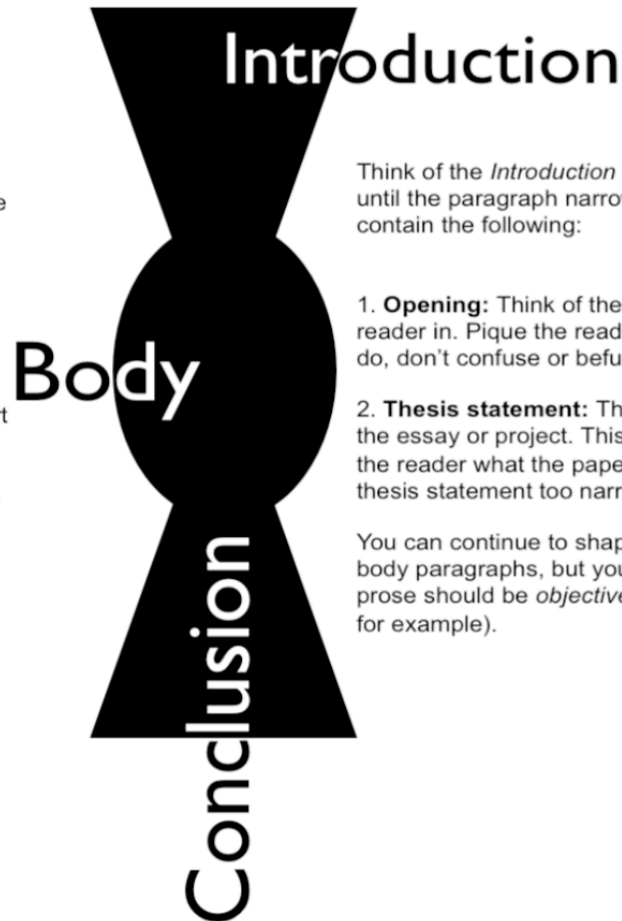


# The Keyhole Essay: Introduction, Body and Conclusion Writing Guide

The basic five paragraph or “keyhole” essay is fundamental to writing. This format can provide you with a foundation for becoming an organised writer on any topic.



## BODY:

*Body paragraphs* are the most important part of your paper. Here is where the reader either ‘buys into’ your discussion or loses interest. Your body paragraphs should contain the following:

1. **A Topic Sentence:** this sentence, usually the first, states the main idea of the paragraph. Everything else in the paragraph should relate to the main idea as stated in the topic sentence.
2. **Support & evidence:** depending on the type of essay, support and evidence can take many forms: references to a text or historical document; facts; quotes from artists, witnesses or experts; data, or any other relevant information that supports the main idea. You should have anywhere from two to five separate items of support and evidence.
3. **Explanation & argument:** this is the heart of the analysis or argument; clearly and thoroughly demonstrate how your support and evidence supports the main idea. Evidence is not enough. Think of yourself as a lawyer in court. You must make the jury (reader) understand how the evidence proves your point.

## INTRODUCTION:

Think of the *Introduction* as a kind of funnel that gradually draws the reader in until the paragraph narrows into the thesis statement. Your *Introduction* should contain the following:

1. **Opening:** Think of the introduction as an invitation, of sorts. Ease the reader in. Pique the reader’s interest, but don’t put her/him off. Whatever you do, don’t confuse or befuddle the reader.
2. **Thesis statement:** Think of the thesis statement as the topic sentence for the essay or project. This statement contains the paper’s main idea and tells the reader what the paper will be about. The challenge here is to not make the thesis statement too narrow or too broad.

You can continue to shape your thesis as you research and construct your body paragraphs, but you should have a clear focus before you begin. Your prose should be *objective*, rather than *subjective* (avoid personal pronouns, for example).

## CONCLUSION:

Don’t claim your essay will change the world. It won’t. But you might change the reader’s mind. That’s something. To that end, here are some things to keep in mind:

1. **Review the highlights, or main points,** of your discussion. But, please, don’t simply repeat your thesis statement. That is BORING. Draw together the threads of your argument and hammer home your points, leaving the reader in no doubt as to your contention. You should refer explicitly to the key words of the question and reinforce the points you made in the main body.
2. **Qualify your thesis:** Qualify your thesis/position in light of any evidence that does not support your thesis, or if there are any limits built in to your response.
3. **Rounding off statement:** Round off your discussion with a closing statement. Leave your reader with something to remember, something that will make a lasting impression. . You might also close with an idea that points the way for future research. However you accomplish this, now is not the time for new material. Stay with your thesis.

