

Unit 15

Paragraph

Objectives

After the completion of this unit, you would be able to–

- define a paragraph.
- read the elements of a paragraph.
- identify the types of paragraph.
- write paragraphs.

Overview:

Lesson 1: *Paragraph Writing*

Lesson 2: *How to write a good paragraph.*

Answer Key

Lesson-1 : Paragraph Writing.

What is a Paragraph?



A paragraph consists of some sentences, but not random sentences. A paragraph is a group of sentences organized around a central topic. In fact, the basic rule of paragraph writing is to focus on one idea. A good paragraph takes its readers on a clear path, without detours. Master the paragraph, and you'll be on your way to writing essays, compositions and stories.

Four Essential Elements

Paragraph writing is the foundation of all essay writing, whether the form is expository, persuasive, narrative, or creative. In order to write a good paragraph, learners need to understand the four essential elements of paragraph writing and how each element contributes to the whole.

The four elements are: **unity**, **order**, **coherence**, and **completeness**. The following example illustrates the importance of these elements in paragraph writing.

A basic paragraph structure usually consists of five sentences: the topic sentence, three supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence. But the secrets to paragraph writing lay in four essential elements, which can make a good paragraph.

Element #1: Unity. Unity in a paragraph begins with the topic sentence. Every paragraph has one single, controlling idea that is expressed in its topic sentence, which is typically the first sentence of the paragraph. A paragraph is unified around this main idea, with the supporting sentences providing detail and discussion. In order to write a good topic sentence, think about your theme and all the points you want to make. Decide which point drives the rest, and then write it as your topic sentence.

Element #2: Order. Order refers to the way you organize your supporting sentences. Whether you choose chronological order, order of importance, or another logical presentation of detail, a solid paragraph always has a definite organization. In a well-ordered paragraph, the reader follows along easily, aided by the pattern you've established. Order helps the reader grasp your meaning and avoid confusion.

Element #3: Coherence. Coherence is the quality that makes your writing understandable. Sentences within a paragraph need to connect to each other and work together as a whole. One of the best ways to achieve coherency is to use transition words. These words create bridges from one sentence to the next. You can use transition words that show order (first, second, third); spatial relationships (above, below) or logic (furthermore, in addition, in fact). Also, in writing a paragraph, using a consistent verb tense and point of view are important ingredients for coherency.

Element #4: Completeness. Completeness means a paragraph is well-developed. If all sentences clearly and sufficiently support the main idea, then your paragraph is complete. If there are not enough sentences or enough information to prove your thesis, then the paragraph is incomplete. Usually three supporting sentences, in addition to a topic sentence and concluding sentence, are needed for a paragraph to be complete. The concluding

sentence or last sentence of the paragraph should summarize your main idea by reinforcing your topic sentence.

Types of paragraphs

There are different types of paragraphs. Here is an overview.

Descriptive : In a descriptive paragraph you describe a scene or a thing or a person. The aim is to give a vivid picture of the object. Only the significant details should be given in a descriptive paragraph.

Narrative : In a narrative paragraph you narrate an incident. The ideas are presented in a coherent manner. Your account must be clear and cogent.

A paragraph of definition : In a paragraph of definition you define a person or an object. When you define things use precise words and expressions. Be objective, scientific and dispassionate in defining things.

A paragraph of similarities : When you compare two things you have to bring out the similarities between them in a convincing manner.

A paragraph of differences : When you contrast two things, the differences have to be expressed in an explicit manner. Use linking words like but, whereas, on the other hand, on the contrary etc.

Statement of facts and figures : There are paragraphs which do not belong to any of the above categories and are mainly concerned with giving facts and figures in a clear and emphatic manner.

Paragraph Examples – Narrative, Descriptive, Persuasive and Many More

Think for a while before writing a paragraph. What are you trying to achieve in this paragraph? What is your purpose here? Do you wish to describe? Do you want to evaluate? Is your goal to narrate? Is your intent to persuade?

1. Personal Narrative Paragraph

I am going to give a PERSONAL NARRATION of an event that changed my life.

Last year was the first time I had ever been the new learner at Bangladesh Open University. For the first four days, I was completely alone. I don't think I even spoke to a single person. Finally, at lunch on the fifth day, Sumona Sharmin walked past her usual table and sat down right next to me. Even though I was new, I had already figured out who Sumona Sharmin was. She was popular. Pretty soon, all of Sumona's friends were sitting there right next to me. I never became great friends with Sumona, but after lunch that day, it seemed like all sorts of people were happy to be my friend. You cannot convince me that Sumona did not know what she was doing. I have a great respect for her, and I learned a great deal about what it means to be a true leader.

2. Descriptive Paragraph

I am going to DESCRIBE a sunset!

Sunset is the time of day when our sky meets the outer space solar winds. There are blue, pink, and purple swirls, spinning and twisting, like clouds of balloons caught in a blender. The sun moves slowly to hide behind the line of horizon, while the moon races to take its place in prominence atop the night sky. People slow to a crawl, entranced, fully forgetting the deeds that still must be done. There is a coolness, a calmness, when the sun does set.

3. Critical Paragraph

Persuasive Paragraph and Argumentative Paragraph

Persuade: *I am going to PERSUADE my neighbors to buy tickets to the college fair.*

The college fair is right around the corner, and tickets have just gone on sale. We are selling a limited number of tickets at a discount, so move fast and get yours while they are still available. This is going to be an event you will not want to miss! First off, the college fair is a great value when compared with other forms of entertainment. Also, your ticket purchase will help our college, and when you help the college, it helps the entire community. But that's not all! Every ticket you purchase enters you in a drawing to win fabulous prizes. And don't forget, you will have mountains of fun because there are acres and acres of great rides, fun games, and entertaining attractions! Spend time with your family and friends at our college fair. Buy your tickets now!

Argue: *I am going to present a logical ARGUMENT as to why my neighbor should attend the school fair.*

The college fair is right around the corner, and tickets have just gone on sale. Even though you may be busy, you will still want to reserve just one day out of an entire year to relax and have fun with us. Even if you don't have much money, you don't have to worry. The college fair is a community event, and therefore prices are kept low. Perhaps, you are still not convinced. Maybe you feel you are too old for fairs, or you just don't like them. Well, that's what my grandfather thought, but he came to last year's college fair and had this to say about it: "I had the best time of my life!" While it's true you may be able to think of a reason not to come, I'm also sure you can think of several reasons why you must come. We look forward to seeing you at the college fair!

4. Process or How-to Paragraph

Process: *I am going to explain the PROCESS of cleaning and organizing your room.*
OR

How-to: *I am going to describe HOW-TO clean and organize your room.*

Here is the perfect system for cleaning your room. First, move all of the items that do not have a proper place to the center of the room. Get rid of at least five things that you have not used within the last year. Take out all of the trash, and place all of the dirty dishes in the kitchen sink. Now find a location for each of the items you had placed in the center of the room. For any remaining items, see if you can squeeze them in under your bed or stuff them into the back of your closet. See, that was easy!

5. Compare and Contrast Paragraph

I am going to COMPARE and CONTRAST an ocean and a lake.

Oceans and lakes have much in common, but they are also quite different. Both are bodies of water, but oceans are very large bodies of salt water, while lakes are much smaller bodies of fresh water. Lakes are usually surrounded by land, while oceans are what surround continents. Both have plants and animals living in them. The ocean is home to the largest animals on the planet, whereas lakes support much smaller forms of life. When it is time for a vacation, both will make a great place to visit and enjoy.

6. Cause and Effect Paragraph

I am going to explain the CAUSES that had the EFFECT of making me a high achieving learner.
(Note: This is also a first person narrative.)

I do well in study, and people think I am smart because of it. But it's not true. In fact, three years ago I struggled in school. However, two years ago I decided to get serious about study and made a few changes. First, I decided I would become interested in whatever was being taught, regardless of what other people thought. I also decided I would work hard every day and never give up on any assignment. I decided to never fall behind. Finally, I decided to make study a priority over friends and fun. After implementing these changes, I became an active participant in tutorial sessions. Then my test scores began to rise. I still remember the first time that someone made fun of me because "I was smart." How exciting! It seems to me that being smart is simply a matter of working hard and being interested.

Lesson-2 : How to write a good paragraph.

Part One: Planning Your Paragraph



1. Decide what the main topic of the paragraph is going to be. Before you begin writing your paragraph, you must have a clear idea of what the paragraph is going to be about. This is because a paragraph is essentially a collection of sentences that all relate to one central topic. Without a definite idea of what the main topic is, your paragraph will lack focus and unity. In order to pin down the exact topic of your paragraph, you should ask yourself a number of questions:

- **What is the prompt I have been given?** If you are writing a paragraph as a response or answer to a particular prompt, such as "You have decided to donate money to charity. Which charity do you choose and why?" or "Describe your favorite day of the week," you will need to think carefully about that prompt and make sure you are directly addressing it, rather than going off topic.
- **What are the main ideas or issues that I need to address?** Think about the topic you are being asked or have decided to write about and consider what the most relevant ideas or issues relating to that topic are. As paragraphs are usually relatively short, it is important that you try to hit on all of the main ideas, without going off topic.
- **Who am I writing for?** Think about who the intended readership of this paragraph or paper is going to be. What is their prior knowledge? Are they familiar with the topic at hand, or will it require a number of explanatory sentences?
- If your paragraphs are part of a larger essay, writing an essay outline can help you define the major ideas or goals of each paragraph.

2. Write down information and ideas relating to that topic. Once you have a clearer idea of what you want to address in your paragraph, you can start organizing your thoughts by writing down your ideas on a notepad or word document. There's no need to write out full sentences just yet, just jot down some key words and phrases. Once you see everything on paper, you may get a clearer idea of which points are essential to include in your paragraph, and which points are superfluous.

- At this point, you may realize that there's a gap in your knowledge and that it will be necessary to look up some facts and figures to support your argument.
- It's a good idea to do this research now, so you will have all the relevant information easily at hand when it comes to the writing stage.

3. Figure out how you want to structure your paragraph. Now that all of your thoughts, ideas, facts and figures are laid out clearly in front of you, you can start to think about how you want to structure your paragraph. Consider each of the points you wish to address and try to arrange them in a logical order - this will make your paragraph more coherent and easier to read.

- This new order may be chronological, may put the most important information first, or may just make the paragraph easier and more interesting to read - it all depends on the topic and style of the paragraph you wish to write.

- Once you have decided where you want everything to go, you can rewrite your points according to this new structure - this will help to make the writing process a lot faster and more straightforward.

Part Two: Writing Your Paragraph

1. Write a topic sentence. The first sentence of your paragraph needs to be the topic sentence. A topic sentence is an introductory line that addresses what the main idea or thesis of the paragraph is going to be. It should contain the most important and relevant point you wish to make regarding your topic, thus summarizing the paragraph as a whole.

- Every other sentence you write should support the topic sentence and provide further detail and discussion of the issues or ideas it raises. If any sentence you write cannot be directly related to the topic sentence, it should not be included in this particular paragraph.
- More experienced writers can include their topic sentence at any point in the paragraph; it doesn't necessarily need to be the first line. However, writers who are new or less comfortable with paragraph writing should stick with having the topic sentence first, as it will help to guide you throughout the rest of the paragraph.
- Your topic sentence should not be too broad or too narrow. If your topic sentence is too broad you will not be able to discuss its ideas adequately in your paragraph. If it's too narrow, you won't have enough to discuss.

2. Fill in the supporting details. Once you have written and are happy with your topic sentence, you can start to fill in the rest of your paragraph. This is where the detailed, well-structured notes you wrote earlier will come in handy. Make sure that your paragraph is coherent, which means that it is easy to read and understand, that each sentence connects with the next and that everything flows nicely as a whole. To achieve this, try to write clear, simple sentences that express exactly what you want to say.

- Link each sentence with transition words which form a bridge between one sentence and the next. Transition words can help you compare and contrast, show sequence, show cause and effect, highlight important ideas, and progress smoothly from one idea to the next. Such transition words include "furthermore", "in fact" and "in addition to". You can also use chronological transitions, such as "firstly", "secondly" and "thirdly".
- The supporting sentences are the meat of your paragraph, so you should fill them with as much evidence to support your topic sentence as possible. Depending on the topic, you can use facts, figures, statistics and examples or you can use stories, anecdotes and quotes. Anything goes, as long as it is relevant.
- In terms of length, three to five sentences will usually be enough to cover your main points and adequately support your topic sentence, but this will vary greatly depending on the topic and the length of the paper you are writing. There is no set length for a paragraph. It should be as long as it needs to be to adequately cover the main idea.

3. Write a concluding sentence. The concluding sentence of your paragraph should tie everything together. A good concluding sentence will reinforce the idea outlined in your topic

sentence, but now it has all the weight of the evidence or arguments contained in your supporting sentences behind it. After reading the concluding sentence, the reader should have no doubt as to the accuracy or relevance of the paragraph as a whole.

- Don't just reword the topic sentence. Your concluding sentence should acknowledge the discussion that has come before it and remind your reader of the relevance of this discussion.
- For example, in a paragraph dealing with the topic "Why is Canada a great place to live?" The concluding sentence might look something like "From all the evidence provided above, such as Canada's fantastic health care provisions, its top-notch education system and its clean, safe cities, we can conclude that Canada is indeed a great place to live."

4. Know when to move on to a new paragraph. Sometimes it can be difficult to tell where one paragraph should end and another begin. Luckily, there are a number of guidelines you can follow which can make the decision to move on to a new paragraph an obvious one. The most basic guideline to follow is that every time you start to discuss a new idea, you should move on to a new paragraph. Paragraphs should never contain more than one central idea. If a given idea has multiple points, then each individual aspect of the idea should be given its own paragraph.

- A new paragraph is also used each time you are contrasting two points or presenting each side of an argument.
For example, if your topic is "should civil servants receive lower salaries?" one paragraph would deal with the arguments supporting lower pay for civil servants, while the other paragraph would provide arguments against it
- Paragraphs make a piece of writing easier to comprehend and give readers a "break" between new ideas in order to digest what they have just read. If you feel that the paragraph you are writing is becoming too complex, or contains a series of complex points, you may want to think about splitting it up into individual paragraphs.
- When writing a paper, the introduction and conclusion should always be given their own paragraphs. The introductory paragraph should define the aim of the paper and what it hopes to achieve, while also giving a brief outline of the ideas and issues it will go on to discuss. The concluding paragraph provides a summary of the information and arguments contained in the paper and states in clear terms what the paper has shown and/or proven. It may also introduce a new idea, one that opens the reader's mind to the questions raised by the paper.
- If you're writing fiction, you need to start a new paragraph in dialogue to show a new speaker.

Part Three : Reviewing Your Paragraph

1. Check your paragraph for spelling and grammar. Once you have finished writing, it is essential that you re-read your paragraph two or three times to check it for misspelled words and poor grammar. Spelling mistakes and bad grammar can significantly impact the perceived quality of your paragraph, even if the ideas and arguments it contains are of a high quality. It is very easy to overlook small mistakes when writing, so don't skip this step, even if you're in a rush.

- Ensure that each sentence has a subject and that all proper nouns are capitalized. Also make sure that all of the subjects and verbs agree with each other and that you use the same tense across the entire paragraph.

- Use a dictionary to double-check the spelling of words that you are unsure about, don't just assume that they are correct.
- Check your paragraph for the proper use of punctuation, making sure that you use marks such as commas, colons, semicolons and ellipses in the correct context.

2. Check your paragraph for coherency and style. Not only should the technical aspects of your writing be spot on, but you should also try to achieve clarity in your writing, as well as stylistic flow. You can do this by varying the length and format of your sentences and by using transitional words and a varied vocabulary.

- The point of view of your writing should remain consistent throughout the paragraph, and indeed, the entire paper. For example, if you are writing in the first person (e.g., "I believe that...") you should not switch to a passive voice ("it is believed that") halfway through.
- However, you should also try to avoid beginning every sentence with "I think..." or "I contend that..." Try to vary the format of your sentences, as this will make the paragraph more interesting for the reader and help it to flow more naturally.
- For beginner writers, it is better to stick to short, to-the-point sentences which clearly express your point. Long, rambling sentences can very quickly become incoherent or fall victim to grammatical errors, so try to avoid them until you gain more experience as a writer.

3. Decide if your paragraph is complete. Once you have re-read the paragraph and fixed any grammatical or stylistic errors, you should have one more glance over it to determine whether it is complete. Try to look at the paragraph objectively and decide whether it sufficiently supports and develops your topic sentence, or whether it needs a few more details or additional evidence to back up your claims.

- If you feel that the main claim of your topic sentence is sufficiently supported and well-developed by the contents of the rest of your paragraph, then your paragraph is probably complete. However, if any important aspect of the topic remains unexplored or unexplained or if the paragraph is shorter than three sentences, it probably needs a little more work.
- On the other hand, you may decide that your paragraph is too long and contains superfluous or tangential content. If this is the case, you should edit the paragraph so it contains only the most relevant information.
- If you feel that all of the content is necessary to your point, but the paragraph is still too long, you should think about breaking it up into several smaller, more specific paragraphs.

Some important tips for writing a paragraph

- A paragraph should consist of:
- Topic sentence
- Supportive sentence(s)
- Concluding sentence
- When you are reading, notice how paragraphs are divided. If you learn what a paragraph is by experience, you can divide writing into appropriate parts by feel.

- There are no hard-and-fast rules for how long a paragraph should be. Instead, make sure there are natural breaks. Each paragraph should contain one main idea and whatever writing supports it.
- Always indent before starting a new paragraph. 0.5” indentations are standard for English writing.
- Spelling and grammatical errors can detract from even the most well-planned writing. Use a spell-checker or ask someone to read your work if you are unsure about anything.
- If you are writing a conversation, start a new paragraph each time somebody else speaks.
- The secret lies in:
 - Unity: Have a single idea and the topic needs to be expressed.
 - Order: The way you organize your sentences helps the reader to understand better.
 - Coherence: Quality that makes your writing understandable. Sentences need to be connected with each other.
 - Completeness: All sentences used in a paragraph should convey a complete message.
- Adjust your writing to its purpose. Just as you wear different clothes for different occasions and different climates, you should write in a style that suits your aim.
- You should start your paragraph with a good clear and simple topic sentence which contains the topic and the controlling idea.

Source : The Internet



Exercise:

Write paragraphs on following topics:

The Necessity of Learning English

Our Victory Day

Dangers of Smoking

Environmental Pollution

Beautiful Bangladesh



Answer Key:

Try yourself