

PARAGRAPH PLAN

A good paragraph is unified, coherent, and well developed. It is unified around a main point, and all sentences in the paragraph should clearly relate to that point in some way. The paragraph's main idea should be supported with specific information that develops or discusses the main idea in greater detail.

THE TOPIC SENTENCE

The topic sentence, usually found in the beginning of the paragraph, sums up the main point of the paragraph. Once you have written your topic sentence, use examples or supporting information to explain or back up the statement made in the topic sentence.

Purpose of the Topic Sentence

- To state the main point of the paragraph
- To give the reader a sense of direction
- To summarize the paragraph's main point

Placement of the Topic Sentence

- Often appears as the first or second sentence of the paragraph
- Rarely appears at the end of the paragraph

ADDING DETAILS

To support a topic sentence, consider some of the possible ways that provide details. To develop a paragraph:

- Add examples
- Tell a story that illustrates the point you're making
- Discuss a process
- Compare and contrast
- Use analogies (e.g., "X is similar to Y because...")
- Discuss cause and effect
- Define your terms

REASONS FOR BEGINNING A NEW PARAGRAPH

- To show you're switching to a new idea
- To highlight an important point
- To show a change in time or place
- To emphasize a contrast
- To indicate changing speakers in a dialogue
- To give readers an opportunity to pause
- To break up a dense text

WAYS OF ARRANGING INFORMATION WITHIN OR BETWEEN PARAGRAPHS

- Order of time (chronology)
- Order of space (descriptions of a location or scene)
- Order of climax (building toward a conclusion)
- Order of importance (from least to most important or vice versa)
- To give the reader a sense of direction
- To summarize the paragraph's main point

SOME CONSIDERATIONS

1. The topic sentence is an opinion, judgment, or conclusion that is supported by the remainder of the paragraph.
2. Points or statements may be an authority's opinion, a reference, dictionary or book quotation, a widely accepted belief, custom, practice, or something that can be proven by objective means.
3. The information should be presented in an orderly manner: general to specific information (or vice versa), past to present (chronological time order), cause to effect, special order (left to right or top to bottom in a description).
4. Transition words should be used between parts of the paragraph to signal movement from one idea to another. Use repetition of key words for effect.