The Anatomy of an Essay

Introduction

- Begins ("introduces") your essay
- Contains your Thesis Statement: one sentence that states clearly what position you will take in the essay
- Introduces reasons/evidence that you will discuss in detail in the body paragraphs

Body Paragraphs

- All sentences are related to ONE main idea
- The TOPIC SENTENCE:
  - Supports the Thesis Statement of the essay
  - Introduces the idea that guides the paragraph and lets the reader know what to expect
  - Should be a specific idea that needs to be proven
- SUPPORTING SENTENCES:
  - Related to topic sentence and controlling ideas
  - Offer evidence, to support, describe, or define the topic
  - Can answer the questions: Who, What, When, Where, Why, or How (a.k.a. the "5 Ws")
- CONCLUDING SENTENCE:
  - Re-states the main idea, offers a solution or prediction, answers any unresolved questions

Conclusion

- Signals the end of the essay and leaves the reader with a final thought
- Can be a call to action (What do you want the reader to do?)
- Can be a final point that ties together all the ideas in the essay
- Can ask a question that leaves the reader with a final problem to think about
- Avoid using the overused phrases "to conclude" or "in conclusion": we know you're concluding if it's the last paragraph!
- WHATEVER strategy you choose, a conclusion should leave the reader with a strong, clear idea of what your position is
(over)
Some final thoughts:

- Argumentative essays (which is what we’re primarily concerned with here) are designed to convince a reader to take a certain position on an issue

- Stay away from wimpy statements: use strong, declarative statements

- “Think locally, write globally”: connect personal situations to universal conditions (e.g. “I live with my parents” is more effective as “many students live with their parents”)

- Use transitions to connect ideas