

Effective Paragraphs: Components and Development

- **What is a paragraph?**

A paragraph is a collection of sentences dealing with a single topic. It should be unified, coherent, and well-developed. Typically, you want to keep one idea to one paragraph.

- **Elements of a Paragraph**

A paragraph is made up of a topic sentence, the developing details, and a concluding sentence.

- Topic Sentence:

- The topic sentence expresses the main point of the paragraph. The topic sentence is typically the first sentence of the paragraph. It helps your reader to understand what the topic of your paragraph is going to be. The purpose of the topic sentence is to state the main point of the paragraph and to give the paragraph a sense of direction.

- Concluding Sentence:

- The concluding sentence is the ending line of the paragraph. It should restate the main idea of the paragraph.

- Adequate Development

- It is important to fully develop and discuss the topic of your paragraph. If your paragraph is only 2-3 sentences, there is a good chance that you have not developed it enough.
- Here are some ways you can develop and support your topic:
 1. Use examples
 2. Tell a story illustrating the idea
 3. Compare and Contrast
 4. Give data (such as facts, statistics, etc)

A good way to think of a paragraph and how it is structured is like a sandwich. The topic sentence is the top layer of bread, the concluding sentence is the bottom layer, and all of the developing details in-between are the meat and other goods of the sandwich.

- **When to Start a New Paragraph**

It can be difficult to know when to start a new paragraph sometimes. Typically, if you find yourself beginning to transition to a new idea, it is best to start a new paragraph. Here are some other times when you may want to start a new paragraph:

- To contrast information
- To break up dense text—long paragraphs can be taxing to the reader. When you find that your paragraph is exceeding a page, you may wish to start thinking of ways to separate that paragraph into smaller paragraphs. First, look for areas that start new ideas and split the paragraph there.