

Paragraph

Major Points

1. *A paragraph is a unified and coherent collection of sentences that is most often grouped with other paragraphs.*
2. *Body paragraphs must have a central point, which is often expressed in a topic sentence located as the first sentence in the paragraph.*
3. *A topic sentence consists of the topic plus a statement of opinion or attitude. It should be focused and as interesting as you can make it.*
4. *Paragraphs are developed with examples, details, and explanations.*
5. *Paragraph support should be sufficient, relevant, and clear.*
6. *Paragraphs benefit from specific word choices and specific examples.*
7. *Concluding sentences should end a paper decisively. One way to end effectively is with an expanded thought.*
8. *Three types of organizational patterns for paragraphs are spatial (description), chronological (narrative), and order of importance (explanatory and persuasive). These methods often overlap.*
9. *A paragraph is unified when all examples, details, and explanations relate to a central point, which is expressed in the topic sentence.*
10. *In coherent paragraphs, sentences are clearly linked using transitions, repetition, synonyms, pronouns, and references to the main idea.*

Discussion

A paragraph is a collection of related sentences that are clearly connected to one another and that make some point. Paragraphs come in several varieties:

- Introductory
- Body
- Concluding
- Transitional

There is no set length for a paragraph; the kind of writing and the audience for it usually determine the number of sentences. For example, newspapers favor shorter paragraphs, whereas articles in academic journals often include paragraphs that fill a page. The paragraphs you write in Unit Two will usually run 250 to 300 words, or around fifteen sentences.

Majorly the construction of body paragraph is confusing. The body paragraph has three basic parts: topic sentence, support sentences, and concluding sentence.

Writing a Topic Sentence

All effective paragraphs have a main point, that is, some reason for their author to put that group of sentences together. Writers frequently state explicitly what a body paragraph will be about in a topic sentence. Usually the paragraph's first sentence, a topic sentence, indicates the direction of the author's and the readers' mental journey. Like a compass guiding a backpacker through unfamiliar terrain, the topic sentence can help readers find their way from one end of a paragraph to the other, without taking needless detours along the way.

HOW TO WRITE A TOPIC SENTENCE

1. Limit the topic.

Since we are working with paragraphs, your scope must be fairly narrow. For example, instead of trying to take on the topic of global environmental problems, you might discuss a personal commitment to recycling.

2. Use specific word choices.

Strive to make your topic sentence interesting, since it is your introduction to the rest of your paragraph. You might begin with a rough topic sentence like "My brother is a great guitarist." But by adding more specific details, you could write a far more interesting sentence, such as this

one: “My brother Jason toured all last summer with Architecture in Helsinki, playing some terrific solo riffs.

Developing Body Paragraphs

After writers establish a workable topic sentence, they must next write sentences that support it. These sentences are developed with examples, details, and explanations—the basic tools of the trade. No matter how long the writing project, we use these tools over and over to “fill up the space” and show why and how our topics matter.

Kinds of Support Writers support their topic sentences with specific examples, details, and explanations.

1. Examples

An example illustrates some part of a statement by showing a specific instance of it. Whenever you are asked for more information to help someone understand an idea, chances are that you will give an example. For instance, you might say to a friend, “Baseball is boring.” Your friend, a baseball fanatic, immediately replies, “What do you mean by that?” When you tell her that the pitcher and the catcher have most of the fun, that half the time the infielders and outfielders are so stationary they might as well be asleep, and that you would like to see a little more body contact, like in football, you have provided a list of examples.

TYPES OF EXAMPLES

1. **Personal examples:** based on your own experiences. To illustrate how frustrating preschoolers can be, you could tell a story about the time your 4-year-old sister locked herself in the bathroom for 2 hours.
2. **Facts:** commonly accepted truths—for example, “Some trees lose their leaves in the fall.”
3. **Statistics:** numerical facts—for example, “The earth is 93,000,000 miles from the sun.”
4. **Information:** gathered from print sources (books, newspapers, magazines, etc.), electronic sources (including the Internet), interviews, TV, and radio.
5. **Second-hand anecdotes:** things that happened to someone else.
6. **Comparisons,** including metaphors/similes—for example, “The flute is basically a pipe with holes drilled in it.”
7. **“What-if” situations:** speculation about what could happen, such as what would happen if you decided to stop working on Fridays.
8. **Dialogue** created or reported to express a point

2. Details

Just as we need examples to illustrate general statements, we need details to make examples more interesting. Details help sharpen an image or clarify an idea. To make the example of your little sister’s locking herself in the bathroom more vivid, you could name some parts of the scene, then add modifiers and sensory details:

My 4-year-old sister slammed the hard wooden door of the bathroom, and I heard the lock click shut. Then she shrieked at me, “I hate you!” When I tried to calm her down, she turned on both taps of the sink full blast.

3. Explanations

You can use examples to develop much of your writing, but sometimes you need more. What if the reader does not understand the example or how it relates to your point? You can offer explanations—reasons that justify behavior, tell how things work, or anticipate possible outcomes. Explanations are vital when you develop a main point because they connect examples and guide readers through your ideas. Explanations work with details and examples to “fill up the white space.” In the following paragraph, you will find three major examples to support the topic sentence, an explanation following each major example, and details throughout to make the examples and explanations more vivid for the reader.

Writing a Concluding Sentence

As important as it is to begin a paragraph well and to develop the body fully, writers need to end their paragraphs with equal care. Although many short and medium-length body paragraphs in

essays do not use summary or “clincher” sentences, longer body paragraphs commonly do, and one-paragraph papers should as well...

HOW TO WRITE A CONCLUDING SENTENCE

1. Use a connector:

Remember to use a transitional word (e.g., finally, aside from, on the other hand, consequently) or other sentence connector in the first part of the concluding sentence.

2. Link to the topic sentence:

Always remind your readers of the topic and the statement you made about it in your topic sentence. You may simply repeat a word or, better still, find a synonym. Some paragraphs benefit from briefly mentioning (in a word or two) some important example, reason, or image from the body.

3. Expand the thought:

Leave your readers with something to think about besides the statement in your topic sentence. This added thought should extend the discussion in the supporting sentences of your paragraph. Use any of the following methods:

- A. Express an emotion.
- B. Give a judgment or opinion.
- C. Ask a related question.
- D. Make a reflective statement.
- E. Say how your topic has affected your behavior or outlook on life.
- F. Make an ironic observation.

WHAT TO AVOID IN CONCLUDING SENTENCES

- 1. Do not simply repeat the topic sentence or a slightly altered version of it. Show your readers that you have some good reason for writing the paragraph and for them to read it.
- 2. In searching for an interesting ending, don't drift off into the twilight zone. Your final thought should grow logically from the paragraph.
- 3. Do not end with a cliché or worn phrase such as this one: So, as you can see, I was caught between a rock and a hard place.
- 4. Do not announce that you are ending the paper: Well, it's time to end this paragraph, so A brief summary of important examples or points, your expanded thought, and the white space at the bottom of the page will let readers know you have finished.

ELEMENTS TO CONSIDER WHEN WRITING A PARAGRAPH

Writing paragraphs takes practice, but what should students write about? Good paragraph writing prompts allow students to write about what they know and like, so their focus can be on the writing process and using the four essential elements. Paragraph writing prompts, such as *Explain why _____ is your favorite activity*, encourage students to develop a topic sentence, write supporting sentences in a proper order, use transition words to achieve coherency, and conclude their paragraphs for completeness.

- 1. **Element #1: Unity.** Unity in a paragraph begins with the topic sentence. Every paragraph has one single, controlling idea that is expressed in its topic sentence, which is typically the first sentence of the paragraph. A paragraph is unified around this main idea, with the supporting sentences providing detail and discussion. In order to write a good topic sentence, think about your theme and all the points you want to make. Decide which point drives the rest, and then write it as your topic sentence.
- 2. **Element #2: Order.** Order refers to the way you organize your supporting sentences. Whether you choose chronological order, order of importance, or another logical presentation of detail, a solid paragraph always has a definite organization. In a well-ordered paragraph, the reader follows along easily, aided by the pattern you've established. Order helps the reader grasp your meaning and avoid confusion.
- 3. **Element #3: Coherence.** Coherence is the quality that makes your writing understandable. Sentences within a paragraph need to connect to each other and work together as a whole. One of the best ways to achieve coherency is to use transition words. These words create

bridges from one sentence to the next. You can use transition words that show order (first, second, third); spatial relationships (above, below) or logic (furthermore, in addition, in fact). Also, in writing a paragraph, using a consistent verb tense and point of view are important ingredients for coherency.

4. **Element #4: Completeness.** Completeness means a paragraph is well-developed. If all sentences clearly and sufficiently support the main idea, then your paragraph is complete. If there are not enough sentences or enough information to prove your thesis, then the paragraph is incomplete. Usually three supporting sentences, in addition to a topic sentence and concluding sentence, are needed for a paragraph to be complete. The concluding sentence or last sentence of the paragraph should summarize your main idea by reinforcing your topic sentence.