

Paragraph Directions

Paragraph Structure

There are three major elements in a well-developed paragraph: a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence. The topic sentence conveys the main idea or concept of the paragraph. Supporting sentences develop the topic sentence, add coherent unity to the paragraph, and provide supporting evidence. The concluding sentence restates the topic and provides closure for the paragraph theme or subject.

Topic Sentence

The topic sentence lays the foundation for a particular subject. It is essential that the topic sentence appears first in the paragraph. The main idea presented in the topic sentence provides the basis for unity and coherency throughout the paragraph.

Supporting Sentences

Supporting sentences are the substance of a paragraph. There are several methods of developing unity through supporting sentences. Maintain the same style of syntax and sentence structure throughout the paragraph, and replace nouns with pronouns when possible. Avoid unnecessary repetition of words and only repeat key words that relate to the topic. Finally, use solid transitions between sentences to enhance the coherency of the paragraph.

Coherency within a subject can be communicated through several techniques.

Additions: Adding additional information to a previously stated sentence builds a supportive structure.

Contrasts: Contrasting a single idea or action with another provides a frame of reference for the reader.

Results: State a particular action or idea and follow through with a resulting achievement or accomplishment.

Concluding Sentences

Concluding sentences complete the concept or subject introduced by the topic sentence. It is through the concluding sentence that a writer finalizes the discussion of the topic. A reiteration of the main idea and a summary of the supporting sentences contribute a smooth finish to a particular subject.

Several types of techniques can be used to construct a quality concluding sentence.

Summaries: Summarize the information presented in the paragraph.

Statistics: Provide statistics that relate to the subject and raise a reader's awareness of the topic.

Anecdotes: Include an interesting story or event that unifies and supports the main topic of the paragraph.

Questions: Leave readers with a question that directs them to consider the subject more in-depth and to formulate their own conclusions from the material presented.

Let's look at some examples of paragraphs.

Paragraph Examples

Descriptive

"Two doors from one corner, on the left hand going east, the line was broken by the entry of a court; and just at that point a certain sinister block of building thrust forward its gable on the street. It was two storeys high; showed no window, nothing but a door on the lower storey and a blind forehead of discoloured wall on the upper; and bore in every feature, the marks of prolonged and sordid negligence. The door, which was equipped with neither bell nor knocker, was blistered and distained. Tramps slouched into the recess and struck matches on the panels; children kept shop upon the steps; the schoolboy had tried his knife on the mouldings; and for close on a generation, no one had appeared to drive away these random visitors or to repair their ravages."

--From *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson

Expository

"In this book a number of dialects are used, to wit: the Missouri negro dialect; the extremest form of the backwoods Southwestern dialect; and four modified varieties of this last. The shadings have not been done in a haphazard fashion, or by guesswork; but painstakingly, and with the trustworthy guidance and support of personal familiarity with these several forms of speech.

I make this explanation for the reason that without it many readers would suppose that all these characters were trying to talk alike and not succeeding."

--From *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain

Narrative

"The apparition of a file of soldiers ringing down the butt-ends of their loaded muskets on our doorstep, caused the dinner-party to rise from table in confusion, and caused Mrs. Joe re-entering the kitchen empty-handed, to stop short and stare, in her wondering lament of 'Gracious goodness gracious me, what's gone - with the - pie!'

The sergeant and I were in the kitchen when Mrs. Joe stood staring; at which crisis I partially recovered the use of my senses. It was the sergeant who had spoken to me, and he was now looking round at the company, with his handcuffs invitingly extended towards them in his right hand, and his left on my shoulder."

--From *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens

Persuasive

If you are searching for the perfect exercise, please consider the benefits of a brisk walk. Walking has been proven to reduce stress, lower blood pressure, increase metabolism, increase deep breathing, help cure depression, and lift spirits. While jogging or running can break down tissue in

the knees, ankles, and feet, walking briskly with arms freely swinging seldom causes any of these problems. Walking requires no special clothing other than a sturdy pair of shoes, while most other sports require special clothing or equipment. For example, swimming requires a suit, and yoga requires a mat and flexible clothing. Walking can be done anytime and anywhere. Walking can be done alone or with a partner, and many people find that having someone to walk with makes the time pass quickly.

Transitional Words

Authors sometimes provide readers with clues that help them to follow their train of thought. Words that show the relation of one sentence to another within a paragraph are called transitional expressions. These transitional expressions are used to alert readers to changes in directions or to provide further explanation. Transitional words are like signals and signposts that give directions and information to a driver on an unfamiliar road.

These transitional words can be organized into the following nine categories:

- Further information
- Directional change
- Sequence and order
- Explanation
- Emphasis
- Location and setting
- Compare and contrast
- Summary and conclusion
- Time

Further Information

These words signal that additional information will be provided:

additionally again along with also and and finally another as well besides equally finally first of all for example	for instance further furthermore furthermore in addition last of all likewise more moreover next one reason other secondly too
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Directional Change

These words signal a move back to an earlier idea or concept:

although but conversely despite even though however in contrast in spite of	in the meantime nevertheless on the other hand otherwise rather still though while
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Sequence and Order

These words organize the information:

after afterward always before earlier finally first for one thing immediately in the first place last	lastly later next now prior to second then third till until while
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Explanation or Clarification

These words provide further information:

for example for instance in other words in the same way as put another way	similar to specifically such as that is to illustrate
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Emphasis

These words accentuate events, characters, and actions:

again central issue for this reason important to note main idea major development major event	most of all primary concern should be noted significant factor the basic concept to emphasize to repeat
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Location and Setting

These words provide directional clues:

above across adjacent against along alongside among around away from behind behind beneath beneath beside between close to east here in back of	in front of in the distance inside middle near next to north on on top of opposite outside over south there to the left or right toward under west
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Compare and Contrast

These words signal differences and similarities:

also and as best better conversely different from different than in contrast, still at the same time in the same way less than like	likewise more than most nevertheless nonetheless on the other hand opposite or rather similar similarly though yet
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Summary and Conclusion

These words bring information together:

accordingly as a result consequently due to finally hence in brief in conclusion	in short in summary in summation last of all therefore thus to sum up
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Time

These words relate to a particular time period and relate the sequence of events:

about after afterwards before during eventually finally first immediately last week, month, year later	meanwhile next week, month, year second soon subsequently then third today tomorrow while yesterday
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