

When you're ready to begin writing, you'll need to turn your topic idea into a well-written, well-developed essay that provides good ideas in each sentence in the essay. You may see that each "good reason," each support sentence, is like a miniature thesis statement. It, too, is a claim that requires support to be convincing. The next step is to develop each "good reason" into a solid, detailed paragraph. Look back over your notes, scour your memory, and squeeze your imagination to discover what facts, details, examples, and illustrations can help your reader understand your ideas and see the reasoning they are based on. Consider your support sentences one at a time and show reader the specifics that have led you to make these claims.

In your essay, each "good reason" will become the topic sentence of a paragraph. And each topic sentence can be opened and developed much like a thesis statement.

Consider the following example:

Skeleton Essay: An Example

(Paragraph #1 is your introduction. The best place to put your thesis statement is at the end of your first paragraph. Once you finish a draft of your introduction paragraph, write a "working thesis statement." By calling your thesis statement a working thesis statement, that just means that you'll probably change and adjust your thesis statement as you work on your essay.)

Sample thesis statement: Lucille Goode is an outstanding high school biology teacher.

topic Sentence (Body Paragraph #1): She knows the material well.

Evidence: She seldom needs notes to lecture.

eXplanation:

Evidence: She gives thorough, in-depth answers to all questions.

eXplanation:

Evidence: She has a doctorate in biology.

eXplanation:

topic Sentence (Body Paragraph #2): Her course covers a large amount of material.

Evidence: She covers ecology.

eXplanation:

Evidence: She covers taxonomy.

eXplanation:

Evidence: She covers microbiology.

eXplanation:

topic Sentence(Body Paragraph #3): She motivates her students to learn.

Evidence: She is entertaining.

eXplanation:

Evidence: She is demanding but fair.

eXplanation:

Evidence: She stresses practical application of the material.

eXplanation:

Sample concluding statement: Students will re-arrange their timetables in order to study biology with Ms. Goode.

While these thirteen sentences alone don't fully develop the central idea, they do provide a framework for that development.

They are a "skeleton essay" which allows you to see how the various parts of your paper relate to your thesis. Much like an outline, they can help you move ahead in your writing with the security and assurance that come from having an overall plan.

You should be able to list three or four sentences under each topic sentence, but since these sentences will guide you in developing your paragraphs, you'll want as many as seem reasonable. If you can't come up with at least one or two such guide sentences in support of a topic sentence, you should question whether you'll be able to write a solid paragraph on the idea. You might need to rethink and reword the topic sentence so that it offers more room for expansion.