paragraphs long. It is about one topic, just as a paragraph is. However, because the topic of an essay is too complex to discuss in one paragraph, you need to divide it into several paragraphs, one for each major point. Then you need to tie the paragraphs together by adding an introduction and a conclusion.

Writing an essay is no more difficult than writing a paragraph except that an essay is longer. The principles of organization are the same for both, so if you can write a good paragraph, you can write a good essay.

The Three Parts of an Essay:

An essay has three main parts: an **introduction** (introductory paragraph), a **body** (at least one, but usually two or more paragraphs), and a **conclusion** (concluding paragraph).

The following chart shows you how the parts of a paragraph correspond to the parts of an essay.

Essay

I. Introduction

General statements
Thesis statement

II. Body

A. Topic sentence
1. Support
2. Support
3. Support
(Concluding sentence)¹

B. Topic Sentence
1. Support
2. Support
3. Support
(Concluding sentence)

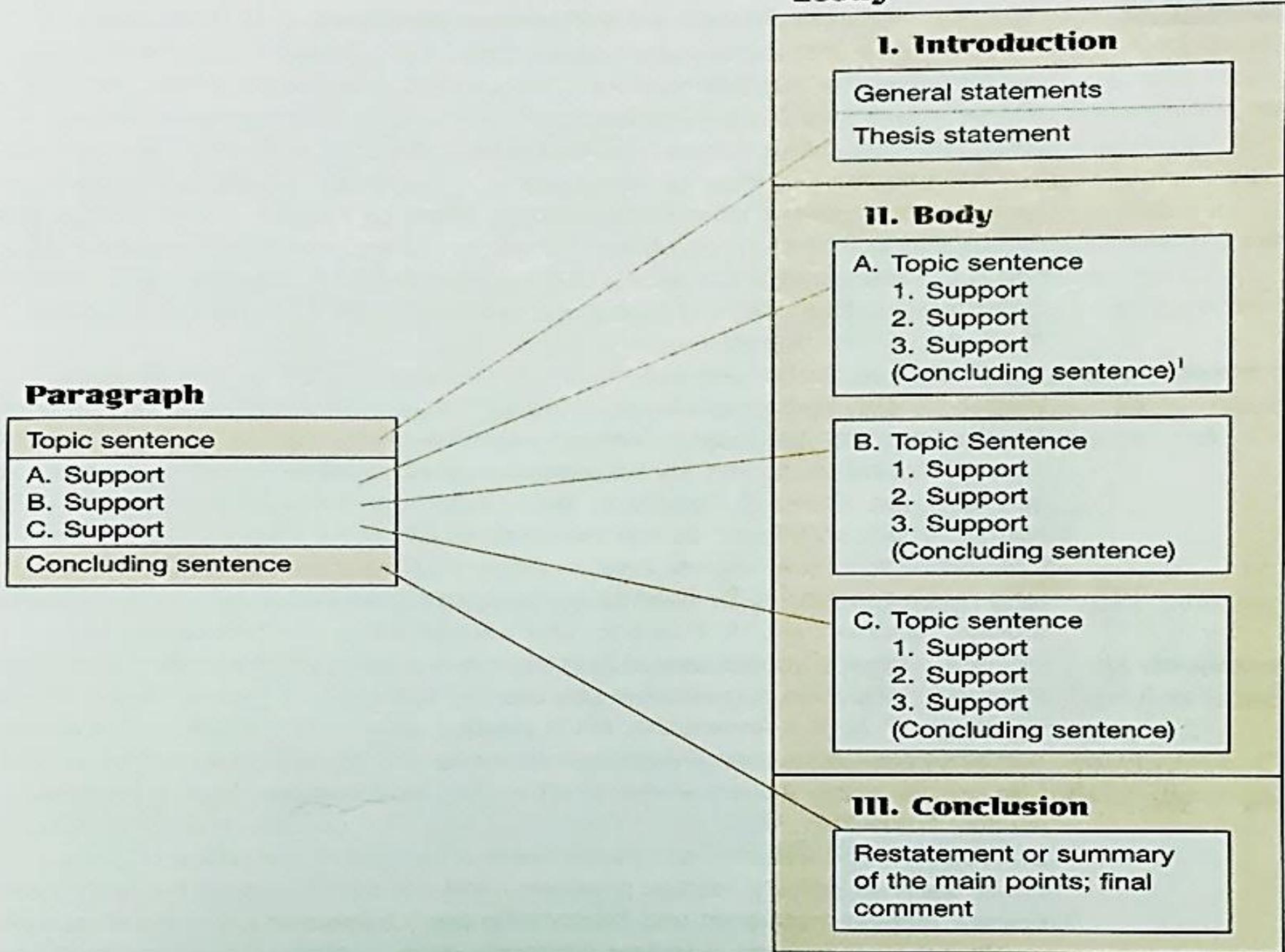
C. Topic sentence
1. Support
2. Support
3. Support
(Concluding sentence)

III. Conclusion

Restatement or summary
of the main points; final
comment

Paragraph

Topic sentence
A. Support
B. Support
C. Support
Concluding sentence



An essay **introduction** consists of two parts: a few general statements to attract your reader's attention and a **thesis statement** to state the main idea of the essay. A thesis statement for an essay is like a topic sentence for a paragraph: It names the specific topic and gives the reader a general idea of the contents of the essay. The **body** consists of one or more paragraphs. Each paragraph develops a subdivision of the topic, so the number of paragraphs in the body will vary with the number of subdivisions or subtopics. The **conclusion**, like the concluding sentence in a paragraph, is a summary or review of the main points discussed in the body.

An essay has **unity** and **coherence**, just as a paragraph does. **Transition signals** and the **repetition of key nouns** link the paragraphs into a cohesive whole.

I remember so well when I had my most embarrassing moment. I was in Form 4 and it was during the school recess. The minute the bell rang for recess, I rushed to the toilet because I had been controlling my urges since class started. I didn't want to miss class because the lesson taught that morning was to include tips for the forthcoming examination.

Without realising, I had rushed to the girls' toilet. The prolonged control and an upset stomach made worse by two glasses of cold milk in the morning made me grunt and groan in what I thought in what I thought was the privacy of the cubicle. I thought I heard giggling outside and wondered why the giggles sounded unusually near. A few minutes later I came out the cubicle and discovered my horror that I had entered the girls' toilet. To make matters worse, the few girls standing outside didn't even turn away when I came out. Instead they looked down at me, then only they turned quickly away. Horror of horrors, I had forgotten to zip up! No beetroot could have matched the colour of my face at this point in time!

The news of my predicament spread like wild fire throughout school. I was truly the talk of the town. I felt like I could either walk around feeling perpetually self-conscious and embarrassed or I could turn the situation round, perhaps even to my advantage. I remembered my mother's words that 'if you can't beat them, join them'. So I decided to make fun of myself, to laugh at myself too. It works. Everyone got bored after a while and nobody teased me after that.

It was indeed an eye-opening experience for me. I have learnt that when people laugh at you, you should laugh along. You must not take yourself seriously. Learn to look at yourself through other people's eyes and you will realise that most of the time when they laugh at you, they just want to have some fun. They mean no harm. If you can make people laugh, it's like bringing sunshine into their lives and as someone said, 'those who bring sunshine to the lives of others cannot keep it from themselves.'