

PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE

SMART SHOP



UNDERSTANDING BODY PARAGRAPHS

Body paragraphs are the paragraphs between your introduction and conclusion. Strong body paragraphs do the following things:

- **STAY** on a single topic
- **Open** with a topic sentence, a sentence that states the main point of your paragraph
- **Give concrete examples** with descriptive detail to demonstrate your main idea in the paragraph
- **Explain** how the examples relate to your main point
- **End** with a statement about the main point, **NOT** on some detail from the example

Topic Sentences:

1. **Tell your reader** what the paragraphs will be about
2. **Make a new points or arguments** that support your thesis
3. **Sound like topic sentences** Use clear, precise diction that is not vague or confusing
4. **Not make points** that are different from the points actually discussed in the paragraph

PARAGRAPHING PROTIPS

Good paragraph structure takes practice

Writing as little as possible because you don't like to write, is not practice

When you're not sure if your paragraph has a topic sentence, look near the bottom of the paragraph. You may find it there.

Think like a lawyer. You will always need more than one or two pieces of evidence/paragraph supporting details.

One long and detailed narrative example might be enough

Paragraph structure and supporting details get better in the revision phase

Paragraph concluding sentences are where you sum up everything -- it feels a little like you're repeating yourself, but it keeps the reader on track.



STAY ON TOPIC

When drafting your essay, some of your paragraphs will go off topic

Get paragraphs on track during the revision phase

Having a clear topic sentence that tells your reader what your paragraph will be about will help you stay on topic

While revising, use cut and paste to cut out or move points not on the topic of your topic sentence

Supporting Details:

1. Every paragraph should give concrete examples with descriptive detail to demonstrate your main idea in the paragraph
2. Concrete details come in the form of facts, statistics, logical reasoning, or other compelling information
3. Or a longer detailed narrative, a story that makes your point
4. The details convince your readers or make your writing interesting and believable
5. One, or even two, brief examples will usually not be enough

Paragraph Concluding Sentences:

All paragraph should end with a statement about the main point, your topic sentence, not on some detail from the example.

A Word on Paragraph Length

- For complex topics, your paragraphs will be much longer than four or five sentences
- Paragraphs can, within reason, be as long as they need to be
- Paragraphs should be as long as they need to be to cover all you promised to cover in your topic sentence.