

Paragraph Structure Overview

Topic

- Choose a topic that is narrow enough to discuss in a single paragraph.
- A paragraph should only discuss a single idea. Additional ideas, even if they are related, must be in additional paragraphs.

P

POINT

- What is the **point** of your paragraph?
- The first sentence of a paragraph is known as the Topic Sentence and should both captures the reader's attention and introduces the idea that the paragraph will focus on to the reader.

E

EXAMPLE/EVIDENCE

- What **examples** or **evidence** do you have to support your point?
- Develop your ideas fully by providing enough supporting detail to achieve your purpose, whether it is to inform or to persuade the reader.

E

EXPLAIN

- **Explain** the connection between your point and your evidence.
- Ensure that each sentence clearly supports the topic sentence. Provide clear connections between sentences.

L

LINK

- **Link** your ideas between paragraphs or to the main focus of the essay
- End with a final sentence that concludes the idea of the paragraph. Link the conclusion of the paragraph to the topic sentence, or if you are continuing your essay, link the idea of this paragraph to the idea of the next paragraph.



Paragraph Beginnings – Topic Sentences:

Your Topic Sentence is the first sentence in your paragraph and should be a clear, concise statement that will introduce the **focus** of your paragraph to your reader. Avoid statements like *'this paragraph will discuss'* that narrate what the paper will be about.

Topic Sentences Created Paragraph Unity:

In academic writing, each paragraph must develop **one** main idea which is expressed in the Topic Sentence. Each sentence after the Topic Sentence must clearly support the idea explained in the Topic Sentence. This helps both the reader and the writer to maintain focus.

The topic sentence should meet the following criteria:

- be neither too broad or too narrow to discuss in a single paragraph
- state the most general idea of the paragraph
- answer the question or address the paragraph topic directly
- make a statement about or take a position on the topic

Paragraph Development:

The idea must be fully illustrated in between 5 – 8 sentences:

- Less than 5 sentences is not enough support for you topic
- More than 8 sentences allows too much room for more than 1 idea in the paragraph

Details should not merely restate the Topic Sentence in different terms but provide valid reasons that provide examples or evidence that support your paragraph's focus.

Paragraph Organization:

The ideas should be clearly organized so that the information is presented in a logical fashion. For example, according to one or more of the following patterns:

- from general to specific (or the reverse)
- from least to most important
- from least to most complex
- chronological order

Additionally,

- Similar ideas must be grouped together
- Verb tenses should not suddenly shift
- Paragraphs should remain balanced throughout the essay

Paragraph Endings:

Your concluding sentences should not merely echo your topic sentence or summarize your points. Remember that your conclusion should comment on your entire paragraph, not just on the last point you've discussed.

