Begin by using an introduction strategy to introduce the topic and grab your reader’s attention: try a provocative question, quote, statistic, anecdote, or hypothetical situation. Or, move from general to specific as you work your way to the thesis.

The last sentence in your intro should be the **thesis**. It performs very specific tasks:

1. Refers to the assigned topic
2. Is an opinionated statement that takes a stand on an issue
3. Establishes a plan for the entire essay. It either covers every point (direct) or remains open (indirect).

The first sentence in the paragraph is the **topic sentence**. Like the thesis, it performs very specific jobs:

1. Refers to the thesis
2. But limits the topic to the ONE thing that will be discussed in this paragraph
3. Remember that your topic sentence, although it does limit the paragraph, is the most general statement of that paragraph.

You may need to explain some idea in your topic sentence in more specific terms. A **supporting sentence** breaks down the topic sentence into smaller parts. Next, include examples and details.

The **bulk** of the body paragraphs is made of specific experiences, instances, or observations that support the opinion you’ve put forth in the topic sentence.

Examples can come from personal experiences (may use I, me) and should be signaled by phrases like for instance, for example, and more specifically.

Details are specific names, numbers, lists, definitions, and descriptions added to your supporting examples. Remember to use vivid adjectives that appeal to all five senses.

Your **conclusion** is relatively short compared to the other paragraphs. It should restate your thesis and wrap up your essay.

Use a concluding strategy here: you could look to the future, make a plea to the audience, or circle back to the idea that introduced your essay. You don’t have to introduce new ideas or repeat body paragraph points.

T. Smith