



Writing Effective Paragraphs

Effective paragraphs consist of a *topic sentence*, which may contain a transition connecting it to the previous paragraph, a combination of *evidence* and *analysis* that substantiates the claim made in the topic sentence, and a *concluding sentence* that restates the topic sentence and perhaps transitions into the following paragraph.

- **Topic sentence**

The paragraph's first sentence should be a **topic sentence** that introduces the central idea—the claim—to be developed in the rest of the paragraph. The rest of the sentences in this paragraph all relate to the claim made in the topic sentence. Writers can also include a **transition** in your topic sentence connecting the paragraph to the one that came before it. Connecting your paragraphs with transitions is a good way to give your paper a sense of cohesion.

- **Using evidence and analysis to develop paragraphs**

Most sentences in a paragraph support the claim made in the topic sentence. They may introduce **evidence**, or they may feature the writer's own **analysis** of that evidence.

- **Evidence** includes any data, facts, statistics, quotations, paraphrase or other information that supports your claim. Evidence often comes in the form of a direct quotation, summary, statistics, or paraphrase
- **Analysis** is the writer's original interpretation or explanation of the evidence. Writers should use their own words to elaborate or explain what the evidence reveals and how it supports the claim(s) made in the topic sentence.

Continue to present evidence and analysis until the paragraph's claim is adequately supported. If, at the paragraph's end, the claim has not been proven, seek additional sources.

- **Concluding sentence**

The end of a paragraph should *remind* the reader of the initial claim and perhaps offer a transition into the next paragraph. At no point should a writer simply *repeat* the topic sentence. Consider restating the claim and transitioning into the next paragraph, as these transitions help make a document more cohesion.

Note: remember that “paragraph” does not necessarily mean “section.” A section of a paper may encompass several paragraphs. Many writers falsely assume that each section of the paper must be covered in one and only one paragraph. Do not make this mistake! While there are no length requirements for paragraphs, exceedingly long paragraphs will annoy readers and make them lose focus.