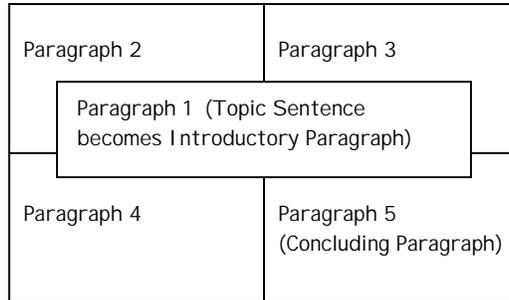


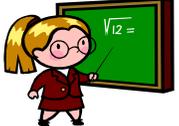
Four Square BETTER Introductory Paragraph Writing

This is the basic Four Square set up. The middle rectangle holds the writer's **thesis statement** (also called "**topic sentence**"), and this sentence is eventually developed into three sentences: (1.) the original **topic sentence**; (2.) the "**wrap-up**" sentence [mentions the **three points** discussed in paragraphs 2, 3, and 4]; and (3.) a "**feeling**" or "**reflective**" sentence.



Example of Four Square Organizational Structure:

Prompt: Write about your favorite season. Tell why it is your favorite. Be sure to use details and descriptive language.

<p>First</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The Weather</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Crisp, cool evenings Good football weather ❑ Gives landscape a break from summer Makes the trees turn beautiful colors ❑ Warm enough for outside activities, but not too hot Biking, running, and basketball 	<p>Another reason</p> <p style="text-align: center;">School</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Summer gets boring after a while. It is good to get back into a routine and get busy. ❑ Friends! Socializing makes us smarter! ❑ Reading, writing, arithmetic... Academic pursuits are welcome after watching cartoons all summer. 
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <p>Autumn is my favorite season.</p> </div>	
<p>Finally</p> <p>Halloween is my favorite holiday.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Dressing up is fun. You can be anything you can imagine. ❑ The candy is pretty fine. My favorites are anything with chocolate and nuts. ❑ It's all about friends. My friends and I always get together and have fun on Halloween. 	<p>So you can see</p> <p>Autumn is the best season of all because the weather is fabulous, we are occupied with the fun of school, and before we know it, it will be time for the best holiday ever -- Halloween!</p>

The basic **Four Square introductory paragraph** that a student would write from this outline would be as follows:

Autumn is my favorite season. The weather is exciting, school is keeping us busy, and Halloween is just around the corner. No other season is a better setting for fun activities than autumn.

This basic 3-sentence introductory paragraph, although adequate for a very young, a beginning, a limited, or a struggling writer, is too predictable and formulaic for an Edmond Public Schools satisfactory or advanced writer. Teachers need to encourage writers to move past this (topic sent./wrap-up sent./feeling sent.) formula as soon as possible.

Below are some suggestions for ways to improve the introductory paragraph.

1. General to specific - Start with the idea of a triangle.

Use big fat (general) ideas at the top and skinnier

(specific) ideas toward the bottom. You end with the point of the triangle as your thesis statement.

Example #1:



Oklahoma may be famous for cowboys and Indians, but those who live here know our state for its four very distinct seasons. Where some parts of the country have one mild, lovely year-round season with very little change, spring, summer, autumn, and winter in the middle of the United States are sharply different. Winter is freezing with icy winds, so the coming of spring is a welcome change. Summer brings beautiful warm weather, but after weeks and weeks of 90-100 degree days, most people are practically melted. Just when it is back-to-school time and everyone is ready for perfect weather and Halloween tricks, the first cold front of the year blows in and reminds me that autumn is my favorite season.

Example #2:



Every year has twelve months, but those months are classified into four different seasons. The year begins with January 1, deep in the frozen heart of winter, when the days are short, the nights are long, and the wind is icy. Winter eventually gives way to spring, and after the long-awaited thaw and the sweet smell of budding flowers, summer pushes its way into the calendar. "Ahh... Nothing feels better than sitting beside the lake in the hot sun..." However, we always get tired of summer before it gets tired of us! Soon it is time for the best season of all -- the season of the first football game, the season of Indian summer weather, the season of trick or treat -- my favorite season, autumn.

A Think-Aloud for This Writing Technique:

My thesis statement is "Autumn is my favorite season."

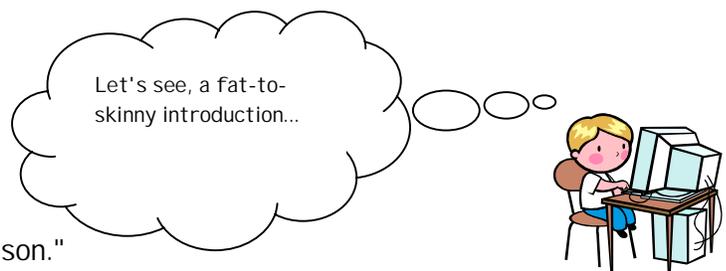
To do the above technique, here's what you can do.

Autumn is the "skinny" word. It is your "specific" word. It is your "thesis statement" word.

You have to think of some words that are "fatter" or more "general" than it.

OK. Autumn → season → two seasons → four seasons → a year

There you go. You start writing something about a "year." Then you narrow your next sentence down and you can talk about "four seasons." Then you can talk about "two" of the seasons. Then you can talk about "two" more of the seasons. Then you can finally talk about your favorite season -- autumn. See how it works? Fat to skinny! General to specific!



2. Start with a quotation from a famous or quotable person (someone who is an expert in the field) or source.

Example:

"To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven." These well known words from the book of Ecclesiastes in the Bible remind us that everything has a reason and a time, including the four different parts of the calendar year. Winter is for huddling indoors, and spring is for peeking out to see if the groundhog has spied his shadow. Summer comes along to warm the ground for growing food, but the best season of all is the crisp, Halloween season of autumn.



3. Start with a question. The reader will want to continue to read to find out the answer.

Example:

Did anyone ever wonder about the origin of the word *autumn*? It first came into our language from Old French in the form of *autompne*, and the French got their word from the Latin form *autumnus*. It is commonly known that *fall*, the synonym for *autumn*, came into English in the 16th century and referred to the losing of leaves by deciduous trees. Formerly *faule of the leafe*, the name was shortened to *fall* for simplicity. The season of swirling winds and leaves; the season of boots and schoolbooks; the season of ghosts and goblins; autumn -- no matter how it acquired its name -- is the season of mystery and subtlety, the season of darkness and light. It is my favorite season.



Etymology sources: <http://www.takeourword.com/Issue068.html>
<http://www.hellskitchen.com/inkwor2.htm>

4. Start with a bit of dialogue. "Talk" is exciting and will make the reader want to read what you have written.

Example:

"Run for your life!" Tesa screamed, as she vaulted over the porch railing with a death grip on her candy sack. She almost made it, too, but that little turned-up toe on her evil witch shoes tripped her up and slammed her down face first right in the boxwoods. I remember even the smell of that night -- how autumn-y it was! It was the perfect time of year. Going to football games on cold Friday nights, studying with Tesa for Spanish quizzes, and planning our magnificent Halloween costumes, we had so much fun during my favorite season of the year, autumn.



5. Start with an outrageous, mystery lead. It might be an exaggeration (hyperbole), include a mention of a famous person or place, or refer to a great treasure or amount of money (anything interesting). However it starts, though, the writer must then weave it back to the thesis statement.

Example #1:

Onions make most people cry, but Egyptian farmers cried when they harvested their corn. Frightened of the spirit who lived in the corn, they pretended to be uncontrollably sad to keep the spirit from becoming angry when they cut down its home. Ancient Egyptians celebrated their harvest honoring *Min*, their god of vegetation and fertility, with a parade and feast during what must have been one of their favorite seasons -- springtime. Today, we still have our favorite times of the year. With the crisp, cool weather, the start of school, and the promise of tricks and treats, autumn is the season that I look forward to the most every year.



Resource: <http://www.holidays.net/thanksgiving/story.htm>

Example #2:



"Raindrops on roses and whiskers on kittens," begins the song from *The Sound of Music*, as Maria sings about her favorite things. President Lincoln's favorite Shakespeare play was *Macbeth*, and Shaquille O'Neal's favorite book is *Undying Glory*. Everyone has favorites, whether it is a favorite color, a favorite car, or a favorite time of the year.

Alberta Ferretti is Catherine Zeta Jones's favorite designer, Hillary Clinton loves the rose the best of all the flowers and summer the best of all the seasons. President Bush indicates that he does not care for summer! It is difficult to determine a favorite in every category, but in the category of seasons, I am certain. Autumn is clearly the most outstanding season of all.

Resources: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/alhtml/alrb/>
http://www.alastore.ala.org/SiteSolution.taf?_sn=catalog&_pn=sub_category&_op=44stbdsd/00405300/001.html

Now remember, you can write the basic 3-sentence *Four Square* style of introductory paragraph, with its topic sentence (Atomic Fireballs are the best candy); its wrap up sentence (They're cinnamon flavored, they're jawbreakers, and they're hot); and the feeling/personal sentence (It's fun to see how many fireballs you can eat). However, your little 3-sentence introductory paragraph will be very predictable, very formulaic, unbelievably boring, and seemingly written by a robot. Why not try the other introductory paragraph writing styles!

General to Specific (Fat to Skinny)

Quotation Start

Question Start

Dialogue Start

Outrageous, Mystery Lead

Use the models above to help develop your own introductory paragraphs. Practice makes perfect!

