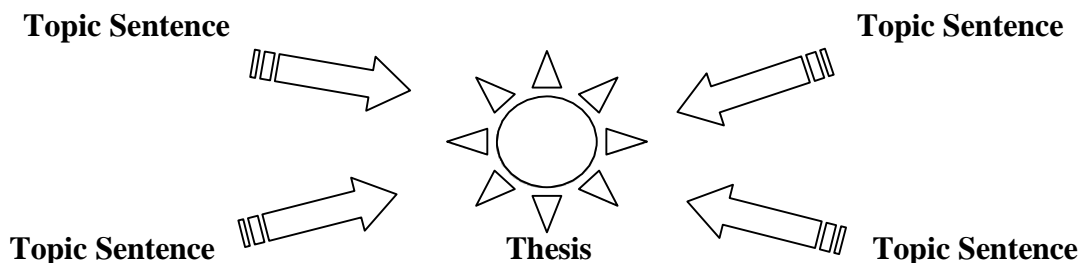
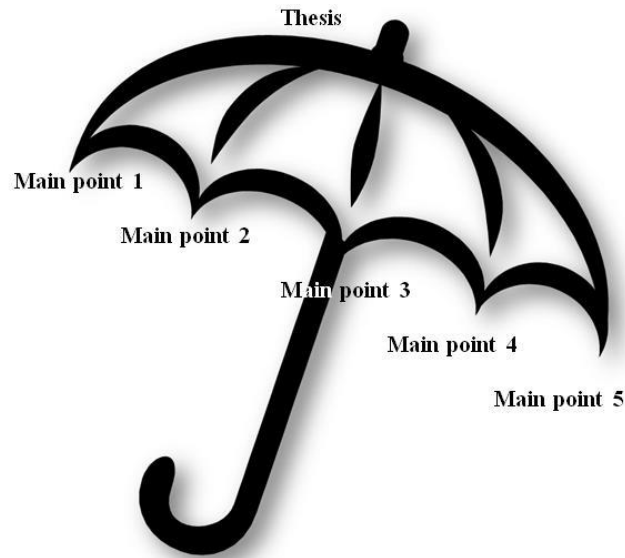
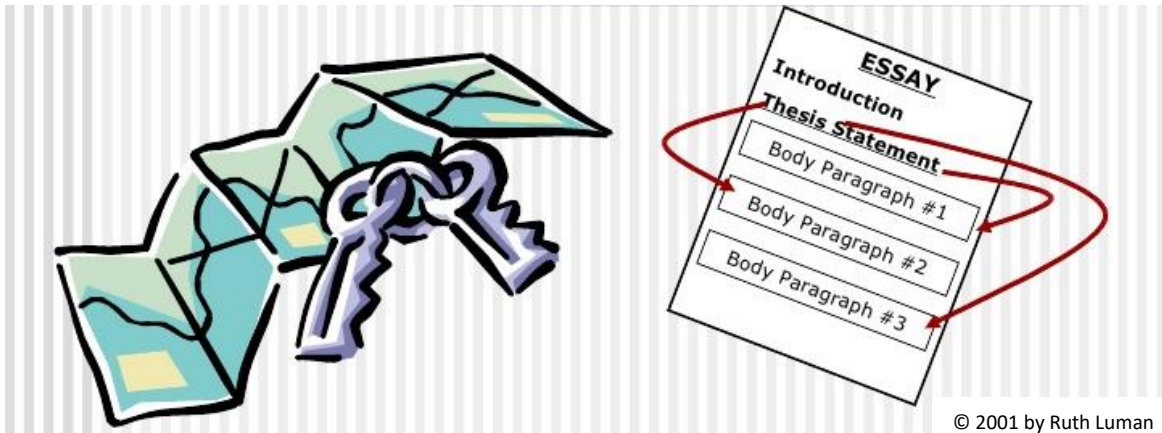


## Focus: Thesis and Body Paragraph Alignment

The thesis statement is the most important sentence in your paper because it establishes a focus and provides direction for the paper. It expresses a single, specific, clearly stated idea that states the primary point of the paper and unifies all of its content. In the same way, the topic sentence in each body paragraph is vital to the paper because it explains how what is in that body paragraph relates back to, or supports, the thesis.

Below are a few ways of visualizing the relationship between the thesis and topic sentences of a paper:



Remember that to achieve a focused essay, you must be sure that your topic sentences align with your thesis statement. This is not always accomplished on the first try, or even before the first draft is written. Don't worry if you need to write your topic sentences and body paragraphs first, and later return and revise your thesis to align with them. Similarly, if you find that your thesis is strong, but your body paragraphs don't align with it, you may need to change your topic sentences to align with your preferred thesis. Regardless of the order in which it is done, thesis and topic sentence alignment is an essential aspect of revision. It may feel forced at first, but after a while, it will become more natural, and you will be amazed at the stronger, more focused writing that emerges as a result! Thesis and topic sentence alignment also adds to the coherence of your paper, helping to ensure that readers are better able to follow your ideas.

On the next page, you will find an example of a complex thesis statement with several topic sentences that align strongly with it; notice how using this framework helps the writer develop a map for writing a highly focused, well-developed essay.

**Thesis Statement:** Andrew Carnegie’s contributions to U.S. manufacturing, personal financial success, and philanthropy often overshadow the tense working conditions, poor wages, and strained labor relations between the steel magnate and the people whose hard work enabled him to spend lavishly.

**Thesis Statement with Key Points (A, B, C, D) Labeled:** Andrew Carnegie’s (A) contributions to U.S. manufacturing, personal financial success, and philanthropy often overshadow (B) the tense working conditions, (C) poor wages, and (D) strained labor relations between the steel magnate and the people whose hard work enabled him to spend lavishly.

**In planning an essay that develops this thesis, the writer breaks the thesis into sections that can be elaborated in individual body paragraphs:**

**A** – What Carnegie’s contributions to U.S. manufacturing, personal financial success, and philanthropy were

**B** – How Carnegie’s contributions often overshadowed the tense conditions under which his workers labored

**C** – How Carnegie’s contributions often overshadowed the poor wages his workers received

**D** – How Carnegie’s contributions often overshadowed the strained labor relations between him and his workers

**Sample Topic Sentences Supporting and Aligning with the Thesis Statement:**

Topic Sentence A: Andrew Carnegie’s innovative approach to steel production helped him amass an unprecedented personal fortune from which he could pursue many philanthropic endeavors [summarizing key points about Carnegie’s contributions to U.S. manufacturing and his philanthropy as outlined in the first part of the thesis statement].

Topic Sentence B: Those things for which he is best known [linking to the previous paragraph with Topic Sentence A], however, often overshadow the tense working conditions that his workers had to endure [incorporating the key phrase, “overshadow the tense working conditions,” from the thesis].

Topic Sentence C: In addition to tense working conditions [linking to the previous paragraph with Topic Sentence B], Carnegie has been criticized for paying his workers inadequate wages [incorporating a synonym, “inadequate wages,” for the key phrase, “poor wages,” from the thesis].

Topic Sentence D: Low wages and harsh working conditions [linking to the previous two paragraphs with Topic Sentences B and C] strained labor relations between Carnegie and the people whose hard work enabled him to spend lavishly on philanthropy [incorporating the key phrases, “strained labor relations” and “the people whose hard work enabled him to spend lavishly,” from the thesis].