

# PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE

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## Why are Paragraphs Important?

All academic essays require paragraphs. They are important because they fulfil the following functions:

- **Organisation:** Structure and outline your ideas.
- **Focus:** Keeps the writer on track and on topic.
- **Coherence:** Assists readers in following a piece of writing.

## What is a Paragraph?

A paragraph is **a collection of related sentences dealing with a single topic.**

### TOP TIP

It is important to remember that a paragraph in an academic essay is generally 5 - 10 sentences, but this can vary. These sentences need to build off one another to develop the main point or focus of the paragraph.

One way to help give your sentences a good flow is to **use logical bridges (connecting ideas) or verbal bridges (connecting words).**

## Paragraph Breakdown

Figuring out how to write a great paragraph can be difficult, but there are some simple steps to get you on the right track.

### Topic sentence

A topic sentence **presents the main idea of the paragraph.** It lets the reader know what you are discussing in the paragraph.

## Body sentences

These sentences **discuss the topic and support the topic sentence with evidence.**

## Concluding sentence

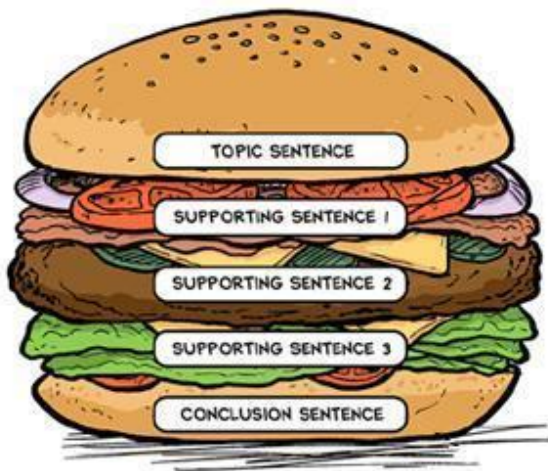
The concluding sentence **reiterates the topic and wraps up the paragraph.** Remember, that you do not restate content here because it will become repetitive. Rather, it is a summary of your point.

### TOP TIP

It is important to use signposts and transitions to guide the reader.

## The Hamburger Analogy

The bun holding everything together is the topic sentence and the concluding sentence, and everything in between is made up by the body sentences.



*To be a good paragraph, or burger, it needs to have enough filling in it, but not so much that you can't manage to eat it (or stay focused).*

*Writers should be wary of paragraphs that only have two or three sentences. The paragraph is not fully developed if it is too short.*

## Academic Paragraph Structure

### TOP TIP

An academic paragraph structure must contain the following elements:

- Claim
- Evidence
- Analysis

The **claim** will stem from the overall **thesis/argument** of your essay, developing one point that you will be making in the paragraph.

**Evidence** will be made up of your research, including academic sources and direct examples from **primary texts or studies** that will support your claim.

**Analysis: Your interpretation** of the evidence and will segue into wrapping up the paragraph.

**If you follow these simple steps you can create a coherent and fluid paragraph:**

Adhering to this structure ensures that the sentences build off of one another and connect to each other with a clear flow that effectively gets your points across.

## P. Q. E.

When writing academic essays, paragraph structure can also be considered in terms of claims, evidence and analysis or

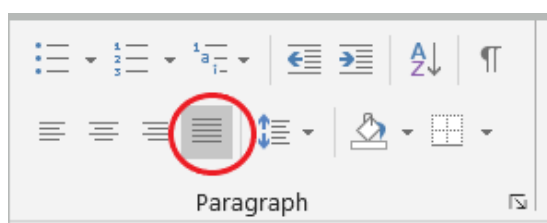
- **Point**
- **Quotation**
- **Explanation**

This is another way of achieving a fluid and coherent paragraph structure.

### Q TOP TIP

Explain the relevance of the quoted evidence to your point and how it proves your thesis or argument.

## Paragraph Tips



Academic essays should be **justified** by selecting the option in the Home Tab.



**Indent** the start of the paragraph (topic sentence) by hitting the "tab" key on your keyboard.

Alternatively, you can leave a blank space between paragraphs.

- **One paragraph should contain only one idea.** Too many points all at once that are not fully developed will confuse the reader.
- **Logical bridges** carry the same idea over from sentence to sentence whereas, **verbal bridges** use words to link sentences. *For example, transitional words like "therefore", which is a pronoun that refer to nouns in previous sentences or repeated keywords or synonymous words across sentences.*
- **Transitions** generally appear at the end of a paragraph and are used to **segue/link** from one idea to another.
- **Signposts** are used to outline what has been or will be covered, or what **direction** the paragraph or essay is headed.

## When to start a new paragraph?

**New ideas should always start in new paragraphs.** If you have an extended idea that spans multiple paragraphs, each new point within that idea should have its own paragraph. Separate paragraphs can serve to contrast sides in a debate, different points in an argument, or any other difference.

**Breaks between paragraphs function as a short "break" for your readers – adding these in will help your writing be more readable.** You would create a break if the paragraph becomes too long or the material is complex.

**Your introductory and concluding material should always be in a new paragraph.**

## Useful links

- Purdue University, Online Writing Lab, Available at: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/606/01/>
- Time4Writing, 'The Secrets to Good Paragraph Writing', Available at: <https://www.time4writing.com/writing-resources/paragraph-writing-secrets/>
- Waylink English, 'Making links between paragraphs', Available at: <http://www.waylink-english.co.uk/?page=61180>
- Smrt English, 'Paragraph Structure', Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NLzKqujmdGk>
- Smrt English, 'Paragraph Structure (Part 1)', Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zoBuQgefNZg>
- Smrt English, 'Paragraph Structure (Part 2)', Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8yoF-MnJYTo>
- Smrt English, 'Paragraph Structure (Part 3)', Available at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cfV\\_yM7A1SY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cfV_yM7A1SY)