



Structuring paragraphs

Introduction

During your time at University you are likely to need to write several different types of assignment. Organising your ideas is an integral part of your work and you will need to use paragraphs to do this. Good paragraphing involves sound planning and structuring in order to give your work a coherent and logical organisation and flow.

This resource outlines the main parts of paragraphs and presents a typical paragraph structure that you might use.

Further information

The Learning Resources Study Hub provides a range of opportunities (such as workshops and drop-ins) for you to enhance your academic skills. For more information visit:

lweb.beds.ac.uk/studyhub



Why are paragraphs important?

There are four reasons why you should use paragraphs:

- 1) They are the building blocks of essays
- 2) They help the reader understand and follow your line of discussion
- 3) They enable you to link subtopics to the main topic
- 4) They help you address the main areas included in the marking criteria

What do paragraphs typically include?

There are often four main parts that make up a paragraph:

- 1) Topic sentence
- 2) Supporting information (you may have several and include examples)
- 3) Interpretation/explanation
- 4) Reasoning /position

What is the form and function of each part of a paragraph?

Part of paragraph	Form	Function
Topic sentence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General statement in relation to the topic • Does not contain specific details in relation to the topic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presents the topic of the paragraph • Serves as an introduction to the paragraph
Supporting information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be introduced as an in-text reference • Often introduced using verbs such as; suggests, claims, states, etc. • Can be a paraphrase or a summary of information from a source • Can be introduced using signpost words such as; <i>In addition, Similarly, however, whereas, in contrast</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduces relevant information related to the topic to support a position • Alternatively, provides an different position or viewpoint • Demonstrates your understanding of the literature • Provides evidence to support your line of argument

<p>Explanation and interpretation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be introduced using expressions such as; <i>this might explain, what is suggested here, this author found.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates your understanding of the information presented • Provides an opportunity to link the supporting information to the point of discussion
<p>Reasoning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be introduced using expressions such as; <i>Collectively this suggests, therefore, based on this</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brings together the parts of the discussion • Demonstrates the reasoning underpinning your work

Example

Each part of the following paragraph has been colour coded:

Poor behaviour in classrooms can have a negative impact on the quality of learning and teaching that takes place. Clarke and Davis (2007) demonstrated the relationship between types of learning and student behaviour. These authors found that behavioural issues were more evident around student centred activities. This is supported by Wilkins (2009) who suggests the organisation of tasks at certain times to avoid instances of poor behaviour. Collectively the evidence suggests that teachers need to strategically plan and time the type of activity and learning that takes place in the classroom.

Topic sentence	Poor behaviour in classrooms can have a negative impact on the quality of learning and teaching that takes place
Supporting information/example	Clarke and Davis (2007) demonstrated the relationship between types of learning and student behaviour
Explanation/ Elaboration	These authors found that behavioural issues were more evident around student centred activities
Supporting information/example	This is supported by Wilkins (2009) who suggests the organisation of tasks at certain times to avoid instances of poor behaviour
Reasoning	Collectively the evidence suggests that teachers need to strategically plan and time the type of activity and learning that takes places in the classroom.