

PARAGRAPH

A paragraph is a basic unit of organization for writing a group of sentences that develop one main idea. There are three parts to a paragraph:

1. A topic sentence
2. Supporting sentences
3. A concluding sentence

The topic sentence is the most important sentence in the paragraph. It gives the main idea of the paragraph. The topic sentence controls and limits the ideas that can be discussed in a paragraph.

The topic sentence has two parts: The topic and the controlling idea. The topic is the subject of the paragraph.

Example: The color yellow is the color of mental activity.

Topic : The color yellow

The controlling idea limits and controls your topic to one aspect that you want to write about.

Example: Brown is the color of material security.

Brown: topic material security : controlling idea

Example: Brown shows a desire for stability.

A desire for stability : controlling idea

A topic can have more than one controlling idea. You could write one paragraph about the color Brown indicating material security and another on the desire for stability.

The colors we wear change our emotions.

People who wear orange like to communicate with others.

People who wear red clothes want to have fun

Shoes give us lots of information about the person wearing them.

Patterns on clothing give us clues to the mood of the wearer.

People who wear yellow are often creative.

Turquoise is good for people who have decisions to make.

People who wear green often like the outdoors.

Supporting Sentences develop the topic sentence. They give the

reader reasons, examples, and more facts about the topic

sentence. They must all be related to the topic sentence.

The Concluding Sentence

The last sentence of your paragraph is called the concluding sentence. This sentence signals the end of the paragraph.

The concluding sentence is similar to the topic sentence. Both are general sentences. The concluding sentence can be written in two ways.

1. State the topic sentence in different words.
2. Summarize the main points in the paragraph.

Begin a concluding sentence with one of these phrases:

In conclusion,

or In summary,

Topic sentences

The topic sentence is usually the first sentence of a paragraph. It is the most important one in your paragraph because it controls all the other sentences. In this way, a topic sentence functions like a traffic sign controlling vehicles on the road. It shows readers which way they are going, just as a traffic sign helps direct drivers.

A good topic sentence *states the topic of the paragraph

*identifies the controlling idea

*expresses the writer's attitude about the topic

Examples: Nuclear *power is our greatest hope for solving the energy crisis.*

Topic:

The Controlling Idea:

Nuclear power is the greatest threat to life on the planet.

Topic:

The Controlling Idea:

Golf is a difficult sport to master.

The laws on child abuse should be strictly enforced.

The Japanese subway system is very efficient.

The clothes we wear often reflect a lot about our personality.

There are several common mistakes students make when writing topic sentences. You should avoid these three mistakes:

The topic sentence is too general

too narrow

lacks a controlling idea

**Many people like to exercise* (too broad; it cannot be developed in one paragraph.)

**I swim laps for 30 minutes every morning.* (too narrow; it cannot be developed in one paragraph.)

**The subject of this paragraph is my exercise routine.*

(the topic has been stated; but the controlling idea or writer's attitude doesn't exist)

A good topic sentence:

Exercising every morning *has* *several positive effects on my health.*

TOPIC

CONTROLLING IDEA

MODEL TOPIC SENTENCES

The customs associated with giving gifts vary from country to country. When you are a tourist, a student, or a businessperson, it is important to know the gift-giving customs of the country you are visiting. For example, if you are invited for dinner, flowers are a safe and appreciated gift throughout the world. In some places, however, you must take care not to offend.

In much of Europe, red roses symbolize romance and would be inappropriate. In Austria and Germany, it is considered bad luck to receive an even number of flowers. If you are in Hong Kong, gifts to avoid are clocks, which symbolize death, and scissors or knives, which indicate the end of the relationship. In Japan, you can impress your hosts by paying attention to the Japanese rules for gift-giving: Always wrap the gift but not in white paper, as white symbolizes death. In addition, never give four of anything, since the Japanese word for the number four is also the word for death. As in Korea and much of Asia, do not expect your gift to be opened until after you have left. In the Middle East, be careful about admiring one of your host's possessions. He or she may offer it to you and would be insulted if you refused it. No matter where in the world you are, you will feel more comfortable if you take the time to learn some of the local gift-giving customs.

There are many reasons why people keep pets. Most importantly, they are kept for pleasure and companionship. In fact, many people consider their pet to be part of the family. In addition to their value as loved and loving companions, pets serve practical purposes, such as protecting homes and property, destroying vermin, and even providing means of transportation. They may also serve as emotional outlets for the elderly or the childless. Recently, the benefit of pet-facilitated psychotherapy has been demonstrated. Finally, some people keep pets for their beauty or rarity or, in the case of birds, for their songs.

Climate affects human life in many ways. For instance, climate affects the kinds of clothes we wear and even the colors we choose to wear. Since it affects the kinds of crops we can grow successfully, it influences our eating habits. Architecture is also affected by climate. Engineers and architects must think about climate when they make decisions about the construction, materials, design, and style of buildings. Even our choices in transportation are determined by the climate in which we live. Climate also plays a big part in economic development. A climate that is too hot, too cold, or too dry makes farming, industry and transportation difficult and slows down economic development.

Drafting a paragraph

Topics: *benefits of having a job that requires a lot of travel.

*reasons that you chose your career or major

*ways colors affect you

*reasons you would or would not like to be a movie star

UNITY

In addition to a clear topic sentence and adequate support, a good paragraph must have unity. A paragraph is unified when all of the supporting sentences relate to the main topic and develop the controlling idea. In order to achieve unity, you must

make sure that you do not include any information that is not relevant to the main point stated in the topic sentence. Any sentences that do not support the topic are considered irrelevant and should be eliminated.

OMIT THE IRRELEVANT SENTENCES FROM THE PARAGRAPH

If you are prone to mental or physical stress while flying, there are several precautions you can take to protect yourself. First of all, you might consider taking a Fearful Flier workshop. The purpose of this workshop is to help replace the myths about flying with facts, such as what makes a plane fly and how crews are trained. There are also many interesting workshops you can take to relieve stress at work. Planning ahead is a second way to cut down on stress. Leave plenty of time for your drive to the airport and have your travel agent make an advance seat assignment for you in a part of the plane you like. Many airports have shops and restaurants where you can spend time between flights. Third, communicate your fears. If the flight crew knows that a passenger is anxious, they will make more of an effort to put you at ease. Another tip is to stay loose, both physically and mentally. Wear loose, comfortable clothing and try to relax. Flex your hands and feet. Get up and walk around. Unfortunately, the food served on many flights is unappetizing. Fifth, don't allow yourself to get bored. Bring along a good book, some magazines, or a lot of absorbing work. Another precaution you can take is to

drink plenty of water and fruit juices so that you don't become dehydrated from the pressurized cabin air. Dehydration is one of the most common causes of discomfort among air travelers. Last but not least, keep your ears open by swallowing, chewing gum, or talking.

COHERENCE

An effective paragraph needs a clear topic, adequate support, and unity. Another component of a good paragraph is coherence. In a coherent paragraph, the sentences are arranged so that the ideas are in a logical order. In order to achieve coherence you need:

1. A clear plan of arrangement
2. Transitions to connect your ideas

Basically, there are three ways of arranging information to achieve coherence:

Time order, spatial order, and order of importance

Time order (chronological order) is preferred when you are explaining a sequence of events or telling a story.

Spatial order is chosen when you are describing the way something looks or its physical characteristics. In this case, you will arrange your details according to the position of the objects being described or where they are located.

Order of importance is used if you are listing examples, causes, effects, reasons, or purposes. You either begin with the least important item and end with the most important one, or vice versa.

ESSAY

An essay is a set of paragraphs about a specific subject. Like a paragraph, an essay makes and supports one main point. However, the subject of an essay is too complex to be developed in a few sentences. To support fully the main point of an essay, several paragraphs are needed. A typical essay contains five paragraphs, but many other types of essays are longer or shorter, depending on their purpose.

An essay has three parts:

-introduction,

-body

-conclusion.

The introduction provides some background information on the subject and states the main point in a thesis statement. The

introduction has two parts: general statements and a thesis statement. The first sentence of the introduction should be a general statement. The second should be less general, the third should be even less general, and so on until the reader comes to the thesis statement.

The general statements give the reader background information about the topic of the essay. These statements should get the reader interested in the topic. The thesis statement introduces the main idea of the essay. It is just like a topic sentence in a paragraph. It states the main topic and tells what will be said in the body paragraphs. The thesis is usually the last sentence of the introduction.

THE INTRODUCTION

Most formal essays begin with an introductory paragraph. In some ways, the introduction is the most important paragraph of your essay. Because it is the first paragraph that will be read, it must capture the attention of the audience and create a desire to read the rest of the essay. It should set the stage for what follows and give the reader an idea of what to expect.

Introduction: provides background information
captures the reader's interest
states the thesis

Techniques commonly used in introduction

- a) move from general to specific
- b) use an anecdote
- c) use a quotation
- d) ask a question
- e) present facts and statistics (enhances credibility)

The body consists of several supporting paragraphs that develop the main idea. Each of these paragraphs has a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and sometimes a concluding sentence. The body paragraphs support whatever is stated in the thesis statement. The body paragraphs are similar to the supporting sentences of a paragraph.

The essay ends with a conclusion that summarizes the main points. The conclusion is the last paragraph of the essay. It summarizes the main points discussed in the body or restates the thesis in different words. It also leaves the reader with a final comment or thought about the topic.

Transitions or linking words are used to connect the paragraphs. These are just like the transitions used in paragraphs to link ideas between sentences.

BASIC PLAN OF A TYPICAL ESSAY

Introduction

Background information

Get reader's attention using:

Facts, statistics, quotations, anecdotes,
questions

Thesis Statement

States purpose

Introduces 3 main points

First Body Paragraph

Topic Sentence

States first main point

Provides supporting details

Second Body Paragraph

Topic Sentence

States second main point

Provides supporting details

Third Body Paragraph

Topic Sentence

States third main point

Provides supporting details

Conclusion

Makes final points by
Summarizing main points
Drawing a conclusion
Making a prediction
Offering a solution

The thesis statement

An essay is controlled by one main idea. This main idea is called the thesis statement. The thesis statement is similar to the topic sentence in a paragraph, but it is broader and gives the controlling idea for the whole essay. The topic sentence in each of the body paragraphs of an essay should relate to the thesis statement.

The thesis statement should be a complete sentence. It should express an opinion, an idea, or a belief. It should be something that you can argue about. It should not be a plain fact.

Water consists of hydrogen and oxygen. (NOT A GOOD TS)

The water in our homes may contain harmful chemicals.
(GOOD TS)

The thesis statement should not be a detail or example.

In Hong Kong, the number eight is lucky. (NOT A GOOD TS)

There are many superstitions about even numbers around the world. (GOOD TS)

The thesis statement may state or list how it will support an opinion.

Television has a bad influence on children for three main reasons.

The choice of food we eat during our New Year's festival in India is influenced by tradition and religion.

Examples:

It is said that to knock over the salt on a table is to meet trouble. (DETAIL)

There is a superstition among sailors that says wearing earrings will save a sailor from drowning. (DETAIL)

It was thought that to cut your nails on Sunday would bring you bad luck. (DETAIL)

The Writing Process:

Very few people pick up a pen or sit down at a computer and produce a perfect piece of writing on the first try. Most writers spend a lot of time thinking before they write and then work through a series of steps while they are composing. The final product is often the result of several careful revisions. It takes patience as well as skill to write well. Writing is a process that involves the following steps:

Step 1: Prewriting (thinking about your topic)

Step 2: Planning (organizing your material)

Step 3: Drafting (using your ideas and plans to write a first draft)

Step 4: Revising (improving the focus, content and organization)

Step 5: Editing and proofreading (checking grammar, spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and word choices)

Step 1: Prewriting You will find it easier to write if you do some prewriting exercises to get started. For many people, the hardest part of writing is getting started. There are several prewriting techniques that can be used to *generate ideas* by *brainstorming*.

Method 1: Listing is a method used to generate a variety of ideas on a subject rapidly and spontaneously. It can be done alone or in a group. The purpose is to get down on paper as many ideas as possible without worrying about how you will use them. To brainstorm, you simply make a list of as many ideas as you can

about a topic. Your list can include words, phrases, sentences, or even questions.

To brainstorm, follow these steps:

- 1) Begin with a broad topic.
- 2) Write down as many associations as you can in 10 minutes.
- 3) Add more items to your list by answering the questions, what, how, when, where, why, and who.
- 4) Group the items on the list that go together.
- 5) Cross out the items that do not belong.

Method 2: Clustering

Clustering is a visual way of generating ideas. When using this technique, you show the connections among your ideas using circles and lines. These are the steps to follow:

1. Write your topic in the center of a blank page and draw a circle around it.
2. Think about your topic and write any ideas that come to mind in circles around the main circle.
3. Connect these ideas to the center word with a line.
4. Think about each of your new ideas and write more related ideas in circles around them.
5. Connect your new circles to their corresponding ideas.

6. When you are finished, your most promising topic will probably be the one with the most circles connected to it.

Method 3: Freewriting

Sometimes it is hard to find a focus for a broad subject. If this is your problem, freewriting can be very helpful. To freewrite, follow these steps.

1. Write your topic at the top of your page.
2. Start writing.
3. Write as much as you can and as fast as you can for 10 minutes.
4. Don't stop for any reason. Don't worry if your mind wanders away from your original idea; let your ideas flow.
5. If you can't think of anything, write "my mind is blank, my mind is blank," or something similar, over and over again until a new thought comes into your mind.
6. Don't worry about mistakes. Just keep writing. You can go back later and edit.
7. Read your freewriting and see if there are any ideas you can develop into a paragraph.

Step 2: Planning

The purpose of prewriting is to generate ideas for writing. The next step is to do some planning. At this stage of the writing process, your main goal is to organize your ideas. Preparing an informal outline of the ideas you generated from prewriting will help you organize your thoughts as you plan your paragraph. You can use your outline as a guide that you refer to while you are composing.

Topic : My superstitions

1. Superstitions about school
 - a. always wear pearl necklace for tests
 - b. sit in center of room for tests
 - c. switch watch to right wrist for tests

2. Superstitions about travel
 - a. sit on left side of plane
 - b. never start a trip on Friday
 - c. wear green when I fly

3. Superstitions about sports
 - a. wear lucky T-shirt for games
 - b. use lucky shoelaces in tennis shoes

c. eat scrambled eggs for breakfast on day of a game

Step 3: Drafting Paragraphs

As you write your **first draft**, use as a guide the ideas you generated from prewriting and the organizational plan you developed in your informal outline. In this step of the writing process, you should be concerned with two things: *stating your point* and *supporting your point*. Do not worry about producing a perfect paragraph on the first draft.

Step 4: Revising

Revising: Changing a piece of writing by adding new information, making improvements, or correcting mistakes.

Step 5 Editing & Proofreading:

Although many people use the terms interchangeably, editing and proofreading are two different stages of the revision process. Both demand close and careful reading, but they focus on different aspects of the writing and employ different techniques.

Editing: preparing a piece of writing for printing by removing mistakes or parts that are not acceptable, by deciding what to include and in what order.

Proofreading: Reading through a piece of writing in order to correct errors in terms of word choice as well as grammar, spelling, punctuation mistakes. It is the final stage of the editing process focusing on surface errors. Try to keep editing and proofreading processes separate. When you are editing an early draft, you don't want to be bothered with thinking about punctuation, grammar, and spelling. If your worrying about the spelling of a word or the placement of a comma, you're not focusing on the more important task of developing and connecting ideas.

ELEMENTS OF GOOD WRITING: SPA

SPA is an acronym that stands for subject, purpose, and audience –three of the most important elements of good writing.

You will find it easier to write if you have

- *a subject that you know well and understand.

- *a clear purpose for writing

- *an audience that you have identified

Keeping these three elements in mind will help your writing stay focused.

Subject: In order to write well, it is helpful to choose a topic that interests you and that you know and understand. If you are assigned a subject, try to find an angle of that subject that you find interesting and want to explore. You will usually have to go through a process of narrowing down the general subject until you find an appropriate topic.

Examples:

Entertainment

- Concerts
- Rock Concerts
- Rolling Stones
- 1993 World Tour

Entertainment

- The Movies
- Movie History
- Early History
- Silent Film Era

Television programs

.....

.....

.....
.....

Inner-city crime

.....
.....
.....
.....

Purpose: Whenever you write something it is important to think about your purpose. To determine your purpose, you should ask yourself the question “Why am I writing?”

Three common purposes of writing: - *to entertain*, - *to inform*, - *to persuade*

However, it is possible for a piece of writing to accomplish several purposes at the same time. An article, for example, may be both amusing and educational.

Audience: What you write about and your reason for writing are greatly affected by whom you expect will read the final product (audience). Because you will almost always be writing for an audience, you will communicate your ideas more effectively if

you keep that audience in mind. Remember that all audiences have expectations, but those expectations vary from one audience to another. In most cases, your audience will be your teacher and your classmates. However, you may sometimes be asked to write with another audience in mind. Depending on the nature of your audience, your writing style could be formal or informal.

THE STAGES OF WRITING AN ESSAY

- Think** carefully about the topic, subject or question.
- Understand** what is required in the essay.
- Make** a note of your ideas, perhaps from your knowledge or experience.
- Note** any books, journals etc. that have been recommended, perhaps from a reading list or a bibliography.
- Add** to your list any other books, articles etc. that you discover while finding the recommended books.
- Read** the books, chapters, articles etc. with a purpose, by asking yourself appropriate questions that are related to the essay topic or title.
- Write** clear notes from your reading.
- Keep** a record of your sources so that you can compile your own bibliography or list of references at the end of your essay.

- Acknowledge** accurately any quotations: author's surname and initials, year of publication, edition, publisher, place of publication, and page number of quotations.
- Look** through your notes when you have finished in order to obtain an overview of the subject.
- Decide** on the content of your essay and how you want to organize it, in other words, plan it.
- Select** your material carefully: you may have too much and some may not be very relevant to the question.
- Divide** your material, or ideas, into three main sections for the essay: the introduction, the main body, and the conclusion.
- Write** an outline of the essay, making use of headings or sub-headings if they are appropriate.
- Write** the first draft, in a suitably formal or academic style.
- Avoid** the use of colloquial expressions and personal references.
- Read** the draft critically, in particular checking the organization, cohesion and language.
- Ask** yourself several questions about it, for example: Is it clear? Is it concise? Is it comprehensive?
- Revise** the draft.
- Write** the final draft.
- Make** sure it is legible.
- Remember** first impressions are important.

- Compile** your bibliography, using the conventional format.
- Ensure** that your references are in strict alphabetical order.
- Add** the bibliography to the end of your essay.