

## Preface

### What You Need to Believe: *The Three “Whens”*

Let’s get one fact straight: you’re not a bad essay writer; you’re an inexperienced essay writer. That’s what’s brought you to here to me, to *This Little Book*. You need to learn how to write good essays. I can show you how to write good essays. But first you need to understand three things: one, understand that essay writing, like many skills, can be grown, like a plant; two, you will only be successful if you work hard to improve your writing skills; and three, you need to believe in yourself, that you are capable of learning how to write good essays. *When* you understand that essay writing is a skill that you learn, *when* you commit to working hard to improve your essay-writing skills, and *when* you believe in yourself, then the magic happens: you learn how to write good essays!

### Essay-Writing Philosophy: *The List of 10 Things You Will Learn*

Now, here’s a list of the 10 things you will learn about essay writing in *This Little Book*. They are its philosophy, its guiding principles ... its Ten Commandments about essay writing. When you are done reading *This Little Book*, and have done all, most or many of the exercises in it, come back to this list. If you feel you haven’t absorbed one or more of the 10 things on this list, review all the information in *This Little Book* about that thing or things. Learn!

1. A thesis is always an overall opinion about a specific essay topic, or subject; it is never a fact.
2. An essay without a thesis is not an essay, as the job of an essay is to argue a thesis, to try to prove that a thesis is valid, the way that a lawyer in court tries to prove that the client is innocent or “in the right.”
3. To prove that a thesis is valid, a college-level essay should present three general kinds of support for the thesis to readers:

3. (cont'd)

- a) Expert opinions: what authoritative (trustworthy) people and organizations say or write in relation to some aspect of the essay topic.
  - b) Anecdotal (an-ECK-dote-uhl) evidence: personal stories and accounts of people's and organization's experiences that are relevant (related to) the essay topic.
  - c) Data: facts, statistics and surveys.
4. The thesis can be communicated in three ways, as ...
- a) The *explicit thesis statement*: the essayist's overall opinion about an essay topic, clearly summarized in one sentence.
  - b) The *implied thesis*: the essayist's overall opinion about an essay topic, which he or she never states directly, but hints at very clearly in the essay.
  - c) The *inferred thesis*: the essayist's overall opinion about an essay topic, which the reader must figure out from the clues that the essayist provides in the essay.
5. To write a good essay, an essayist needs not only to support the thesis (overall opinion), but also to rebut (argue against) the most convincing evidence supporting the opposing opinion to the thesis, which is called the antithesis (an-TITH-uh-sis).
6. The secret to writing a good college-level essay is knowing how to transition, and that a transition is not just one word or a few words that help all your sentences and paragraphs to "flow," to be connected in thought. A transition can be a sentence or even a paragraph.
7. An essay does not need to contain a specific number of paragraphs, nor do paragraphs need to contain a specific number of sentences.<sup>1</sup> A paragraph's length depends on its purpose—what it intends to do in an essay—so it can vary in length from one sentence to many sentences.
8. An essay does not have to begin with an introductory paragraph consisting of a "hook": an interesting quote, story, question, or some other attention-getter. An essay can begin with its thesis (its overall opinion about the essay topic), or it can begin by immediately supporting—but not stating—its thesis. An essay only needs an introductory paragraph if background information is required to make some aspect of the essay topic or thesis clear—or if a writer *wants* to include an introductory paragraph. And ... an essay is not limited to

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<sup>1</sup> The Five-Paragraph Essay is a beginning writing exercise that instructors often use to teach students how to write; it is not a college-level essay.

8. (*cont'd*)

one introductory paragraph—an essay can have more than one introductory paragraph.

9. An essay does need a conclusion, and the conclusion can be more than one paragraph.
10. Punctuation and grammar rules are not hard to learn, but they do require time and effort to learn, and they should almost always be observed in an essay, as they usually help you to communicate clearly and establish your desired tone in an essay. Rules should be broken judiciously (jew-DISH-us-lee), with careful consideration—only because they interfere in some way with whatever you are trying to communicate. If grammar and punctuation rules do not accomplish their purpose, then they should be ignored. However, to break the rules, you need to learn the rules first, so that readers will know that your non-observance of a rule is deliberate and not an error. As Pablo Picasso said, “Learn the rules like a pro so that you can break them like an artist.”

Perhaps one or more of the ten things on this list flummox (flum-MUX) you; you may feel greatly bewildered and confused, because guidelines about essay writing presented in this list directly contradict what you learned in a classroom. For example, you may have learned that an essay must always begin with an introductory paragraph—and only one introductory paragraph—and that paragraphs should be the same size and contain a specific number of sentences. If you learned to write an essay in this kind of formulaic (form-YOU-lay-ICK) way—in a rigid, predictable format and style—then what you learned about essay writing is not accurate. An essay only needs to follow the guidelines in this list. But explore the truth of this contention yourself. Read—and complete the exercises—in *This Little Book*. Learn how to write a “real” college-level essay.

## Chapter One: Learning What an Essay Is

**Chapter Purpose:** The purpose of this chapter is to teach you that college-level essays usually contain a mixture of short transitional paragraphs and standard paragraph forms, which are paragraphs that ...

1. Introduce the essay topic,
2. Support the thesis and rebut the antithesis, and
3. Conclude the essay.

### Exercise 1: What is a college-level essay?

**Overview:** This exercise contains a 25-paragraph essay whose aim is to explain to you what a college-level essay is. It is “the whole kitchen sink”: an explanation of all the parts that make up the whole that is a college-level essay. Therefore, it will require time and effort to study—particularly because it will probably contradict much of what you have already learned about essay writing. Be patient, determined and focused: learn!

**Time Requirement:** On your own, this exercise may take several hours over the course of a few days to complete; in a classroom, this exercise may span a few class sessions.

#### Directions:

1. In this 25-paragraph essay, paragraphs 11 and 13 contain your instructions for this assignment. However, do not read these paragraphs first. Instead, read the whole essay, from beginning to end. As you read, try NOT to read the small print to the left of each paragraph, explaining the paragraph’s purpose. Instead, try to guess the purpose of each paragraph on your own. (So that you will not be tempted to read the small print to the left of each paragraph, cover it with a piece of paper.)
2. As you read, jot notes inside the essay paragraphs about information you find interesting, unclear or confusing. Try to phrase notes about information that you find unclear or confusing as a question, beginning with the words *why*, *what*, *who*, *how*, *when*, and *where*. (Examples: Why is this paragraph one sentence? Where is the introductory paragraph?)
3. After you follow the instructions in paragraphs 11 and 13, read this essay again, and this time, read the information to the left of each paragraph, studying it carefully.



Title:

## Why You're NOT a "Bad" Writer!

**Par. 1**

*Explicit Thesis Statement: Overall opinion about essay topic, summarized in one sentence.*

Students who earn low essay grades are usually not "bad" writers, as many of them seem to think—they're simply inexperienced writers.

**Par. 2**

*MAP: Here is the overall organizational scheme (plan) to the essay. The writer explains what topics will be discussed to support the thesis, presenting the topics in the order that the writer will discuss the topics.*

Why are they inexperienced writers? They lack three important and related kinds of knowledge about the essay. First, they lack a clear understanding of what a thesis is, and why a well-written thesis is key to writing a good essay. Second, they don't know how to organize their thoughts to support the thesis. Finally, they don't know how to conclude an essay. Without this knowledge, they cannot write a cogent essay, one that is clear, logical and convincing. Let's discuss these topics in the order they have been presented, beginning with the thesis.

**Par. 3**

*Transition to the first topic (in italics): many students don't know what a thesis is.*

*The thesis is the number one stumbling block for many students—they don't know how to write a thesis, or why it is so important in an essay.* Usually, these students are taught that a thesis is the "main idea" of an essay—and that's it. Although this definition is accurate, it's too vague for students to understand what a thesis is and its key role in an essay. For this reason, students try to write an essay either without a thesis—or without a well-written thesis, one that is clear and helps to focus the writer's thoughts in the essay. No wonder they earn low grades on their essays! If they clearly understood what a thesis is and the key role it plays in an essay, then they would most likely earn better essay grades.

**Par. 4**

*Thesis Definition: isolated for clarity/importance.*

But what is a thesis? A thesis is a writer's overall opinion about an essay topic. The job of an essay is to prove that the thesis is true. Without a thesis, an essay cannot do its job!

**Par. 5**

*How to develop a clear, focused thesis.*

But how does a student develop not only a thesis, but also a thesis that is clear and helps to focus the writer's thoughts in the essay? Here's how. A student needs to think about what the overall, specific topic of an essay is. That's number one. Determine the specific topic of the essay—and the topic does need to be specific, about one particular aspect of one thing, such as how to deal with a cheap date, not the general subject of dating, or whether or not to spank children, not the general subject of how to rear children—because an essay is usually limited in page number: a few pages or several pages. This process of developing a specific essay topic may take some time. Often a student needs to free write, discover what he or she thinks about a topic by just writing down whatever comes to mind without worrying about grammar and punctuation rules. He or she

*Limiting the essay topic*

**Free write**

**Par. 5 (cont'd)**

*brainstorm*

will also benefit by brainstorming, discussing the topic with others. After establishing what the specific topic of an essay is by thinking deeply about the topic in these ways, the student can develop a thesis, which is an overall opinion about the essay topic. Keep in mind that a thesis, because it is an opinion, is a point of view that you can argue. Therefore, a thesis is *an opinion that you can try to prove is valid* in an essay; it is never a fact. In this essay, the specific topic is why so many students think they're "bad" writers because they earn low grades on their essays. My overall opinion about this specific topic is my thesis. Do you remember my thesis? It is: Students who earn low essay grades are usually not "bad" writers, as many of them seem to think—they're simply inexperienced writers. With this thesis nailed down, I'm ready to help my essay to do its job: to prove to you, the reader, that this thesis/opinion is correct.

**Par. 6**

*Question: Isolated for emphasis*

Now, at this point ... let me ask you a super-important question.

**Par. 7**

*Thesis definition reiterated/  
isolated for emphasis*

Did you know that your thesis in an essay is simply your overall OPINION about an essay topic? Did you also know that the job of an essay is to make the thesis seem true?

**Par. 8**

*Essay's thesis reiterated,  
isolated for emphasis: students  
are inexperienced—not bad—  
writers.*

If this information is news to you, and you think you are a bad writer—then feel good! I just proved to you that you are not a bad writer—you are simply an inexperienced writer. Start your essays with a specific topic in mind. Develop a clear overall opinion/thesis about the essay topic. And then help the essay to do its job (*your* job in an essay!): to prove that the thesis/opinion is true.

**Par. 9**

*Transition to the second topic  
(in italics): students don't know  
how to organize support for  
the thesis.*

*MAP: Explains how the topic of  
organizing an essay will be  
discussed: two rules*

Okay ... ! We've covered the importance of developing a specific thesis topic and a thesis/opinion about this topic. Done! *Let's move on to the second reason why students have trouble writing essays. In addition to not knowing how to write a thesis, or understanding why a thesis is vital to an essay, most students don't know how to organize their thoughts to support a thesis.* They don't possess a comprehensive understanding of the two ways to organize their thoughts. If they were rules, these two ways to organize an essay could be summed up as follows. First, use transitions. Second, group all related topics together. Let's explore these rules in the order in which they have just been introduced. We'll begin with transitions—by telling you why students have trouble with transitions.

**Par. 10**

*First rule about transitions  
detailed*

Unfortunately, transitions are often defined in classrooms in a very limited way. Students learn that transitions are single words and small groups of words, like *therefore, however, in other words, unfortunately, or in essence*, and they are told (correctly) that these words help us to organize

**Par. 10 (cont'd)** and connect our thoughts when we write. They learn to create these kinds of transitions by studying sentences with and without transitions, like the sentences below.

*Transition Example 1*

1.  
I am not feeling well. I will go to the concert.
  
2.  
I am not feeling well. *However*, I will go to the concert.

*Transition Example 2*

1.  
There are two primary reasons why many students fail to attain college diplomas. They are academically deficient. They do not know how to study.
  
2.  
There are *two primary reasons* why many students fail to attain college diplomas. *First*, they are academically deficient. *Second*, they do not know how to study.

*What students frequently do not know about transitions ...*

What students frequently do not learn about transitions in general is that there are other kinds of transitions—not just single-word transitions and small groups of words that help us to organize and connect our thoughts when we write. Transitions can be complete sentences and also complete paragraphs! They are not limited to single words and small groups of words.

**Par. 11:  
LESSON ABOUT  
TRANSITIONS**

*The writer requires the reader to study the single-sentence and paragraph transitions to learn what they are and how to create them.*

Before moving on to the next paragraph, let's reinforce this last important point about transitions in your mind. Working alone or in a small group with other students (if you are in a classroom situation), take about 30-40 minutes, or longer if you need the time, to study the transitions below. These transitions are above, in paragraphs 1-10 in this essay, and next to them are their paragraph numbers. Figure out HOW they are connecting my thoughts in this essay. And ... if the transitions are paragraphs consisting of a single sentence or a few sentences, and seem as if they could have been combined with the paragraph that precedes or succeeds them, try to figure out why they have been isolated into one paragraph.

*Par. 2 Transition: Map – explains topics writer will use to support thesis, and in what order they will be discussed*

- First, they lack a clear understanding of what a thesis is, and why a well-written thesis is key to writing a good essay. Second, they don't know how to organize their thoughts to support the thesis. Finally, they don't know how to conclude an essay.



**Par. 11 (cont'd)**

Without this knowledge, they cannot write a cogent essay, one that is clear, logical and convincing. (Par. 2)

*Par. 2 Transition (cont'd)*

*Par. 3: Topic Sentence 1 – Students don't know how to write a thesis.*

- *The thesis is the number one stumbling block for many students—they don't know how to write a thesis, or why it is so important in an essay. (Par. 3)*

*Par. 5: Question/Answer Transition*

- But how does a student develop not only a thesis, but also a thesis that is clear and helps to focus the writer's thoughts in the essay? Here's how. (Par. 5)

*Par. 6: Question isolated for emphasis; answer to follow*

- Now, at this point ... let me ask you a super-important question. (Par. 6)

*Par. 9: Transition to Topic Sentence 2: Students don't know how to organize thoughts to support thesis*

- *Let's move on to the second reason why students have trouble writing essays. In addition to not knowing how to write a thesis, or understanding why a thesis is vital to an essay, most students don't know how to organize their thoughts to support a thesis. (Par. 9)*

*Pars. 9-10: Transition introduces discussion of transitions (par. 9) to problem in teaching of transitions (par. 10)*

- *End of par. 9: We'll begin with transitions—by telling you why students have trouble with transitions. Beginning of par. 10: Unfortunately, transitions are often defined in classrooms in a very limited way.*

**Par. 12**

*Transition to second rule to organize support for thesis: group all related thoughts together*

I'm going to assume that you did your homework in the paragraph above, and studied the transitions. I'm also going to assume that you're a proactive student—and if you couldn't figure out the answers to the questions I asked you in the paragraph above, then you buttonholed a writing composition instructor and had him or her answer these questions for you. You are enlightened—you understand more about what transitions are, and how they help you to connect your sentences and paragraphs in an essay ... ! So now let's move on to the second way, in addition to transitions, for students to organize their thoughts in an essay: Group all related thoughts together.

**Par. 13**  
**LESSON ABOUT HOW TO GROUP RELATED THOUGHTS TOGETHER**

*The writer requires the reader to study homework (study paragraphs 1-12) in the essay to understand that the length of a paragraph depends on its purpose.*

Again, I'm going to ask you to take a break of about 30-40 minutes—or longer, if you need the time. Re-read the first 12 paragraphs of this essay, and working alone or in a small group with other students (if you are in a classroom situation), try to figure out each paragraph's purpose—not looking at the explanation to the left of the paragraph! Then, read the explanation about each paragraph's purpose. Taking this time to study the first 12 paragraphs of this essay will help you to learn how to organize your thoughts to support a thesis. You will come to understand that the length of a paragraph depends on its purpose—its job in an

**Par. 13(cont'd)**

essay: transitioning from one topic to another, emphasizing and isolating an important point or piece of knowledge, or providing support for the thesis in the form of some kind of explanation. Thus, in the future, when somebody asks you how long a paragraph in an essay should be, your answer will be identical in meaning to this one, no matter what words you use: “A paragraph’s length depends on what it’s doing—its job! Depending on its job, it can be one sentence, a few sentences, or many sentences!”

**Par. 14**

*Transition to third toic (in italics): students don't know how to conclude an essay.*

*And ... a REMINDER: The writer reminds the reader what the thesis is and what topics have been covered at this point in the essay. In a lengthy essay, you do want to remind readers what your thesis is and provide little maps that explain where you are in the process of supporting the thesis. If you do not do so, then readers will not follow your train of thought easily.*

Okay, again I’m going to assume you did your homework in the paragraph above, and you have gained a good general understanding of what a paragraph is—and why some paragraphs are single sentences or a few sentences and others are lengthier. Therefore, let me sum up where we are now—on our road to supporting this essay’s thesis, which I will remind you is: Students who earn low essay grades are usually not “bad” writers, as many of them seem to think—they’re simply inexperienced writers. At this point in the essay, I have detailed two primary reasons why I think students are not bad writers, but inexperienced writers. First, they lack a clear understanding of what a thesis is, and why a thesis is vital to an essay. Second, they don’t know how to organize their thoughts to support the thesis. Okay ...! *Let’s move on to the third reason why I think many students are not bad writers, but inexperienced writers: they don’t know how to conclude an essay.* Now, about the conclusion of an essay ... !

**Par. 15**

*Conclusion Definition*

*Transition: The writer will begin to explain what a conclusion is.*

There’s a reason that the end of an essay is called a conclusion—you’re concluding, or ending, your thoughts about a specific topic, and you can do so in one or more paragraphs, as I will do in this essay. You are not limited to one paragraph. But how does one conclude an essay?

**Par. 16**

*Background: How the conclusion is usually taught*

In a typical writing composition class, students are often taught that essays have introductory and conclusion paragraphs, and that these paragraphs “mirror” each other. In other words, in the introductory paragraph, students should begin the essay with a “hook” (an interesting quote, story, question, or some other attention-getter) to capture readers’ attention, and then state the essay’s thesis. In the conclusion, students should re-state (mirror) the hook (whatever it was) so it can “frame” the essay, and they should also re-state the thesis.

**Par. 17**

*Example of traditional conclusion*

As an experienced writing composition instructor, I like and agree with the advice about the hook and thesis. Starting an essay with an interesting quote, story, question, or some other attention-getter before stating the thesis, and then referring to it again in the conclusion (or even

**Par. 17 (cont'd)**

throughout the essay) is a neat way to frame an essay. For example, let's imagine that I'm writing an essay in which I support this thesis/opinion: most people don't take the time to think before they make important decisions. If I begin such an essay with this Benjamin Franklin quote as a hook—"An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure"—re-introducing this quote in the conclusion would be an effective way to reaffirm my thesis, the opinion I am supporting in my essay. Additionally, the quote would be a neat frame for my essay, propping it up like matching bookends on either side, in the introduction and conclusion.

**Par. 18**

*Contention that a standard conclusion is boring, and explains what a persuasive purpose is and how it can make an essay more profound in terms of depth of thought.*

However, simply spewing out the introductory hook and the essay's thesis in a conclusion can make an essay seem lackluster—predictable and therefore boring. Consider introducing a persuasive purpose in the conclusion, and even throughout the essay, too. What is a persuasive purpose? It's a REASON WHY the writer supports a particular thesis/opinion, and it can make an essay much more intriguing to read. For example, if I'm supporting the thesis/opinion that people don't take the time to think before they make important decisions, I might want to think about WHY I am trying to prove that this thesis is true. What do I hope that my readers will think or do after reading my essay ... ?

**Par. 19**

*Example of how to develop a persuasive purpose to add depth of thought to an essay*

Maybe I want them to think more deeply about themselves and others, why we don't take time to look before we leap. Maybe I want them to understand that many problems in life are self-created, that we human beings are frequently our own worst obstacles. Maybe I want them to become aware of—and change—habits, attitudes, and points-of-view that cause friction and make their lives less successful than they could be. Maybe I want them to engage in important self-analysis, to (as Aristotle recommended) "know thyself"! When we leap before we look—don't think before we make important decisions—we usually do so, I contend, because we are arrogant, afraid, or misinformed, or maybe we're guilty of all three of these things. Who knows? Think about why you don't think! Engage in metacognition—become aware of and seek to understand your own thought process. (Wouldn't *that* make a dandy persuasive purpose!)

**Par. 20**

*End of discussion of conclusion (Remember: In Par. 2, the overall map to the essay, the reader learns that three topics will be discussed to support the thesis: thesis, support for thesis, conclusion. At this point, all topics have been discussed, so the writer is ready to conclude this essay.)*

**Par. 21**

*Conclusion Paragraph 1: Throughout the essay, the writer has been indirectly rebutting (arguing against) the antithesis—traditional essay-writing pedagogy, or teaching methods, about essay writing. Now, the writer is directly rebutting the antithesis, clearly stating that formulaic writing exercises like the ubiquitous\* the Five-Paragraph Essay is not a desirable way to teach essay writing.*

*\*ubiquitous (you-BICK-kwa-TUS): found or existing everywhere*

**Par. 22**

*Conclusion Paragraph 2: The writer explains three general rules that apply to essays.*

**Par. 23**

*Conclusion Paragraph 3: Why grammar and punctuation are important in an essay.*

Thinking about WHY you are supporting a particular thesis, and coming up with a persuasive purpose—something you want readers to think or do after reading your essay—can give a depth of thought to your essay that simply referring to the hook and re-stating the thesis will not do. However, as I stated a few paragraphs above, you don't have to introduce this persuasive purpose only in your conclusion—you can lace it throughout your essay, if you like, or introduce it as an *a-ha* moment in your conclusion, so you end your essay on a profound thought that surprises and intrigues readers.

There is no formula you have to follow to write a good essay. An essay is not a math problem that requires a specific order of operation. So forget all this nonsense you may have heard: (1) essays need to contain one introductory paragraph and one conclusion paragraph; (1) essays need to contain a specific number of paragraphs; and (3) all paragraphs need to be of approximately equal length and/or contain a specific number of sentences ... ! Traditional essay-writing pedagogy—which usually boils down to writing exercises like the ubiquitous The Five-Paragraph Essay—does teach students what topic sentences are and how to support a thesis. However, it also tends to persuade students that essay writing is very formulaic and even lacking in creativity—and it's not!

In any essay, you only need to follow three general rules. First, you need to develop a clear thesis to support—and the thesis does not have to be ensconced in an introductory paragraph. (Take a moment to review the first paragraph in this essay—it's simply an explicit thesis statement: an overall opinion about the essay topic, summarized in one sentence.) The second rule in essay writing, after developing a clear thesis, is ... you need to support the thesis convincingly *with the aim of persuading a targeted reader group to accept it as valid*—which means that your essay tone (how you come across) must appeal to this specific reader group, and should contain a variety of convincing support. The third essay-writing rule is: you need to wrap up your thoughts in the conclusion. Don't introduce a different, unrelated topic in the conclusion, or leave your essay with thoughts that seem insufficiently detailed or complete.

Now ... you might be wondering why I didn't mention that an essay needs to be error-free, with no grammar and punctuation errors? Why not? Isn't this stuff important? Of course it is! If there are errors in your essay, how you try to prove that your thesis is true might seem unconvincing—because your readers might think that if you make basic

**Par. 23 (cont'd)** English usage errors, then you might not know what you're talking (writing) about. Also ... these mistakes could interfere with the clarity of your thought in your sentences, confusing the reader. Therefore, you should learn grammar and punctuation rules. However, don't depend on grammar course or even many grammar courses to teach you everything you need to know. You will learn what you need to know by reading constantly and by studying the rules—*on your own!* That's what I did—and trust me, that's what many people do. And ... once you learn the rules, you can break them judiciously—if you have a good reason for doing so (i.e., a rule interferes with what you're trying to communicate or the essay's tone).

**Par. 24**  
Conclusion Paragraph 4: Be self-didactic!

But back to the importance of reading constantly and studying writing on your own. No instructor can teach you as well as you can teach yourself. You must be self-didactic, self-taught, your own best teacher! So the way to learn how to write a good essay is ultimately by ... reading constantly and by studying what you read, which includes studying not only other writers' transitions, but also the grammar and punctuation inside their sentences—in addition to studying English usage rules in textbooks that you can check out from the library, buy inexpensively (like *This Little Book*), or find for free online. Let me reiterate this point I made in the last paragraph: you will NEVER learn everything you need to know in one class or even many classes. You'll only learn everything you need to know in one place: inside your head, and outside the classroom. In other words, you'll only learn what you need to know by STUDYING.

**Par. 25**  
Conclusion Paragraph 5:  
Emphasis – Study!

Just do it.

### ESSAY FOCUS BOX

1. Thesis: Students who earn low essay grades are usually not “bad” writers, as many of them seem to think—they are simply inexperienced writers.
2. Targeted Reader Group: High school and college students
3. Persuasive Purpose: To convince students that they must be self-didactic in order to be academically successful.

## Questions

1. What is a thesis—and what is its job in an essay?

2. How many paragraphs should an essay contain, and how long should a paragraph be?

3. How many sentences did the shortest paragraph contain; how many sentences did the longest paragraph contain? Do you think it's acceptable for paragraphs in an essay to vary so widely in terms of length?

4. How many introductory and conclusion paragraphs did the Exercise 1 essay contain? Do these numbers seem acceptable to you?

5. Study the information in the **ESSAY FOCUS BOX** after the Exercise 1 essay. Do you think that the thesis, targeted reader group, and persuasive purpose accurately reflect the writer's focus in the essay?

**Thoughts, Questions and Concerns Box**

*My thoughts, questions and concerns about the Exercise 1 essay are ...*