



Lecture 3

English for Financial Sector

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This lecture is made through the use of Professor GIBBS Nick's course materials for the Academic and Professional Writing Workshop at
CoE

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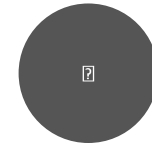
Academic Writing



What is a paragraph?



What is the maximum and minimum length of a paragraph?



Is there a standard structure for a paragraph?



How is a paragraph linked together?

paragraph



A paragraph is a unit of thought. It introduces and develops an idea, presents supporting points, elaborates, gives definitions, etc., and uses examples to support the main points. The length can vary but tends to be between 100-200 words, with an absolute maximum of 250 words (think of a full block of text of size 12 on your computer screen as the limit), and no less than 4-5 sentences for academic texts. Any less than that looks insubstantial. This paragraph, for example, is only 104 words so this would realistically be the minimum if you were formulating a credible argument in an academic essay.

The standard structure for a paragraph

A paragraph often starts with a topic sentence. A topic sentence introduces the subject of the paragraph and is often, though not always, quite short. The sentence that started this paragraph is an example of a topic sentence. The reader then expects you to expand on and elaborate this point in the following sentences, for example as in this and the previous two sentences. This structure of going from General to Specific is very common in English: to start with a general point in the first sentence and then get more specific and detailed in the following sentences. It is also very common to do what I did in the previous sentence and in this sentence as well: to introduce a point (topic sentence) and then give a definition of what I mean (after a colon - :). Examples are then given to illustrate your argument in concrete terms and to build credibility.



How is a paragraph linked together?

Paragraphs are 'linked' together using connecting phrases (also, for example, therefore) or pronouns (this, that) and synonym phrases. These phrases refer back to what was said before using different words. In this way one sentence builds on another, developing the topic further. In this and the previous paragraph there are examples of 'linking', so the reader can clearly follow the point I am trying to make. The final sentence of a paragraph is often a summary or comment on the topic introduced in the first sentence and then developed in the subsequent sentences. Like the topic sentence, this 'wrap' sentence, which 'wraps up' the paragraph, is often short, and it gives the impression that an idea has been discussed in the paragraph and a 'conclusion' has been reached. This gives the paragraph a sense of completeness. Notice that in English we always leave a white space between paragraphs.



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