Writing 1.1

The Elements of Writing: The Thesis, Topic Sentences, Concluding Sentences
A General Outline of a Paper

- Introduction
  - Thesis
- Body Paragraph(s)
- Conclusion
The Thesis

- The thesis is the sentence that tells the focus of your essay and tells your reader what the essay will be about.
- Think of it as an umbrella.
  - Everything that you carry along in your essay has to fit under the umbrella
  - If something doesn’t fit, you need a bigger umbrella
The Thesis (cont.)

- When creating an outline, write your thesis statement last
  - Why?
    - To make sure your thesis statement covers everything you are talking about
- Do rewrite your thesis
  - As you proofread your paper, edit drafts, and change sections, the thesis will change
The Thesis (cont.)

- What should a thesis do?
  - It makes a clear and specific statement
  - It indicates the direction of your thoughts
  - It sets a stage
  - It provides structure
  - It is supported by the body paragraphs
The Thesis

Strong thesis statements are specific.

Compare these statements:
- American Born Chinese is a good book.
- Jin’s life is very complicated in American Born Chinese.
- Gene Luen Yang, the author of American Born Chinese, gives his audience a character with whom they can identify: Jin.

The first sentence presents the book. At least we know what we’re talking about.

The second sentence presents the book AND boils it down to one character.

The third sentence accomplishes both of these tasks while letting us know that this character is supposed to be like us.
The Thesis

Should outline your body paragraphs

Technically, there are two types of theses: the undivided thesis and the divided thesis.

The undivided thesis makes a general statement which implies the points that will be discussed in the paper.

ex. The election process in Mexico is unfair.

ex. Student access to technology helps learning.

For our purposes, however, we want to use the divided thesis.
The Thesis (cont.)

The divided thesis includes the main ideas of your paper, or topic sentences of each paragraph, into one sentence.

ex. The election process in Mexico is unfair.
    ---> Due to electoral fraud, millionaires investing their own money, and a skeptical public, the election process in Mexico is unfair.

Body paragraph 1: electoral fraud
Body paragraph 2: millionaires investing their own money
Body paragraph 3: a skeptical public
ex. Student access to technology helps learning.

ex. Pollution is bad for the environment.

ex. Adventure Time is the best show on television.

ex. I love math.
Speaking of Topic Sentences...

A topic sentence is a mini-thesis. It should go near the beginning of every paragraph. Every sentence in your paragraph must tie back into the topic sentence, just as every topic sentence ties back into the thesis.
Topic Sentences (cont.)

Divided Thesis: Student access to technology helps learning by allowing students to work together easier and allowing education touch all corners of the world.

Topic Sentence #1: With e-mail, chat, and social media, students can interact even when not in the same room.

Topic Sentence #2: The internet puts universities, professors, and all manner of interesting people and thoughts at your fingertips.
Topic Sentences (cont.)

ex. Pollution destroys our air quality, weakens the ozone layer, melts ice caps, and poisons our rivers and streams.

ex. Adventure Time is the best show on television because it is the most fun, has the best characters, and makes you laugh.

ex. I love math because it is like a puzzle, there is always a right or wrong answer, I like challenges, and Mr. Mvera is a great teacher.
Concluding Sentences

- The purpose of the concluding sentence is to recap, or recover all information presented
  - Do not present new information in your conclusion
- Make sure you cover all main areas of your paper, but briefly
- Rewording your topic sentences is a good way to accomplish this
Concluding Sentences (cont.)

Divided Thesis: Student access to technology helps learning by allowing students to work together easier and allowing education touch all corners of the world.

Topic Sentence #1: With e-mail, chat, and social media, students can interact even when not in the same room.

Topic Sentence #2: The internet puts universities, professors, and all manner of interesting people and thoughts at your fingertips.

Concluding sentences: E-mail lets teachers and students interact over the computer, while interesting people are always only a click away. Today, technology makes being a student easy.
For Tuesday

- Think about Jin.
- What is his relation with his family like?
- What is his relation with his culture like?
- Do you think it is difficult for him to be both the son of Chinese parents but living in America?
- Are there any ways you are similar to Jin?