

# Shape it UP

How you set up your paper is your decision, and it determines how successful your paper will be. Many options exist to help you organize academic papers, such as outlines and concept maps (also known as webs). The following are shapes that can help you visualize your paper's direction - they can help you see ways to organize your writing:

## Opening and Closing Paragraphs

### 1. The funnel.

Whether you are introducing your paper or concluding it, the funnel can be useful shape to help your organize.

#### **Think about it this way:**

You're trying to focus your paper on a particular subject, much like talking a photograph. Before you snap the exact shot you want, you'll have to focus your lens. Lead the reader to the main idea by showing specific details. In the body, you will begin focusing on particular shots. But for now, you want to stand back and offer a few focused shots that leave us wanting more.

\*Start your paragraph with a broad idea or generalization.



\*\*Continue by giving details that are more specific. This will help in working up to your main point.



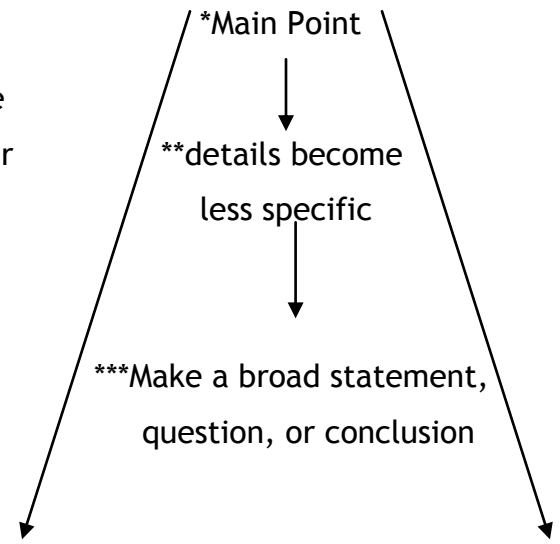
\*\*\* Finally, state the main idea (this could be a question).

### EXAMPLE of a paragraph written using the funnel shape:

\*In American society today, slenderness generally portrays happiness, success, youthfulness, and social acceptability. Respectively, overweightness is associated with laziness, lack of will power, and being out of control of one's life. \*\*Our culture promotes this "standard" through advertisements, the media, and the entertainment industry. \*\*\*Does the message being conveyed promote wellness and a motivation toward a healthy lifestyle, or does it actually foster psychological disorders? What are we really promoting in out "thin is in" society?

## 2. The Inverted Funnel.

Yep. You guessed it ... the inverted funnel is the opposite of the funnel. Think back to when you focused in on your idea. This time, start by making your point, finding that exact shot you want. Then, move back, revealing a little more of the idea until we have a broad view of it.



### EXAMPLE of a paragraph using the inverted funnel:

\*The attitude we take, as a society, that values thin women more than overweight ones is hurting the self-image of females of all ages. \*\*The messages of thin as “good” are everywhere. In fact, promoting thinness isn’t promoting wellness and a healthy lifestyle. \*\*\*The “thin is in” trend has been prevalent over the last 40 years, but there is hope for society to realize that while not all women can be supermodels, all can be beautiful.

### Put It All Together and What Do You Get?

## 3. The Keyhole.

This shape applies to the whole paper, not just individual paragraphs (although I’m sure you will recognize parts of it!). Begin by focusing in—start out broad, then focus. The body consists of your development. It’s like a series of close-up photographs that explain the bigger picture. At the conclusion, you be focus again on your main point: then you step back and offer the picture that leaves the reader with an overview of the whole.

