# Paragraph Writing

#### What is a paragraph?

It is a group of sentences that introduces, presents and develops **one** main idea about the topic. And it can be divided into **three** major parts.

A. **The Topic Sentence**

* It is normally the first sentence of the paragraph.
* It conveys the overall point of the paragraph.
* It helps the writer focus on the idea written about.
* It helps the reader know about what the paragraph is all about.

B. **The Supporting Details**

* They are sentences used to support the main idea stated in the topic sentence.
* They give more information about the main idea through examples.
* They say in details what the topic sentence says in general.
* They should be clear evidence that what the topic sentence says is trustworthy.
* They should be strong convincing points on which the topic sentence can rely upon.

C. **The Concluding Sentence**

* It is a reflection of the main idea pronounced in the topic sentence.
* It sums up what the topic sentence and the supporting details talk about.
* It is the closing sentence that reminds the readers of what they have to value.
* It is compulsory for the completion of the paragraph unity.
* It eventually indicates the end of a paragraph.
* It prepares the reader for a smooth transition to the next paragraph if there is one.

#### How to write your paragraph

Paragraph writing consists of many necessary elements to be taken into consideration before, while and after writing.

I. **BEFORE WRITING**:

* In this stage it is important to specify the topic you are intending to tackle.
* Take a sheet of paper and just start jotting down notes that have tight connection with your topic.
* In this stage, mistakes and word-order are to be overlooked momentarily.
* After you gathered the data necessary for your topic the next step is to be taken.

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II. **WHILE WRITING**:

* + Topic Sentence

*Choose a topic sentence for your paragraph that states the main idea of your topic.*

The topic sentence is a statement that generally introduces the topic and thus it is often referred to as: the opening statement. Keep in mind that the readers will greatly rely on what it says so as they can decide if the paragraph is worth reading or not. It gives them a broad view of what you are writing about because the topic sentence is meant to state the main idea of the paragraph. It helps readers save time as it tells them what the reset of the paragraph is all about. If they are interested in the topic, they will continue reading; if not; the topic sentence has given them guiding clues that help them be selective in their reading. I mean that the topic sentence in each paragraph is the short cut that helps the readers economize the amount of time and effort when they are skimming for gist or scanning for specific information. That’s why your topic sentence should be a sort of clincher, that is - a tempting statement that catches the readers’ attentions and entice them to carry on with the reading of the paragraph. The students are the most meant by this because their corrector should intelligently be dragged into liking and enjoying reading the paragraph because this topic sentence controls the entire paragraph. It helps the student focus on the main idea and not drift away from it. If it is well put, it easily helps the students narrow their supporting details, which will follow, into more specific and subject related examples because the supporting details are there to reinforce the topic sentence and to do that effectively they should each include at least one example.

* + Supporting Details

These are sentences that support the topic sentence. They give information that reinforces the main idea stated in the topic sentence. So there should at least be three supporting details because one or two make the paragraph less convincing and not worth the effort done to build it. Thus the students are strongly advised to provide at least three strong details which can support the main idea. The students can use all the writing techniques necessary to make the paragraph sustainable and eligible: descriptions, definitions, examples, elaboration and exploration. If any of the supporting details doesn’t correlate with the main idea or does not support it, it will break the unity of the paragraph.

* + Concluding Sentence

This is the last sentence of your paragraph and it should reflect what you have talked about in your paragraph and it should echo the topic sentence in a way or another.

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III. **AFTER WRITING**:

##### Reviewing

This final step can be called the editing step. This is a very crucial stage of your work process as you should review what you have done and make sure the paragraph is eligible, technically speaking. Among the things that this stage is about are:

* Coherence and cohesion of the content
* The stability of the form
* The linking words
* Grammar, spelling and punctuation.
* Clear handwriting.

Apart from these essentials, other factors are to be mulled over:

1. Your main idea should be expressed in the topic sentence in a full, clear declarative sentence.
2. Your topic sentence should in no way be a purpose statement such as:
	* The purpose of this paragraph is …
	* I will prove in this paragraph …
	* In this paragraph, I will tell …
	* *Show but don’t tell.*
3. Don’t repeat yourself now then thinking that you are reinforcing your point.
4. Don’t use complex or far fetched terms that may puzzle the corrector.
5. Don’t use long winding sentences. Keep simple.
6. Instead of giving definitions, it’s better to explain and give examples.
7. Your supporting details shouldn’t be too excessive.
8. Try not to be redundant or out of point. Stick to your topic.
9. Never introduce or present new ideas.
10. Irrelevant supporting details should immediately be discarded.

Finally, you can transform your concluding sentence into a thought provoking statement that the reader may find appealing.

### *Practice*

Imagine you are asked to write a paragraph about ASPIRIN, which of the following topic sentences you would prefer to open your paragraph with:

1. Aspirin is a pain killer drug, but it has side-effects.

2. Aspirin can be a fatal poison.

3. Aspirin is used to calm down headaches but it attacks the stomach.

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* If you take the first one, you are not really successful in your choice because this one is not brainstorming enough for the readers. It doesn’t motivate them to continue reading your paragraph for there’s nothing inspiring about it.
* Now if you choose the second one, to my mind, the reader will want to discover in what way Aspirin is a killing poison. This topic sentence is more powerful, provoking, exciting, inviting and motivating one.
* Like the first, the third topic sentence doesn’t predict any significant information. All is said in it. It doesn’t trigger the readers’ curiosity to know more.

The style employed in initiating your topic is the most important of all. It bears the most important part of the work. If the topic sentence is a failure, the whole paragraph will collapse no matter what excellent supporting details you provided.

As you know there are many ways -or say styles- to say the same thing. However, authors are said to be writers because they can write it the right way. They make use of the most appropriate and the most suitable styles to write something the other people know about but they cannot express it the same way. Their styles make them different. Once the style is eloquent, attractive and full of adequate language tools, the readers look like reading the product with pleasure. The student is not expected to be a “writer” but should at least follow the same path to make his or her writing worth reading.

## SAMPLE PARAGRAPH:

Now I am inviting you to read what a student has written about ASPIRIN and see if she has respected the layout and the steps and finally if you like her paragraph:

|  |
| --- |
| Aspirin can be a fatal poison. People are used to taking aspirin whenever they feel pain. It is true that aspirin is an efficacious pain-killer for example in headache cases. However, aspirin is like any other medicine can be dangerously harmful. Any unregulated use of it may result into the damage to the lining of the stomach, prolonged bleeding time, nausea, vomiting, ulcers, liver damage, and hepatitis. It is scientifically proven that excessive use of aspirin turns it into a toxin. Its toxic effects are Kidney Damage, severe metabolic derangements, respiratory and central nervous system effects, strokes, fatal haemorrhages of the brain, intestines & lungs and eventually death. Thus, the careful and regulated use of aspirin is most advisable so as not to turn into a deadly poison. |

##### Recapitulation

Try, as hard as you can, to make your paragraph unusual, in the positive sense of the word. Never launch your paragraph with an idea people already know. They won't be willing to read along. However, if you throw at them a provoking Topic Sentence, the reader would accept the challenge and gets impatient to know what you want to say. If the reader is faced with a topic sentence such as,

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* Aspirin is a medicine.
* Aspirin has a lot of side effects.
* Aspirin can cure headaches.

The reader won't be enthusiastic as to go on reading your paragraph. If, on the contrary, your paragraph starts like this for instance,

* Aspirin can prevent heart attacks.

The reader, I guess, would be fervent to know in what way this is possible. What you have to do, then, is to prove your topic sentence valid and scientifically proven by giving sustainable and convincing supporting details. You may prefer to quote a Doctor so as to make your statement reliable and authentic.

Exercise

Read the following paragraph and identify its three main parts as indicated below

There are three reasons why I prefer jogging to other sports. One reason is that Jogging is a cheap sport. I can practise it anywhere at any time with no need for a ball or any other equipment. Another reason why I prefer jogging is that it is friendly to my heart. I don’t have to exhaust myself or do excessive efforts while jogging. Finally, I prefer this sport because it is safe. It isn’t as risky as other sports like gymnastics, racing or horseback riding. For all these reasons, I consider jogging the best sport of all.

#### I. TOPIC SENTENCE:

#### ...........................................................................................................................

#### II. SUPPORTING DETAILS

**\*/ First one:****..................................................................................................................**

*Example: .......................................................................................................................*

**\*/ Second one: .............................................................................................................**

*Example:**......................................................................................................................*

**\*/ Third one: ...............................................................................................................**

*Example:**......................................................................................................................*

#### III. CONCLUDING SENTENCE:

#### ........................................................................................................................

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#### Opinion Paragraph

#### Presentation

####  After you have read about the general pattern of a paragraph, let’s discuss in what way an opinion paragraph might respond to that pattern. This is what the following paper is trying to verify.

####  An opinion paragraph has nothing special that the other paragraphs don’t have; I mean the common Skelton should be patiently set up including all the basic components, notably the topic sentence, the supporting details and the concluding sentence. The specifications are as follows:

####  1. The Topic Sentence which states your opinion specified by the controlling ideas.

####  2. The Supporting arguments which have to be reasons, proofs or evidences sustained by examples enough to illustrate the idea clearly.

####  3. The Concluding sentence which is normally a reminder that reflects or somehow echoes the topic sentence so as to maintain the unity of the paragraph.

####  Apart from all these, Organization sounds worth thousands of shallow words. The unity of your paragraph should be maintained through some key measures. Coherence and cohesion have to be handled carefully as well as punctuation, spelling and tone. It is also convenient to vary the length of your sentences so that they should bring about neither boredom nor confusion. Review your grammar and the syntactic structure of your statements. Your vocabulary should be rich and diverse but not far fetched. Avoid optional statements; you have to be concise since the secret dwells in your own ability and competence to show not to tell. In a word, the quality not the quantity of your product is what counts the most.

####  Recapitulation

####  The opinion paragraph starts with a clear and original view point or attitude about a topic. Never use expressions such as “In my opinion” or “I think”. You should directly start on with your opinion as it is a truth. Instead of saying, “In my opinion life is worth living fully.” just write, “Life is worth living fully.” This stage should be heavily concentrated upon because you need to give lucid contentions that support and justify the authenticity and validity of the opinion.

#### Convincing as well as persuasive styles should be the most common throughout the whole paragraph. An opinion without clear and vigorous arguments that support and sustain it is not at all inspiring for the reader. You should also bear in mind that arguments are not new opinions, but only an attempt to support the opinion with the most appropriate evidence. Therefore you should be careful about the way the topic sentence is managed and reinforced through logical, resistant and easy to assimilate supporting details, here arguments. The arguments must be so comprehensible that in this stage you have to avoid using assumptions or theories but you must use only facts. Examples are the most helpful tools to clarify and

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#### back up your arguments; however they should neither be volatile nor vague ones. They should be positive statements aiming at bringing about the reader’s involvement and understanding.

####  The concluding sentence, on the other hand, should not raise a new opinion or present an open statement. It should be cautiously dealt with in order to echo the whole paragraph or at least to paraphrase the topic sentence. The concluding shift is crucial because it is the last thing the reader will keep in mind. The minimum deviation from the opinion stated above or the pace and logic of the paragraph will engender a deadly effect.

####  By these directions, instructions and reminders, we don’t intend to train future writers but there is -we couldn’t deny it- some of the intension within. Eminent writers knew these details first but they are not only these directives which made them famous professional authors, there is always gift and skill behind all this. We hope we are, with this humble attempt, participating in the making of a great writer who would be “YOU”. All in all, for the time being, try to regularly write and check over so as to learn and develop the power to be a good student-writer and good luck.