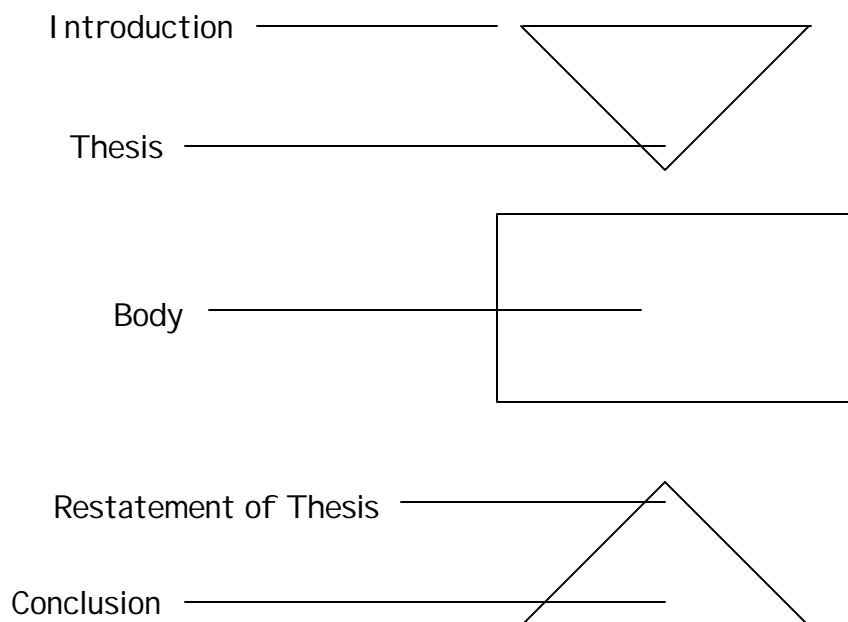
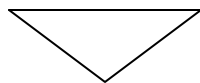


How Do I START to Write a Paper?

In almost every class you are asked to write at least one paper. A suggestion on how to get started is to imagine the visual shape of your paper's outline:



Here's a suggestion as to how these three major sections assume these visual shapes:



Introduction:

- ✓ Usually about one paragraph in length.
- ✓ Its aim is to begin with a broad scope and narrow down to the more detailed ideas that you intend to cover in your paper (represented by an inverted triangle).
- ✓ The thesis is located at the tip of the triangle and concisely identifies the specific points you will be addressing. Typically, it is the last sentence in the introduction.

Example:

If you are writing a paper about the role of marriage in the Renaissance play, *The Tragedy of Miriam*, you might start the introduction by mentioning the conventional roles of marriage of the two main characters within the play. The point of the paragraph (and “point” of the triangle) is to move toward your thesis, which explains the specific significance of that marriage (or those characters):

- In Elizabeth Cary's *The Tragedy of Miriam*, the character of Herod embodies some of the typical qualities of a Renaissance marriage regarding his relationship with his wife Miriam, such as a concern for both bloodline and romance. However, Herod's concept of marriage is twisted, controlling, obsessive, and tyrannical, which explains the perverse nature of his character and provides the force that will make a tragic outcome in Cary's play.

Body:

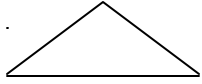


- ✓ The body takes those specific points listed in the thesis statement and elaborates on them (represented by a rectangle).
- ✓ This is where you address the assignment thoroughly by expanding on your topic. This is also where you might develop a specific rhetorical strategy—see ARC handouts on Cause/Effect, Comparison/Contrast, Classification/Division, and Position/Argument.
- ✓ One way to organize the ideas within the body of the paper is to construct an outline—not fancy Roman numerals but an organized list with main points and examples to support each point!

Example:

This is the part of the paper where you could expand on Herod's adherence to the Renaissance notions of bloodline and romance within marriage. Following that discussion (still in the body of your paper), you might also include your reflections on how his understanding of these concepts is twisted, and his marriage is thus controlling and tyrannical.

Conclusion:



- ✓ The conclusion repeats the pattern of the introduction but in reverse order (represented again by a triangle).
- ✓ It's aim is not merely a summary of your paper, but a chance to draw a conclusion—to ask your ideas, “So what?”
- ✓ A restatement (not in exact words) of the thesis is typically the first sentence of the conclusion—the tip of the triangle. This signals the reader that you have discussed all of your ideas and your paper is coming to an end.
- ✓ Be careful not to introduce any new concepts (at least ones that need explanation or elaboration) in your conclusion, but create a sense of significance or relevance for your ideas beyond implying “Dr. _____, you told me to write a paper, so here it is.”

Example:

Start a conclusion by returning, in new words, to the major points you mentioned in your paper. Then you might draw some major conclusion about your analysis, such as how Herod's understanding of marriage reflects the overall perverse nature of his character throughout the play, or how Elizabeth Cary was able to create a critique of masculine assumptions about gender roles through Herod's actions and the audience's sympathy for Miriam.

Note: Please understand that this handout is not exhaustive. It is simply a tool created by the ARC to help get you started on your way to successful composition. If you have any questions regarding paper writing, consult your professor or stop by the ARC to make an appointment with one of our writing tutors for further guidance.

Created by Amy Criniti (WJU 2002).