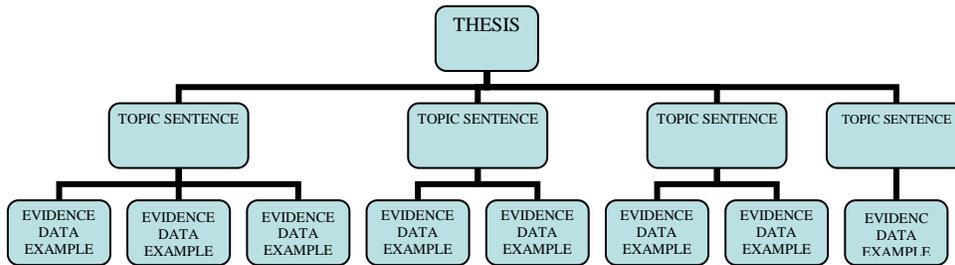


# ORGANIZATION



The overall organization of an essay is not unlike an organizational chart for a company: the **THESIS** is the boss: this is the main idea that unites and commands all the other ideas. The **TOPIC SENTENCES** are like managers: they head up and control individual paragraphs. Just as the thesis expresses the overall idea of the entire paper, topic sentences express the overall idea of each paragraph. **EXAMPLES / DATA / EVIDENCE** – the **DEVELOPMENT** – are like employees in different departments of a company: they support their division manager and thus, by extension, the head of the company. The specific evidence in each paragraph answers the reader’s question to the writer: “So how do you know that what you’re saying in your topic sentence and your thesis is true?” The kind of evidence you provide (personal examples, facts and data found through formal research, quotes from literary texts) depends on the kind of assignment you are working on. And just like different departments in companies don’t all have the same number of employees, paragraphs provide different amounts of evidence: sometimes, a single, well-developed example is enough; sometimes it takes a bunch of different facts extracted from several different source.

Writing combines **telling and showing**: the thesis and topic sentences tell your reader what conclusions you have come to; the evidence shows where you got your ideas.

Few writers have meticulous outlines before they start writing, but most of them have a basic idea of what their thesis and their topic sentences are going to be. Also, outlines are not etched in stone either: as writers discover things as they write, their outlines change as they draft and revise. It’s always a good idea to do a **CONTROL OUTLINE** after you finish drafting the paper: write down the thesis and the topic sentences you ended up with on a sheet of paper and check to see if the thesis really does cover all the ideas expressed in your topic sentences. You might have to revise the thesis to fit the changes you made in the body of your paper, or you might have to drop a body paragraph because it does not fit your overall idea.

## WHAT IS NOT A THESIS?

- A thesis is not a title.
- A thesis is not an announcement of what you are going to do in the paper.
- A thesis is not a statement of fact.
- A thesis is not a question.

### **WHAT IS A GOOD THESIS?**

- A good thesis expresses the writer's position or opinion on a subject or sums up the lesson learned from the subject.
- A thesis can be implied or directly stated; the latter is safer because it tells the reader rather than suggests the point of the essay.
- A good thesis is specific, not general.
- A good thesis does not point out the obvious.
- A good thesis should appear in the introduction of a paper and should be restated in its conclusion.
- A good thesis should be accompanied by a preview of the points the writer is going to make in the body of the paper.

### **WHAT IS A GOOD TOPIC SENTENCE?**

- A good topic sentence sums up the point made in the paragraph, the point which all individual pieces of evidence support.
- A good topic sentence ties in clearly with the thesis. Often, writers do this by repeating key words or phrases from the thesis.
- A good topic sentence appears at the beginning of the paragraph; if there is a lot of evidence, the topic sentence should be restated at the end of the paragraph.

### **WHAT IS GOOD EVIDENCE?**

- Good evidence is reliable: the reader should never suspect that the writer "made up" his or her evidence. If you use outside sources, make sure you document them properly.
- Good evidence is varied: if you use personal examples, use several; if you use outside sources, use more than one.
- You should have enough evidence to convince your reader that you really know what you are talking about.

### **WHAT IS A GOOD PARAGRAPH?**

- A good paragraph is unified, which means all the evidence presented in the paragraph ties in with the topic sentence.
- A good paragraph flows, which means that the writer provides bridges from one sentence to the next through repetition of key words and phrases or through transitional expressions.