Writing Well
Thesis Statements, Topic Sentences, Paragraphs & Linking Ideas

Steve Cope learning@kent.ac.uk
Student Learning Advisory Service
www.kent.ac.uk/learning
www.twitter.com/kentuniSLAS
www.facebook.com/kentuniSLAS
Monday – Friday 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Templeman Library 2nd floor
Essay Structure

1. Introduction
   - General Statements
   - Thesis Statement

2. Main Body
   - Topic sentence
   - Support
   - Support
   - Concluding sentence
   × number of paragraphs

3. Conclusion
   - Restatement or summary of main points + final comment
Essay Structure

• **Introduction** – often consists of two parts:
  A few general statements to attract reader’s attention; maybe a fact or quote, even a story.
  Thesis statement – main idea of essay giving an outline of its contents. Followed by…

• **Body**
  Paragraphs – each developing a subdivision of the topics.

• **Conclusion**
  Summary or review of main points + closing sentence.
  Not just a repetition, but a re-cap and final point.

[http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/](http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/)
Essay Introductions – the Funnel Model

General statements

- Racism is not new.
- Institutional racism is a newer concept.
- Racism is not solely determined by skin colour.
- Racism can be concealed by concepts such as national pride.

Thesis statement

- Asylophobia is a recent manifestation of racism.

Your line of thought moves from the general to the specific.
Moving to a new country can be an exciting, even exhilarating experience. In a new environment, one can somehow feel more alive. Seeing new sights, eating new food, hearing the foreign sounds of a new language and feeling a different climate against one’s skin can stimulate one’s senses as never before. Soon, however, this sensory bombardment becomes sensory overload. Suddenly, new experiences seem stressful rather than stimulating, and delight turns into discomfort. This is the phenomenon known as culture shock. Culture shock is more than jet lag or homesickness, and it affects nearly everyone who enters a new culture – tourists, business travellers, diplomats and students alike. Although not everyone experiences culture shock in exactly the same way, many experts agree that it has roughly five stages.
1. Topic sentence:

This sentence is usually the first sentence of a paragraph and summarises the main idea of the paragraph.

All of the following sentences will add information that expands upon or supports the idea stated here.
2. **Supporting sentences:**

The second sentence identifies the first major supporting detail.

The third sentence may explain the relevance of the detail given above.

The fourth sentence may introduce a second supporting detail.

Additional sentences can be added to clarify or strengthen an argument or to divide one lengthy supporting statement into separate, easier to read points.
3. Conclusion:

The last sentence of your paragraph is your concluding sentence, which effectively ties your supporting thoughts together.

It also might restate your first topic sentence using different terms.
The benefits of social networking websites have the potential to outweigh the dangers of such websites. While social networking does curb real life interaction with one's peers, it also provides shy, introverted, or socially awkward youth with a new avenue of communication that often makes it easier to connect and form relationships. A sharp increase in cyberbullying is an unfortunate result of social networking, but sites like Facebook also give people the opportunity to build a larger network of support. Additionally, while unmonitored teens and young adults may post photographs and information that could damage their futures and make them less desirable to potential employers, responsible and well-guided youth have the chance to build working relationships and create a stronger presence in the working world. Even though there are a large number of risks and downfalls associated with social networking, when the tool is used correctly and the youth are instructed on correct usage, it offers considerable positives.
Topic Sentence & Main Idea

- States the topic and idea of the paragraph
  Usually (though not always) the first sentence
  Helpful for the writer *and* the reader
  Writer can see what information to include/exclude
  Reader can see what the paragraph is about
- Generally in two parts
  The topic – names the subject of the paragraph
  The controlling idea – defines the specific area

Convenience foods are easy to prepare

Immigrants have contributed many delicious foods to English cuisine
Concluding Sentence

Not needed in every paragraph
Signals the end of longer paragraphs
Leaves reader with central ideas of the paragraph
1. Summarises main points
2. Repeats topic sentence in different words
May begin:
Finally,
In brief,
Lastly,
These examples show that...
We can see that...
In conclusion / in summary (somewhat overused)
Transitions between paragraphs

Next we need to consider...
Lastly the issue of x needs to be addressed.
Finally, it should be acknowledged that...
A second advantage / problem with cheaper travel is...
Another way of / reason for / disadvantage of...
In addition to increased pollution...
To write good essays, one must not only read widely, but also take clear notes. (Links to previous)
Regular exercise is one way to get fit and lose weight. Diet, however, is central to good health. (Links to previous)
Transition Signals in Use

Aggressive Drivers

The number of vehicles on our roads is increasing at an alarming rate. This increase is creating hazardous conditions. Moreover, drivers are often in such a rush to get to their destinations that many become angry or impatient with other motorists who are too slow or are in their way. Aggressive drivers react foolishly towards other road users in several dangerous ways.
Transition 1
One way an angry driver may react is to ‘cut up’ another motorist. This is when… (+ supporting sentences)

Transition 2
Another way is to tailgate the car in front (+ supporting sentences)

Transition 3
In addition to cutting off and tailgating other cars, aggressive drivers often use bad language or gestures to show their anger. (+ supporting sentences)
Although the police and the Highway Code warn road users about aggressive driving, the number who act out their angry impulses has not declined. (+ supporting sentences) In 2012 over 20% of...

Conclusion

This essay has shown how aggressive drivers are endangering everyone because they create hazardous conditions by acting and driving without regard for the needs of others. Those with an aggressive driving style should learn to control their anger and drive more safely. After all, the lives they save could be their own. (Concluding point)
Activity 1

Sample Essay

Native American Influences on Modern U.S. Culture
Materials Adapted from:

Any questions?

Good Luck!

Steve Cope

learning@kent.ac.uk
The Student Learning Advisory Service (SLAS)

Canterbury

- Email: learning@kent.ac.uk
- Phone: 01227 82(4016)

www.kent.ac.uk/learning
www.twitter.com/kentuniSLAS
www.facebook.com/kentuniSLAS

Monday – Friday 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Templeman Library 2nd floor