Essays - Writing Paragraphs

A paragraph is a collection of related sentences dealing with one single topic. Writing effective paragraphs is essential when doing academic papers and writing assignments. Below are the components of well-developed paragraphs and suggestions for writing them.

Elements of a Paragraph

1. A topic sentence—a sentence, usually at the beginning of the paragraph, that tells what the paragraph will be about.

2. Adequate supports—All sentences in the paragraph should provide information about the topic sentence. To provide good supports you can
   - Use examples and illustrations.
   - Cite facts, statistics, evidence, and details from research sources.
   - Define terms and/or give a description.
   - Compare/contrast, evaluate cause and effect, or analyze the parts that make up the whole.

3. Unity—all sentences should be about the topic sentence and not wander off into different areas. Each paragraph focuses on a single subject and develops it.

4. Coherence—sentences should be written in logical order to make the ideas clear to the reader. To help create coherence, present ideas in terms of their relationship to each other by
   - using transitional words and phrases, such as first, next, for example, on the other hand, also, and finally, to create a flow that takes the reader from beginning to end easily.
   - repeating key words essential to the meaning, which reminds the reader of the main topic.
   - arranging the details in a logical sequence, which can be sequential/chronological or emphatic (in order of importance to build to a climax), depending on the topic.

Three Part Structure of a Paragraph

Beginning—the topic sentence to give the main idea
Middle—the explanations, evidence, and examples to expand the topic
Ending—a conclusion drawn, a summary, a final thought, or a transition sentence leading to the next paragraph.
Types of Paragraphs in an Essay
An essay can have many paragraphs, all of which serve a specific function. Strong well-developed paragraphs create a well-written paper. Most basic academic essays have three sections, the introduction, the body, and the conclusion. Each has a purpose in an essay.

The introduction is designed to get readers interested in the topic and the point to be made about it. The intro should make a positive impression on readers, encourage them to read further, and prepare them for what is to come. The introduction should

- provide any background information necessary to help readers understand the issue, but not include any irrelevant details. Always consider what readers already know.
- define any key terms as they are intended to be used in the essay. The context of terminology is important for clear understanding.
- announce the topic and the position being taken on it - the thesis of the essay.
- preview the main points in the order in which they will be discussed.

The body paragraphs will take up most of the essay. They reveal the information that explains and justifies the thesis as here is where the arguments are presented clearly and proven with evidence. Each paragraph discusses one main idea only and has the following structure.

1. Start with a topic sentence that summarizes the main or controlling idea of the whole paragraph.
2. Give detailed, established facts or points to support the topic sentence; include transitions between sentences to aid the flow.
3. Write a concluding sentence to connect it with the next body paragraph. This link between paragraphs is an element that makes the essay structure coherent.

The conclusion is the final analysis of the essay. What was written in the introduction can be matched in the concluding paragraph but in reverse order.

- Restate (not repeat) the thesis using a persuasive thrust to emphasize its importance.
- Review the main points covered in the body to remind the reader of the essay’s components.
- Write a final perspective to suggest how the information applies to a larger concern to end convincingly and leave a favourable impression.