

**The Academic Essay: Three Common Patterns**

An **essay** is a multiple-paragraph piece of writing in which you try to inform, persuade, or entertain the reader.

A **thesis statement** is a one-sentence statement of the main idea of your essay; it must identify your subject and make an assertion about it. Think of your thesis as a one-sentence answer to the question **"What are you trying to prove?"** A good academic essay should contain a thesis statement.

Make sure that you **support** your thesis adequately. Think of your body paragraphs as the answer to the question **"Why should we believe you?"** or **"What have you got to go on?"**

**Three Common Academic Essay Patterns**

**Analytical**

**Narrative**

**Comparison-Contrast**

**Intro paragraph**  
**Thesis statement:**  
 Answers the question  
*What are you trying to prove?*

**Intro paragraph**  
**Thesis statement:**  
 Answers the question  
*What are you trying to prove?*

**Intro paragraph**  
**Thesis statement:**  
 Answers the question  
*What are you trying to prove?*

**Body paragraph**  
*Why should we believe thesis?*  
 Reason #1

**Narrate in chronological order.**  
 Start new paragraph with each shift in time or perspective (or speaker, if you include dialogue).

**Similarities** between Subject A and Subject B

**Body paragraph**  
*Why should we believe thesis?*  
 Reason #2

**Differences** between Subject A and Subject B  
 (End with whichever is more significant, similarities or differences.)

**Body paragraph**  
*Why should we believe thesis?*  
 Reason #3

**Conclusion**

**Conclusion**

**Conclusion**