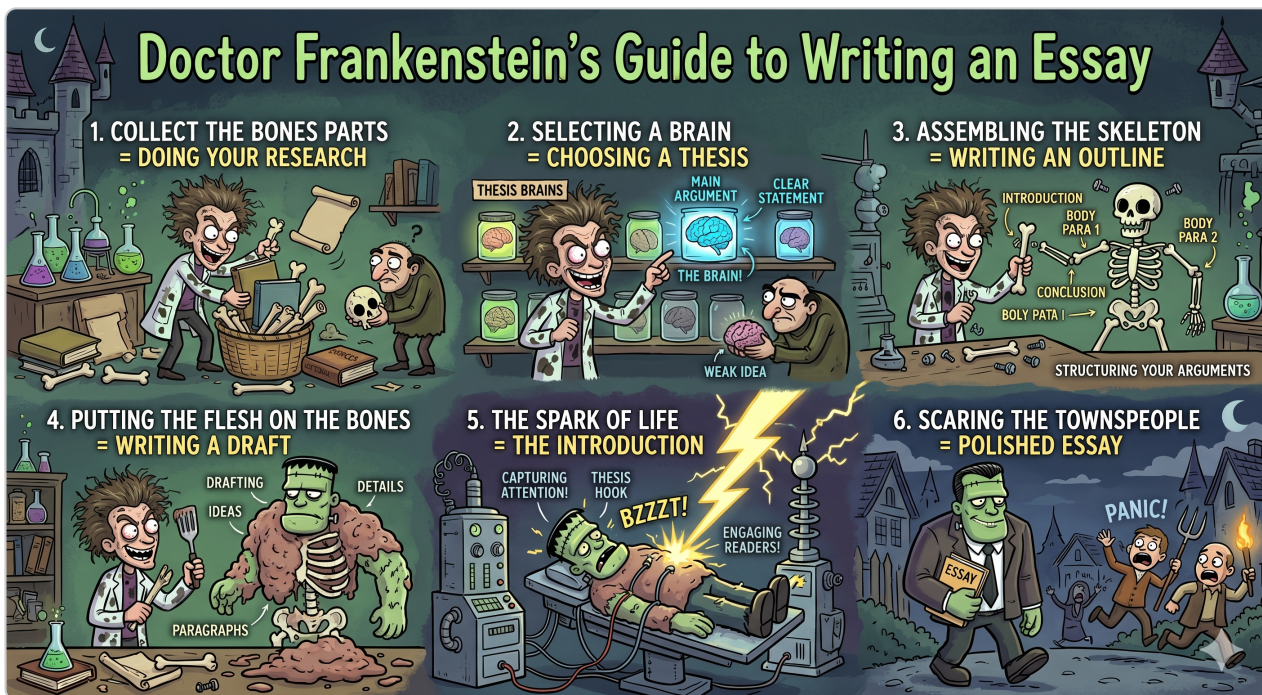


# Lesson 7 — Outlining and drafting

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Doctor Frankenstein's Guide to Writing an Essay.

## 1 · What a draft is

An **outline** and a **draft** are not the same thing. An outline is the plan — the skeleton, the order of the parts. A draft is the first attempt at the writing itself, hung on that skeleton. A draft is a work in progress, and it is not meant to be perfect:

*This is the first draft of a student essay, so it is not perfect.*

— Zemach et al., Unit 1, p. 5

The difference matters because the two stages ask different things of you. Writing an outline, you decide the parts and their order. Writing a draft, you turn each part into rough prose. Good preparation makes the second stage easier:

*Adequate preparation (brainstorming and organising) means that the drafting stage will go much more smoothly.*

— Zemach et al., Unit 1, p. 6

## 1.1 A draft is provisional by design

A draft lets you see the shape before you commit to the prose. While drafting:

- Sections can be empty, one line long, a few bullet points, or just a URL.
- An argument can be a note, not a paragraph.
- The order can change.

You are deciding **what** to say and **in what order** — not yet **how well**. This is why a draft can, and should, be ugly.

## 2 · Exploring your controlling idea

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Before you draft, focus the thesis by asking yourself questions. The aim is to move from a broad **topic** to a single, arguable **controlling idea**.

A controlling idea can take one of three forms:

Form	What it does
Thesis statement	States the claim directly and sets the direction of the paper.
Enthymeme	Makes a claim with a <i>because</i> clause.
Hypothesis	States a proposition the paper will test or examine.

*Thesis / enthymeme / hypothesis: Lester & Lester, §12a.*

### 2.1 Questions to focus the thesis

These questions help you narrow a topic into a controlling idea. They are drawn from the sources you have already read. Two of them — centrality and the gap — come from the **CARS model** (Creating a Research Space) you met in L04: a focused thesis usually answers the “gap” question.

Question	What it is for	Source
How do you define, limit and narrow your thesis to a single issue?	The core narrowing move: from a topic to one arguable issue.	<i>Lester &amp; Lester, §12a (Subject)</i>
What can we assume the reader knows?	The background the reader already has.	<i>Lester &amp; Lester, §12a (Background)</i>
Who is your audience?	Decides what you must define and what you can assume.	<i>Swales &amp; Feak; see L06</i>
Why is this topic important? (centrality)	CARS Move 1 — establishes that the topic matters.	<i>Swales &amp; Feak, Unit 8 (CARS)</i>
What is missing or unresolved in what has been said? (the gap)	CARS Move 2 — the gap a focused thesis answers.	<i>Swales &amp; Feak, Unit 8 (CARS)</i>
What will you do first? Then what steps will you follow?	Turns the idea into a plan you can act on.	<i>Zemach et al., Unit 1, p. 4</i>

### 3 · Writing devices

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Once you have a controlling idea, you **develop** it in the body of the essay. Lester sets out a range of **methods of development** — ways to build a substantive body paragraph from a topic sentence. He stresses that a good paragraph runs from about four to twelve or fifteen sentences, and that you reach that length by writing strong topic sentences and developing them fully. The six devices below are the ones used in the Draft-o-matic; Lester lists several more, given underneath.

Device	What it does	Example
<b>Chronology</b>	Uses time order — and plot summary — to trace historical events or survey a story. Always relate it to your thesis; keep plot summary to a single paragraph.	Following Roosevelt's death in 1945, Truman inherited a foreign policy that soon called for the atomic bomb — a decision that must be weighed against the circumstances of the time.
<b>Comparison</b>	Compares or contrasts to show two sides of a subject, two characters, or the past against the present.	The pyrophobic public protests every “controlled burn”, while environmentalists praise a forest fire's rejuvenating effects.
<b>Cause &amp; effect</b>	Develops the reasons for a circumstance, or examines its consequences. Lester notes that a cause-and-effect paragraph can also use the device of <b>analogy</b> — a metaphoric comparison.	To picture the uniform expansion of the universe, imagine raisin bread rising: as the dough expands, every raisin moves away from every other in proportion to its distance.
<b>Definition</b>	Explains and expands a complex term. Avoid a simple dictionary opening (“Webster defines...”); define the term as it matters to your subject.	Functional foods, as the Australian National Food Authority defines them, are foods with metabolic or physiological roles beyond those of common foods.
<b>Classification</b>	Identifies several key types or issues of the topic, then uses analysis to examine each in turn.	You might classify the types of fungal infection — athlete's foot, dermatophytosis, ringworm — and then analyse each.
<b>Analogy</b>	Explains the unfamiliar through a metaphoric comparison with something familiar. Lester treats it as a device that strengthens other methods (notably cause and effect) rather than a standalone mode.	See the raisin-bread example above: an analogy carrying a cause-and-effect explanation.

Lester names several further methods you can use as your subject requires:

- **Explain a process** — set out, step by step, the stages needed to reach an end.
- **Ask questions and provide answers** — frame a question as a topic sentence, then answer it with specific detail and evidence.
- **Cite evidence from the source materials** — build the paragraph from quotations, paraphrases, and summaries that support the topic sentence.

- **Other methods** — description of a scene, statistics, historical evidence, psychological theory, and so on.

The methods are not mutually exclusive — Lester's own cause-and-effect example carries an analogy inside it. Choose the method that fits what the paragraph needs to do.

*Methods of development: Lester & Lester, §12b (Writing the Body of the Research Paper), from p. 226.*

## 4 • References

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Lester, J. D., Sr., & Lester, J. D., Jr. *Writing Research Papers: A Complete Guide*. 16th ed. Pearson. (Chapter 12: Writing the Introduction, Body, and Conclusion — §12a–12b.)

Swales, J. M., & Feak, C. B. *Academic Writing for Graduate Students: Essential Tasks and Skills*. 3rd ed. University of Michigan Press, 2012. (Unit 8: Constructing a Research Paper II, pp. 331–378.)

Zemach, D. E., et al. *Writing Research Papers: From Essay to Research Paper*. Macmillan Writing Series. (Unit 1: Review of the Essay, pp. 3–7.)