Basic Paragraph Writing

Content

A paragraph contains three main components:

1. A Topic Sentence
2. Supporting Information (examples and details)
3. A Concluding Sentence

The Topic Sentence is a sentence that identifies the main point or focus of the paragraph.
- It usually appears at the beginning of the paragraph
- It is usually a general statement that does not provide specific details about the main point

Supporting Information helps the reader understand the main point of the paragraph
- It includes additional points and/or examples that support the topic sentence, as well as details that explain or clarify the supporting points and examples

The Concluding Sentence closes the paragraph
- Concluding sentences sometimes summarize the main points of the paragraph
- Alternatively, the concluding sentence can provide an interesting final statement about the main point of the paragraph

Organization

Paragraphs are often organized according to the following pattern:

1. Topic Sentence/Main point
2. A Sentence giving a supporting example
3. One or two sentences giving details to explain or illustrate the example
4. Another supporting example
5. One or two sentences giving details to explain or illustrate the example
6. Another supporting example
7. One or two sentences giving details to explain or illustrate the example
8. Concluding Sentence

NOTE: The number of supporting examples will depend on how much information you want to give.

Constructing a Paragraph

Step 1: Choosing a Topic

If your instructor has given you a topic, or if you have already decided what you want to write about, go to Step 2
If you can choose your own topic:

- Choose a topic that you think is interesting
- Choose a topic that you know something about (so that you can actually write something)
- Try to choose a topic that would be interesting for other people

Step 2: Choose your Focus

Once you have selected your topic you need to decide your focus. Your focus is what you are going to say or write about the topic. It could be:

- an issue related to the topic,
- an interesting point of view on the topic,
- an explanation of the topic or a particular point related to it

Suggestion: If you can’t decide what to write, start by writing as many sentences as you can about your topic – basically write everything you can think of.

When you have finished, review your sentences and choose the one that you think is the most important or that you think is most interesting. This sentence can be used to form your topic sentence.

Step 3: Write your Topic Sentence

Your topic sentence will tell the audience (readers) what you are going to write about, but it should be written in a way that will make them want to read the rest of the paragraph – in other words it should be interesting.

Example: If you were asked to write a paragraph explaining your favorite season, you could just make a simple statement such as: *Summer is my favorite season.*

This is OK, but it could be a bit more interesting. For instance: *Although all seasons have their good points, there are several aspects of summer that make it my favorite.*

Now the audience knows the topic (your favorite season) as well as your focus (the qualities of summer that make it your favorite season). But you have also put a question in the mind of the reader: Why is summer your favorite season, or, in this case, what are the qualities that make summer your favorite time of year?

The examples and details you give in the paragraph will answer that question.

Step 4: Provide Supporting Information

The supporting information consists of additional points or examples that support and/or explain your topic sentence. The number of examples you give will determine the length of your paragraph, but it’s a good idea to try and list at least three supporting examples.

Example: In the paragraph explaining why *summer is your favorite season* you might provide the following points:

- *Summer allows for more outdoor activities*
- *More fun events are held during the summer*
3. **Summer provides more vacation options**

Along with these three main points, you should also give some **details** to explain each one. This makes the supporting information clearer and more interesting for the audience.

1. **Summer allows for more outdoor activities**
   a. The warm weather lets me spend more time outside
   b. I can enjoy outdoor sports, meeting with friends, or just walking around the city
2. **More fun events are held during the summer**
   a. There are many outdoor concerts and various festivals
   b. The atmosphere of these events is so much nicer when they are held outside
3. **Summer provides better vacation options**
   a. Skiing trips and travelling abroad are expensive, so I spend most of my time inside
   b. Summer gives me more freedom. I can go to the beach, for instance or explore different places closer to home for much less cost and without having to pack extra clothes

**Step 5: Conclude your Paragraph**

The paragraph should end with a concluding sentence that brings the paragraph to a close. The concluding sentence should provide an interesting statement that summarizes your main point or idea.

**Example:** The paragraph on **summer** could end like this: *For these reasons, summer is my favorite season by far.*

Or you could make it more interesting, for example: *Considering the coldness of winter; and despite the colors of autumn and the freshness of spring, for me, summer is the best time to get out and really enjoy the world we live in.*

**Format**

A paragraph is **not** a bullet-point list of separate sentences. In a paragraph the sentences follow each other in a logical order creating a “unit” of information. Often the first line is indented, so that the final paragraph looks like this:

Although all seasons have their good points, there are several aspects of summer that make it my favorite. First of all, summer allows for more outdoor activities. The warm weather lets me spend more time outside doing the things I love, such as playing my favorite outdoor sports, meeting with friends, or just walking around different parts of the city. Additionally, more fun events are held during the summer, such as outdoor concerts and various festivals. The atmosphere of these events is so much nicer when they are held in the open air or under the stars. Finally, summer provides better vacation options. Skiing trips and travelling abroad to warm countries are too expensive for me, so most of my winter breaks are spent sitting at home. Summer vacations give me much more freedom. I can go to the beach, for instance, or explore different places closer to home at much less cost and without having to pack a lot of warm clothes. Considering the coldness of winter; and despite the colors of autumn and the freshness of spring, for me, summer is the best time to get out and really enjoy the world we live in.
Practice

Follow these steps to write your own paragraph:

1. Choose a topic you are interested in (almost any topic is possible as long as you know enough to write something about it).
2. Write a sentence stating what you want to say about your topic (this is your topic sentence).
3. Write a sentence giving an example that will support what you wrote in your topic sentence (this is your first supporting point).
4. Write a sentence giving details for the supporting point.
5. Repeat steps 3 and 4 two more times.
6. Make a final statement about the main idea of your paragraph.
7. Check your format (make sure it looks like the example given).
8. Check your spelling.
9. Check your grammar.