

Paragraph Structure

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Module Overview:

1. Writing the Paragraph
 - *The Topic Sentence: Topic and Controlling Idea*
 - *Position of the Topic Sentence*
2. Supporting Sentences
 - *Supporting Sentences (Graphic Organizer)*
 - *Developing a Paragraph: Unity*
3. Writing the Conclusion of the Paragraph
 - *Strategies to Approach the Conclusion*

Video 1: Writing the Paragraph

Greetings and welcome to how to write a paragraph in an academic paper. Today we will look at the elements that make up the organization of a good paragraph.

The Topic Sentence: Topic and Controlling Idea

The topic sentence is the most important sentence in a paragraph. It has two parts, a topic and a controlling idea, also known as the main idea. The topic names the subject of the paragraph. The controlling idea presents the main idea about the topic: It is called the controlling idea because it controls or limits the topic to a very specific idea.

Position of the Topic Sentence

The topic sentence is usually the first or second sentence in a paragraph. The usual place to put the topic sentence is at the beginning of the paragraph, as it gives the reader an idea of the content. More experienced writers sometimes put their topic sentence at the end or even in the middle. Here, you see that the topic sentence is at the beginning of the paragraph, providing a clear idea of both the topic and the controlling idea from the very beginning.

Not Too General, Not Too Specific

It is important to note that the topic sentence needs to introduce the paragraph, but it does not give the details. Be prepared to edit your topic sentence, so that it's not too general and or too specific and gives the reader good, clear information.

Video 2: Supporting Sentences

Supporting Sentences (Graphic Organizer)

After you write a topic sentence, you must provide information to support your point. Supporting details aim to convince the readers of your point. There are many ways in which this can be done.

Examples of Supporting Sentences

You may provide categories, facts, examples, descriptions, explanations, and definitions to help you support your ideas within the topic sentence. Here, in this example, you see how these types of sentences provide support. For example, this second sentence is showing categories, and here, in this example, we have facts and descriptions.

Developing a Paragraph: Unity

Each idea within the paragraph should relate to the topic sentence. This principle of focusing on one idea only within the paragraph is called unity. If any of your sentences do not relate to or develop the controlling idea of the topic sentence, you should rewrite or remove them, as they interrupt the flow of good writing. Maintaining unity helps you develop your ideas and move toward a clear, concise paragraph.

A coherent paragraph contains sentences that are logically arranged and flow smoothly. One way of achieving coherence in writing a paragraph is to use transition words (such as, in addition, another, finally). Using transitions will assist in logically connecting your sentences, so that your ideas flow from one sentence to another, creating a clear paragraph that develops logically.

Video 3: Writing the Conclusion of the Paragraph

The conclusion is crucial for any paragraph in academic English. It signals the end of the paragraph and reminds the reader of the controlling idea of the topic sentence. There are several strategies for writing a good conclusion. Let's take a look at a few.

Strategies to Approach the Conclusion

One way to remind your readers of the main idea of the paragraph is to revisit the topic sentence. Do not copy it; in fact, it is much better to restate it. Another way of ending a paragraph is to summarize the main points (of the paragraph). Using a signal phrase is always a good idea (as seen in the example).

You may give your final thoughts, a suggestion, or a prediction in your conclusion. In this first example, the writer is providing a suggestion, and in the second one a prediction.

Finally, a well-crafted paragraph that has a clear topic sentence, strong supporting sentences, and an effective conclusion will enhance your paper and satisfy your academic readers.

List of References:

Reid, Joy. *The Process of Paragraph Writing*, Second Edition. Prentice Hall, 1994.

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