



## Things to Remember

- Think of the topic sentence as a ‘mini thesis’, a focal point for the paragraph rather than the essay as a whole.
- Unity means “one”.
- Avoid the “5 paragraph essay” trap: resist the temptation to cram too much information into a single paragraph just because it relates to one particular idea.
- Coherence means the essay “flows”.
- To use an architectural metaphor, paragraphs are the building blocks of an essay, the bricks that hold the structure together, while the transitional words and phrases function as the mortar between the bricks.
- Useful transition words: indeed, moreover, thus, however, contrary...
- Indentations help the reader to visually navigate the text.
- Jettison superfluous or irrelevant material – anything that does not support or relate to the topic sentence and/or thesis statement.

# Writing Paragraphs

**Definition:** A paragraph is an organizational component within an essay; it contains one or more sentences, is usually indented, and addresses a particular point related to the larger issue being discussed.

## TOPIC SENTENCE

- announces the theme/controlling idea of the paragraph
- shows a connection to the last sentence of the preceding paragraph
- can be stated boldly (explicitly) or be merely suggested (implicit)
- contains key words that indicate what will follow

## UNITY

- Unity is achieved by concentrating on a single point. Because deviation from the central idea may lead the reader astray, any irrelevant material should be omitted.

## COHERENCE

- Refers to the smooth transition of ideas from sentence to sentence and paragraph to paragraph
- Linking devices allow each paragraph to build on the one that came before it. Examples include: connecting words, synonyms and pronouns, parallel structure, varied sentence length.
- Begin a new paragraph to set off introductions and conclusions, signal a shift in time/space, indicate a change in speakers, contrast ideas, delineate a process, or break up a wall of text.
- Develop ideas through a *pattern of organization*: chronological, progressive, cause & effect, classification, definition, compare-contrast, analytical, listing, analogy, or general to particular.
- Keep paragraphs to within 5-10 sentences (one-third to two-thirds of a page typed double spaced).

## SUPPORTING DETAIL

- Clarify and explain the controlling idea with supporting information: facts, statistics, examples, anecdotes, allusions, expert testimony, definitions, moral and ethical reasoning, personal insights etc.