ORGANIZING AN ESSAY

A solid essay has many related components that fit together to produce a whole piece of writing. The pieces that make up an essay should follow a clear order and help illustrate the writer’s thesis statement/controlling idea.

STEP 1- Arrange your thoughts in a hierarchy of ideas (general to specific)

For example:
Art
Painters
Expressionist Painters
Vincent Van Gogh
Van Gogh’s painting “Starry Night”

STEP 2- Organize by creating a rough outline. The informal outline should begin with a thesis statement. The thesis statement should be direct and to the point, and it should map out what is to come in the essay. For example:

The United States is a nation of constant ethnic conflict.

The above thesis statement clearly states an opinion/idea that can be supported or denied using factual information. It guides the direction of the essay for the reader and for the writer.

STEP 3- Structure the essay into three parts—an introduction, body, and conclusion. The introduction presents the writer’s plan for the essay and prepares the reader for what is to follow in the body of the essay. The body of the essay offers examples, details, reasons, and other support for the reader to agree with the thesis statement presented earlier. The conclusion summarizes and synthesizes the introduction and body of the essay (“remember to restate the thesis statement in this section for emphasis of the main idea). The conclusion may also suggest a course of action or serve to inspire the reader with a powerful closing thought that the reader didn’t know when he/she began reading the essay.