

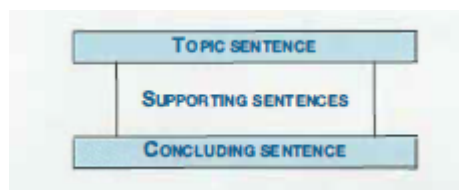
Lesson 02 : Paragraph Organization

Paragraph Structure

A paragraph has three parts: a topic sentence, several supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence.

1. The topic sentence tells what topic the paragraph is going to discuss.
2. The supporting sentences give details about the topic.
3. The concluding sentence summarizes the main points or restates the topic sentence in different words.

A paragraph is like a sandwich. The topic sentence and concluding sentences are the two pieces of "bread" enclosing the "meat" -the supporting sentences. A diagram of a paragraph looks like this:



Consider the following paragraph :

Barefoot Boy

I had a scary experience when I was a young boy. One evening while my parents were eating dinner, I was playing barefoot in the yard with my toys. Even now I still remember the perfume of the flowers and the moisture of the grass. While I was sitting on the grass and playing with a truck, I looked up at the sky, and my attention was distracted by the beauty of the stars. Then I felt something cold and smooth slide over my feet. I stayed perfectly still, but I looked down at my feet. Then I saw a snake slowly slithering over my toes. I felt terrible and afraid, so my heart beat very fast. After the snake moved away, I screamed to my parents for help, and they captured the snake and took it away. The experience frightened me, and I never went outside barefoot again.

topic sentence

supporting sentences

concluding sentence

In addition to the three structural parts of a paragraph mentioned above, a good paragraph also has the elements of unity and coherence. Unity means what you discuss only one main idea in a paragraph. The main idea is stated in the topic sentence, and then every supporting sentence develops that idea. Coherence means that your paragraph is easy to read and understand because (1) your supporting sentences are in some kind of logical order, and (2) your ideas are connected by the use of appropriate transition signals.

In the following paragraph is structured as follows :

The model paragraph below, on gold, serves as a good illustration for the main parts of a good English paragraph. It is structured as follows :

Topic sentence :

Gold, a precious metal, is prized for two important characteristics.

Supporting sentences :

Gold has a lustrous beauty that is resistant to corrosion.

It is suitable for jewelry, coins, and ornamental purposes.

Example : a Macedonian coin remains as untarnished today as the day it was minted twenty-three centuries.

usefulness to industry and science

It has been used in hundreds of industrial applications.

The most recent use of gold is in astronauts' suits.

Astronauts wear gold-plated heat shields for protection outside the spaceship

Concluding sentences :

Gold is treasured not only for its beauty, but also for its utility.

Unity :

In this paragraph, the writer introduces two important characteristics of gold as it is stated in the topic sentence. He did not discuss anything else such as the price of gold, the history of gold, or gold mining.

Important characteristic 1 : Gold has a lustrous beauty that is resistant to corrosion.

Important characteristic 2 : usefulness to industry and science

Coherence :

In the model of paragraph about gold, there are two main supporting ideas, those are, gold is beautiful and gold is useful. Each of these supporting ideas is discussed, one after the other, and an example is given for each one. This is one kind of logical order. Furthermore, the relationship between the ideas is clearly shown by using appropriate transition signals (words and phrases) such as "first of all," "another important characteristics," "for example," and "in conclusion."