Quick! Read these two scenarios and vote for which trip you’d rather take.

**TRIP A (deductive method)**
Pretend that when you get into my car, I say, “We’ll drive to Chicago on Highway 55 North. We’ll pass Springfield, Bloomington and Joliet. The whole trip will take about five hours, depending on traffic, so sit back and enjoy the ride!”

**TRIP B (inductive method)**
Pretend that when you get into my car, I say nothing at all about our destination, drive for five hours, and finally announce, “Well, here we are in Chicago!” You could see the general direction we were headed, but could not be certain of the destination until my announcement at the end.

Most students would agree that trip A is preferable because—eVEN THoUGH THE DrIvING tImE Is tHE sAme foR botH tRIPS—they’d know where they were going before they got there! Trip B would seem boringly long if they found out where they were going only at the end of a long drive.

Most academic essays are like a five-hour car trip the author asks readers to take. Readers feel in control knowing in advance where they’re heading. That’s why most composition instructors require the thesis statement in the first paragraph. This is known as the **deductive method**. Deduction comes from two Latin words meaning “to lead away from.” As a writer, you lead your reader away from the thesis and toward your evidence (facts, statistics, case histories, quotes).

Approximately 95% of what you read follows this method.

Sometimes, though, an author might want to create suspense by delaying the thesis statement until the end. This is known as the **inductive method**. Induction comes from two Latin words meaning “to lead into.” As a writer, you lead your reader to the thesis, using the evidence in each paragraph (facts, statistics, case histories, quotes) to slowly build up to the thesis.

Approximately 5% of what you read follows this method.

Two good examples are Aesop’s fables, with the moral (thesis) at the end; and murder mysteries, for which you don’t want to know who did it (thesis) until the end. In more academic writing, some personal narratives, news editorials, and others use induction to slowly build up to the main point/thesis.

As a writer, you and your instructor should determine what method and placement of the thesis is best for your audience and purpose.