

The Traditional Single Paragraph

A paragraph is a group of sentences which are all giving information about the same topic. An essay is made up of several paragraphs, but this tutorial will be discussing how one single paragraph is traditionally written and what goes into it.

A paragraph is usually made up of three parts:

1. one topic sentence at the beginning
2. several sentences in the middle giving supporting details and other specific information about the topic
3. then one concluding sentence at the end.

A paragraph can be any length, long or short, but the average length is usually about four or five sentences. All paragraphs should begin with an indentation the size of about one tab space in order to let the reader know that a new paragraph (and therefore a new topic) has begun. Let's take a closer look at each of these parts.

The Topic Sentence

The topic sentence is usually the very first sentence in a paragraph. The purpose of the topic sentence is to tell the reader the one, main point that the entire paragraph will be making about the topic. This special sentence should make a specific point about something.

Here are some examples of typical topic sentences:

- When I began my college education, I had no idea how difficult it would be.
- My favorite place to visit when I was a small child was the local zoo.
- Although computers can be very helpful, they will never replace the need for humans to think and to reason intelligently.

A good topic sentence will say to the reader of your paragraph, "Here's what this paragraph is going to be discussing." That's why it is called the "topic" sentence, because it tells the reader immediately what the exact topic of the paragraph is.

The Supporting Material

After the topic sentence, you should write several sentences which give detailed supporting evidence for your topic sentence. In other words, explain to your reader why your college years were difficult. What were your reasons for liking the local zoo so much? What are some examples of how, when, and why humans should not allow computers to think for them? These supporting sentences are very important to the paragraph because they give strength and power to your topic sentence. Traditionally, three reasons or three details are usually offered to support your topic sentence. You should have as many supporting sentences as it takes to give convincing details about the truth of your topic sentence. You can give examples, provide more

details, tell a little story – anything that will show your reader why you said what you did in your topic sentence.

Also, try to arrange your supporting reasons in increasing order of importance. That means to begin with a reason or a detail that is just “so-so,” then go on to one that is much better or stronger, and then finish with the one that is the best or most convincing reason of all. Arranging your reasons like this will add interest, suspense, and power to your paragraph.

The Concluding Sentence

The very last sentence of a single paragraph should be the concluding sentence. In it, you should remind the reader what your original topic sentence was by repeating some of the main ideas and words. However, do not repeat the topic sentence exactly word-for-word. Change a few of the words in the concluding sentence so that it is not an exact repeat of the topic sentence, but be sure that the main idea is still the same.

Here is a sample single paragraph which demonstrates the three parts of a traditional single paragraph:

My Fun-Filled Visits to the Zoo

Topic Sentence { My favorite place to visit when I was a small child was the local zoo. I always looked forward to going for weeks ahead of time, and I always remembered each visit for days after it was over. One reason I liked to go to the zoo so much was that my whole family went there together. My father, my mother, and my older brother and sister were all with me, and we all seemed to enjoy not only the zoo but also being together as a family. This act of going to the zoo together helped us to bond as a family and to become closer to each other. Another reason that going to the zoo was my favorite activity was the food that I ate there. It was great! My dad bought us cotton candy and lots of popcorn. When we were thirsty, my mom let us drink sweet soda pop from huge cups. When dinner time came, we'd fill up on juicy hot dogs with lots of mustard and ketchup. The food was yummy, but of course the main reason I loved going to the zoo was the animals! There were so many of them, and they were all so different and so very interesting. I remember wondering how the giraffe could balance itself with that huge, long neck. I also loved to see the elephants flopping their big, wide ears. My absolute favorite animals to watch were the monkeys. I always laughed when they jumped happily from branch to branch in the trees. Now that I am an adult, whenever I look back on those fun-filled visits to the zoo, I recall the family fun we had, all the tasty food we ate, and all the fascinating animals that we saw, and I can easily understand why the zoo was my favorite place to visit. }

Supporting Evidence {

Concluding Sentence }