

Unit 15

Paragraphs

Objectives:

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

- define a paragraph.
- understand the elements of a paragraph.
- identify different parts of a paragraph.
- write paragraphs.

Overview:

Lesson 1: *Paragraph Writing*

Lesson 2: *How to Write Good Paragraphs*

Answer Key

Lesson 1 : Paragraph Writing



If you look at any printed prose book, you will see that each chapter is divided into sections, the first line of each being indented slightly to the right. These sections are called paragraphs. Chapters, essays and other prose compositions are broken up into paragraphs to make the reading of them easier.

Definition of a paragraph

A paragraph is a number of sentences grouped together and relating to one topic. This definition shows that the paragraphs of compositions are not mere arbitrary divisions. The division of a chapter into paragraphs must be made according to the changes of ideas introduced.

There is, therefore, no rule as to the length of a paragraph. It may be short or long according to the necessity of the case..

The Principle of Good Paragraph Structure

A good paragraph should have three aspects.

1. Unity
2. Order
3. Variety

Now, let us see what they are.

1. Unity

The first and most important principle to be observed in constructing a paragraph is that of Unity. Just as each sentence deals with one thought, each paragraph must deal with one topic or idea – and with no more than one. Every sentence in the paragraph must be closely connected with the main topic of the paragraph. The paragraph and every part of it must be the expression of one theme or topic.

2. Order

The second principle of paragraph construction is Order – that is, logical sequence of thought or development of the subject. Events must be related in the order of their occurrence, and all ideas should be connected with the leading idea and arranged according to their importance or order.

Here the key point is that the two most important sentences in the paragraph are the first and the last. The first, which should be the topic sentence, should arouse the interest of the reader; and the last should satisfy it. The first, or topical, sentence states the topic – a fact, a statement, or a proposition; the last should bring the whole paragraph on the topic to a conclusion, or summing up.

3. Variety

The third principle of paragraph construction is Variety, by which is meant that to avoid monotony, the paragraph of a composition should be of different lengths, and not always of the same sentence construction.

The essentials of good paragraph construction are:

- (1) Unity
- (2) A good topic sentence
- (3) Logical sequence of thought
- (4) Variety
- (5) A full and rounded final sentence in conclusion

Now, let us examine a few paragraphs.

Example 1

Poetry is the language of the imagination and the passions. It relates to whatever gives immediate pleasure or pain to the human mind. It comes home to the bosoms and businesses of men; for nothing but what comes home to them in the most general and intelligible shape can be a subject for poetry. Poetry is the universal language which the heart holds with nature and itself. He who has contempt for poetry cannot have much respect for himself, or for anything else. Wherever there is a sense of beauty, or power, or harmony, as in the motion of a wave of the sea, in the growth of a flower, there is poetry in its birth.

Here again, the first sentence is the topic sentence. The sentences that follow enforce or restate the statement that “poetry is the language of the imagination and the passions”, and the concluding sentence reinforces it by showing that poetry exists wherever men feel a sense of beauty, power or harmony.

Example 2

The Road is one of the great fundamental institutions of mankind. Not only is the Road one of the great human institutions because it is fundamental to social existence, but also because its varied effects appear in every department of the State. It is the Road which determines the sites of many cities and the growth and nourishment of all. It is the Road which controls the

development of strategies and fixes the sites of battles. It is the Road that gives its framework to all economic development. It is the Road which is the channel of all trade, and, what is more important, of all ideas. In its most humble function it is a necessary guide without which progress from place to place would be a ceaseless experiment; it is a sustenance without which organized society would be impossible, thus the Road moves and controls all history. – **Hilaire Belloc**. In this paragraph, the first sentence states the subject. It is the topical sentence. The body of the paragraph consists of examples which prove the statement in the first sentence. The final sentence sums up the whole.

In all these paragraphs, the principles of Unity and Order are observed, and also the general rules about the place of the topical sentences and the rounding off the whole with a good conclusion.

Lesson 02 : How to Write Good Paragraphs



Now, you will get a guideline on writing paragraphs. If you follow this guideline step by step, you will learn to write good paragraphs.

Step 1: Decide the Topic of Your Paragraph

Before you can begin writing, you need to know what you are writing about. First, look at the topic. As you look at the topic, note any key terms or repeated phrases because you will want to use those words in your response. Then ask yourself:

- On what topic am I supposed to be writing?
- What do I know about this topic already?
- If I don't know how to respond to this topic, where can I go to find some answers?
- How do I relate to it?

After doing some additional reading and research, you should better understand your topic and what you need to discuss.

Step 2: Develop a Topic Sentence

Before writing a paragraph, it is important to think first about the **topic** and then what you want to say about the topic. Most often, the topic is easy, but the question then turns to *what* you want to say about the topic. This concept is sometimes called the **controlling idea**.

Strong paragraphs are typically about one main idea or topic, which is often explicitly stated in a **topic sentence**. Good **topic sentences** should always contain both (1) a **topic** and (2) a **controlling idea**.

The **topic** – The main subject matter or idea covered in the paragraph.

The **controlling idea**– This idea focuses the topic by providing direction to the composition. When your paragraphs contain a clearly stated **topic sentence**, your reader will know what to expect and, therefore, understand your ideas better.

Step 3: Demonstrate Your Point

After stating your topic sentence, you need to provide information to prove, illustrate, clarify, and/or explain your point.

Ask yourself:

- What examples can I use to support my point?
- What information can I provide to help clarify my thoughts?
- How can I support my point with specific data, experiences, or other factual material?
- What information does the reader need to know in order to see my point?

Facts, details, reasons, examples

- Information from the readings or class discussions
- Paraphrases or short quotations
- Statistics, polls, percentages, data from research studies
- Personal experience, stories, examples from your life

Sometimes, adding transitional or introductory phrases like: *for example, for instance, first, second, or last* can help guide the reader.

Step 4: Give Your Paragraph Meaning

After you have given the reader enough information to see and understand your point, you need to explain why this information is relevant, meaningful, or interesting.

Ask yourself:

- What does the provided information mean?
- How does it relate to your overall point, argument, or thesis?
- Why is this information important/significant/meaningful?

Step 5: Conclude

After illustrating your point with relevant information, add a **concluding sentence**. Concluding sentences link one paragraph to the next and provide another device for helping you ensure your paragraph is unified. While not all paragraphs include a concluding sentence, you should always consider whether one is appropriate. Concluding sentences have *two* crucial roles in paragraph writing:

First, they draw together the information you have presented to elaborate your controlling idea by:

- Summarizing the point(s) you have made.
- Repeating words or phrases from the topic sentence.
- Using linking words that indicate that conclusions are being drawn (e.g., therefore, thus, resulting).

Second, they often link the current paragraph to the following paragraph. They may anticipate the topic sentence of the next paragraph by:

- Introducing a word/phrase or new concept which will then be picked up in the topic sentence of the next paragraph.
- Using words or phrases that point ahead (e.g., the following, another, other).

Step 6: Look Over and Proofread

The last step in good paragraph writing is proofreading and revision. Before you submit your writing, look over your work at least one more time. Try reading your paragraph out loud to make sure it makes sense. Also, ask yourself these questions:

- Does my paragraph support my thesis?
- Does it make sense?

You can try to follow the steps before writing a paragraph.

Different parts of a paragraph

A paragraph is very well-known format of writing. It stands as the most useful model not only to express your ideas in the form of a paragraph, but as an easier format to remember and to execute in your writing. Further, Paragraph stands as the most suitable format for the novices, who aspire to polish their writing skills.

You can think about different parts of a paragraph like this:

What you are going to tell us (Introduction), then what you have decided to tell us (body), and what you have told us (conclusion).

A good paragraph has a topic sentence (preferably placed at the beginning), a number of supporting sentences and a concluding sentence. Each of them has important and different roles.

Introduction:

An introduction must have the following aspects:

- Hook Line – A quote, proverb or an abrupt question that would provoke the curiosity of the readers
- Thesis Statement – A sentence that would employ precise terms to communicate the central idea of the work
- General Outline – A general reference to the evidences that would be employed to strengthen the thesis
- Topic Statement – A sentence that explains the nature and the source of the evidence

Body:

- The body must include the following aspects:
- Supporting Details – sufficient additional information to present the evidence in the most exclusive manner to convince the readers.

- Transition – A sentence that functions as a link between this passage and the one that follows

Conclusion:

A conclusion is the final yet important constituent of a paragraph. A conclusion must succeed in offering an emphatic recap of the core theme and purpose of the work. The conclusion may give a moral or a lesson. Therefore conclusion is very important for writing. A good ending is as important as a good beginning.



Exercise:

Write paragraphs on the topics given below:

1. Tree Plantation
2. A Rainy Day
3. Traffic Jam
4. A Winter Morning
5. A School Magazine
6. A Street Accident
7. Your Mother
8. A Book Fair
9. The Life of a Farmer
10. Load Shedding
11. Your National Flag
12. International Mother Language Day



Answer Key:

Try Yourself.