

Paragraphs

If each sentence represents a single idea, then paragraphs are best defined as groups of similar ideas placed into a coherent structure. A complete paragraph should include the following elements:

1) Topic Sentence:

The first sentence of each paragraph should be the topic sentence. The topic sentence, which can be considered the ‘thesis statement’ of the paragraph, outlines what ideas will be found in the rest of the paragraph. If you are writing a persuasive essay, the topic sentence outlines the argument you’ll be making in that paragraph. Your topic sentence should directly relate to the thesis statement of your paper, and be specific, concise, and accurate.

2) Evidence:

Each paragraph should contain evidence or supporting sentences. The supporting sentences of the paragraph are the “meat and potatoes” of the paragraph in that they contain all of the substance that was introduced in the topic sentence.

3) Conclusion or Analysis:

After evidence is provided for your topic sentence, be sure to provide a brief conclusion sentence that summarizes your paragraph and connects it to the main argument of your paper (the thesis statement). The analysis should provide context for the reader and convince the reader that your conclusion is the appropriate one.

4) Link:

The last sentence of each paragraph should contain a link that transitions the reader from the current topic to the next. Including transitional sentences is important because it shows your readers the logical thought processes that went into your essay and how each paragraph “flows” into the next paragraph. Links or transitions can be standalone, be included at the end of the analysis, or be included at the beginning of the next paragraph.

Examples of transition words and phrases:

therefore, however, next, also, furthermore, in addition to, similarly, likewise, accordingly, hence, consequently, as a result, otherwise, subsequently, thus, so then, generally, usually, for the most part, as a rule, ordinarily, regularly, in particular, for instance, particularly, such as, including, namely, for example, as an example, in this case, coupled with, compared to, in comparison to, together with, besides, in brief, in short, in conclusion.

After writing your paragraph, ensure it has the following four qualities:

- **Unified:** Is each sentence in the paragraph unified around the topic sentence?
- **Coherent:** Does each sentence in the paragraph make sense in the context of every other sentence?
- **Complete:** Does it have a topic sentence, evidence, a conclusion, and a link to the next paragraph?
- **Ordered:** Are your paragraph components presented in logical order? Are your paragraphs presented in logical order?

Some examples of the order paragraphs can take in your essay:

Climactic order is when paragraphs are arranged by least important to most important. It is up to you to determine what's important, but one suggestion is for earlier paragraphs to contain your weakest points and the later paragraphs to contain your strongest points.

Reverse climactic order is where the most important information is presented first and the least important is presented last. Be careful when choosing this order since having your least important or less dynamic points at the end may make it more difficult to keep your readers' attention.

Chronological order is from earliest date/time to latest date/time.

Reverse chronological order is the same as chronological order, but instead of moving forward in time, your paragraphs are arranged backwards.

Spatial order is when paragraphs are arranged by how they appear, or what order they appear in a physical space. With spatial order, you can guide your reader from one point of interest to the next.

Topical order is simply when you divide your paragraphs into specific topics, then choose to arrange them based on those topics. When using topical order, it is important to make sure that topics go naturally together and that one topic leads easily to the next.

Transitions for climactic/
reverse climactic order: *more importantly, best of all, still worse, above all.*

Transitions for chronological/
reverse chronological order:
lastly, next, hence, consequently, as a result, in conclusion.

Transitions for spatial order:
to the left, north, a few feet behind, above.

Which paragraph order should you choose?

- Use **climactic order** if you are writing an essay that leads up to a finishing point.
- Use **chronological order** if you are writing an essay on historical events or the progression of time.
- Use **reverse chronological order** if you are writing an essay that traces a series of events to their origin.
- Use **spatial order** if you are writing an essay about geography or multiple objects in different locations.

When paragraphs go wrong...

The 'monster' paragraph	If your paragraph is taking over your entire page, you may have a 'monster' paragraph on your hands! In these situations, check whether your topic sentence is too broad. Most often the problem stems from trying to cover too much information in a single paragraph.
The unresponsive paragraph	An unresponsive paragraph contains information that is not related to your thesis statement. Each topic sentence in your paper should support your thesis statement. If your topic sentence is not related to your thesis, you might be providing unnecessary or extraneous information in that paragraph.
The undeveloped paragraph	The undeveloped paragraph lacks some or all of the required paragraph components. If your paragraph is missing a topic sentence, evidence, a conclusion, or a link, the reader may feel as if they have only been told part of the story.

Paragraph Components: Example

This example highlights the different components of the paragraph in action:

Topic Sentence	The immersion factor of the persistent world was suggested to be one of the major factors that entice people to keep logging back into a Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Game (Young, 2009; Wu, Wang & Tsai, 2010).
Evidence	Unlike the average single player game, the world does not pause when the player logs out. The player has a sense that they belong to this world, and each action they take within the world has some sort of impact that may be noticed by other players in the future. The desire to log in and see what events have unfolded could be one hook that keeps the player returning continuously (Young, 2009).
Analysis	<i>This immersive persistent world plays a role in each of the investigated factors, making it one of the most important pieces of the appeal of online gaming.</i>
<u>Link</u>	<u>The persistent world offers additional social incentives because it is a shared world.</u> At some point, the player will encounter content where it is expected that they will team up with others to accomplish a goal. ...