

# Paragraphing

**Paragraph:** In academic writing, the paragraph's purpose is to develop your thesis. The paragraph will directly connect to the main point of the paper. However, the paragraph will be developing a sub-point of its own, not the whole thesis.

## Parts of a Paragraph:

1. Topic Sentence
2. Support
3. Wrap-up/transition

**Topic Sentence:** States the main point of the paragraph. Usually the first sentence. No matter how you incorporate a topic sentence, your readers should understand what the main point of the paragraph is. Remember that the main point of the paragraph should support the thesis in some way.

Example: *This Pixar short implements color contrast to emphasize the character's growth.*

It is also useful to state the connection between the previous paragraph's main point and the current paragraph's main point. That connection usually has to do with the thesis statement (how both these points relate to the main argument of the paper).

Example: *In addition to the use of setting and background music, this Pixar short implements color contrast to emphasize the character's growth.*

This might seem obvious, but to a reader who is learning your argument for the first time, it may not be. In academic writing, *never assume that the reader knows the connections you're making.*

**Support:** Most of an academic paragraph will be composed of supporting sentences that help develop the main point of the paragraph. If you find yourself including information that doesn't directly relate to the topic sentence, you may be getting off topic. That information may be important to focus on in a separate paragraph because it develops the thesis in another way, so simply save that information for later.

If you're unsure how to expand your support, think about the "how" and "why" questions your readers might have about what you've said so far. Don't try to lengthen your paragraph by repeating ideas. If you're saying the same thing in different ways, that will count as wordiness.

These are some approaches to expanding ideas without repeating them:

- *Data*: facts, stats, evidence
- *Description*: reveal details
- *Illustration*: provide examples
- *Comparison/contrast*: show how something is similar or different
- *Cause/effect*: show how one thing has led to another
- *Testimony*: cite what others have said about the topic

**Wrap-up:** If you end a paragraph on supporting information, that will make your essay feel abrupt. This is usually what students mean when they say they need help with "flow." To make the flow smoother, end the paragraph on a wrap-up.

A *wrap-up* will reinforce the main idea of the paragraph. This is good for a long paragraph that has a lot of supporting information—you are making sure your reader understands what point all that support was making and how that relates to the thesis of the paper.

## Outline a Paragraph

**Topic sentence:**

**Support:**

**Wrap-up:**