

## THE PARTS OF A GREAT PAPER

Like a movie, short story, or novel, an academic essay (a paper) has three distinct parts:

1. an **introductory** part, in which the writer catches our attention, gives us the background we need to understand what's going to follow, and tells us what the central idea of the work will be
2. a **body**, in which the central idea, given color and life through examples and other specifics, is explored
3. a **conclusion**, which ties up the story and leaves us feeling satisfied.

These parts aren't artificial constructions. They are natural and necessary for our understanding and pleasure.

## THE SHAPE OF YOUR GREAT PAPER

In your INTRODUCTION you will want to include

- a **Hook** to catch your readers' attention. Your hook (or "lead") can be anything catchy--a question; a startling statistic or other fact; a vivid example; an anecdote; a quotation; a description of a scene or event; even a smell, sound, or taste, etc. (Note that technical and scientific writing often does not require a hook.)
- any **Background Material** necessary to orient your reader. Depending on the situation, in your background material you could explain why your topic interests you; describe any credentials or experiences you might have that make you knowledgeable about the topic; and/or define and clarify the key term your paper is about (example: eco-justice). Thinking about what your **audience** (your reader) needs to know to understand your paper will help you decide what background materials to include.
- a **Thesis Statement**. You write a clear statement of the central idea, the main point of your paper. Your thesis statement should usually be only one sentence long and should include any key words of your paper. The thesis statement often appears at the very end of the introduction.

Your **BODY PARAGRAPHS** each help support the main point of your paper. Somewhere in most body paragraphs (usually at or near the beginning) is a **Topic Sentence** telling your readers what that particular paragraph will be about (it's like the thesis statement for that paragraph). A paper can have any number of body paragraphs. Remember that your readers need to understand how your train of thought flows logically from one paragraph to the next. Sometimes, you'll need transitional words or sentences to get your readers from one paragraph to the next.

Your **CONCLUSION** rounds out your paper and gives your readers a satisfactory sense of closure. It echoes the main point of your paper without repeating it, word for word, in a boring way. A paper can also end with a question, a quotation, a hope, or a recommendation. But don't introduce new material, preach, or apologize in your conclusion!