

Paragraphs

A Paragraph is a group of connected sentences that is generally made up of **one main idea and a group of supporting sentences**. Paragraphs are the basic unit for building longer pieces of writing, e.g. essays, reports, assignments etc.

Paragraphs contain **three** main parts:

- A **topic sentence** - contains the main idea of the paragraph. It's often but not always the first sentence of the paragraph. It helps the reader to understand quickly what the paragraph is going to be about. Allows the writer to clearly develop the paragraph that follows.
- **Supporting sentences** - these sentences develop or give details about the topic sentence. They can:
 - expand on the main point
 - offer explanations
 - give examples
 - give additional details.
- A **concluding sentence** which summarises the paragraph or may provide a link to the next paragraph. This sentence is not always necessary in a paragraph.

Below is a list of useful language that could be used in your concluding statement(s).

Finally

Therefore

Indeed

In conclusion

Thus

Clearly

In summary

As a result

It is clear that

Paragraph unity — sentence connectors

All sentences need to relate to the main idea / topic sentence in the paragraph. The reader should be able to see how each sentence flows from the previous one and how each is connected to the topic sentence. Sentence connectors weave sentences together to create a cohesive paragraph. They order and sequence ideas, theory, data etc. The following tables list useful connectors.

Useful sentence connectors

Logical order

- firstly, secondly, thirdly etc
- next, last, finally
- in addition
- furthermore
- also
- at present / presently

Order of importance

- more importantly
- most significantly
- above all
- primarily

Contrast

- however
- on the other hand
- on the contrary
- by (in) comparison

Comparison

- similarly
- likewise
- also
- too

Useful connectors within paragraphs

Comparison

- like
- and
- both
- alike
- similar (to)
- the same (as)
- Not only
- compared to
- in comparison to
- so...that

Contrast

- although
- though
- while
- even though
- whereas
- yet
- but
- more than
- different / differ from
- unlike

Steps for paragraph writing

Step 1 — write an outline

When writing a paragraph, first write an outline of the paragraph and include:

- the topic
- supporting information.

Step 2 — write the topic sentence

Write a topic sentence.

Step 3 — write supporting sentences

Next write a supporting sentence for each point. Use facts or examples to support your points.

Step 4 — concluding sentence

Then write a concluding sentence to sum up.

Step 5 — final paragraph

Write the final paragraph.

Example

topic sentence

There are several serious health hazards directly linked to smoking. The link between smoking and cancer is well known. As well smoking is linked to other lung diseases like emphysema and bronchitis. Smokers also have a greater risk of heart disease later in life. This is evidenced in recent court cases in the USA where smokers have been awarded damages from tobacco companies. Further, there is substantial research that even passive smoking can have long term effects on health. Clearly smoking is a dangerous habit and should be avoided.

supporting sentences

concluding sentence

A diagram showing a paragraph with labels. The first sentence is labeled 'topic sentence'. The following five sentences are labeled 'supporting sentences'. The final sentence is labeled 'concluding sentence'. The labels are in purple, green, and orange respectively.

Activity - Identifying the paragraph structure:

Read the following paragraphs and find the topic sentences, the supporting sentences, and the concluding sentences:

Making the best use of study time is important. There are several ways to make the best use of the study time available. These include limiting interruptions, setting achievable goals, getting into a study „habit“. Another way to make study time more profitable is to set a time limit with regular breaks. All of these techniques help to maximise concentration.

Many people are afraid of snakes. However, snakes are shy creatures that avoid contact with humans. Snakes generally hide under logs or rocks. If approached they move away rapidly. In addition, snakes only attack when under threat. If snakes are left alone they are usually not a problem.

Many writers make grammatical errors when they experiment with different ways of putting sentences together. They may arrange words in the wrong order, use the wrong forms of particular words, or leave out important punctuation marks altogether. However, there is nothing wrong with making mistakes like these when you write your first draft, as long as you carefully edit your final copy.

TASK: write a paragraph on a chosen topic.