Basic, failsafe, no-frills essay form

(Particularly useful for in-class essays)

Introduction

The introductory paragraph may begin by catching the reader's attention with:

* a bold statement
* a scenario
* a question
* a compelling statistic
* a formulation of a problem

It should provide background information.

* Identify the topic of the paper (e.g., Robert Frost's poem "*The Road Not Taken*" or *The unification of Italy*).
* Give some context, a summary, or the main components of that topic. Sometimes it helps to answer a few of the 5 W's: who, what, where, when, why . . . and how.

The thesis statement should state the specific, main idea the paper will discuss.

* For many in-class essays, you can rephrase the question as a statement.

Body of the essay:

Each body paragraph should:

* have a topic sentence that clearly connects to the thesis & tells what point the whole paragraph will make
* develop support specific to the point of the topic sentence using authorities cited, explanations, facts, examples, details or statistics.
* use analysis to show "how" and "why" the types of support give insight into the topic
* provide transition (a word or two: "*On the other hand*"; a phrase: "*An equally important program...*"; or a sentence: "*Frost uses this ironic theme again in 'The Road Not Taken.'*") to show how your paragraphs are connected.

Conclusion:

1. Return to the thesis idea so the reader understands the importance of the main point of your paper.
2. Don't just repeat what was in the paper -- that has already been said.
3. State what you most want readers to remember or think about from your essay.
4. However, do not bring up new topics!