

Paragraph development by listing

One way of developing your paragraph is to list details in support of your topic sentence. These sentences support and develop your key idea. Enumerating words such as 'first', 'second', 'next' and 'finally' show development of the topic.

For example: In the past, tall buildings were used mainly for administrative and commercial purposes. Today, high-rise flats, both in the city centres as well as in the outer suburban regions, house both working and middle class families. There are many reasons for the necessity of high-rise living. First is the increase in population due to the high birth rate. Second is the steady reduction in the amount of dwelling space and the increasing competition for urban land. Third is the rising aspirations of both the working and the middle classes for home ownership and the intention of younger married couples to live away from their parental families. For such couples, the most feasible and affordable homes are the high-rise flats built at a great subsidy by the government.

Paragraph development by example

The technique used for writing such a paragraph is very simple. After the topic sentence, a series of examples is given to support the main idea.

For example: Many contemporary novels deal with the lives of ordinary people and their search for independence and personal identity. Quite often, however, the tone of the novel is one of pessimism. Chinua Achebe's 'A Man Of The People' is a good example of one man's search for political integrity and the adversity faced when he decided not to go along with the reigning political party. '1984' by George Orwell also deals with this theme of sacrifice of personal identity in a world where authorities keep check on man's every action, word, gesture and thought. Similarly, Aldous Huxley's 'Brave New World' is a warning against the optimism that people were feeling during that time. This novel deals with how science and technology rob people of their identity and it is a lesson in pessimism.

Paragraph development by comparison

You may wish to develop a paragraph by comparing similar aspects or qualities of either two related or unrelated subjects. If you are developing a paragraph by comparison, you may use transitional words like 'similarly', 'in the same way', 'just as' or 'can be compared with'.

For example: When we talk of child abuse, the first thing that comes to mind is the physical abuse that an adult inflicts upon a child. We read of parents pouring hot water on a child or of a child chained to a door and put in isolation for days. Most parents condemn such acts, saying that they would never abuse a child. But what about emotional abuse? Just as physical caning inflicts a physical scar on the child, a frown from the parent showing disdain for the child also inflicts a scar, an emotional scar. Similarly, just as the physical wound takes time to heal, an emotional wound also takes time to heal, in fact, a longer time. Emotional abuse also causes a child to withdraw from the person inflicting the pain, in the same way that a child will recoil from fire if he has been physically abused with fire before.

Paragraph development by contrast

While the comparison paragraph compares similar aspects of two issues, paragraph development by contrast looks at the different aspects. To develop a paragraph by contrast, transitional words such as 'unlike', 'on the other hand', 'however', or 'in contrast' can be used.

For example: Two of the major religions of the world are Christianity and Islam. While there are some similarities between them, the two religions have very different beliefs and practices. Christians address their deity as God while the Muslims address their deity as Allah. Christians believe that the Holy Bible is the inspiration of God and reading the Bible will teach, reprove, correct and lead the Christian into righteous living. Muslims, on the other hand look to their Koran for guidance in their prayers and way of living and they adhere very closely to what is taught in the Koran. Christianity also preaches that Jesus died for the sins of mankind and therefore the only way to be saved is to believe in Him. Islam however teaches that Mohammed is the greatest prophet and the founder of the Muslim religion.

Paragraph development by definition

If there are unfamiliar terms to be explained in your essay, it is best to develop your paragraph by defining or explaining these unfamiliar terms.

For example: In the process known as cloning, a scientist takes a cell from, for example, a rabbit and stimulates the nucleus in a way that will make it divide. The nucleus goes on dividing and from this individual cell eventually develops a whole rabbit. From one rabbit, using the technique of cloning, thousands of other identical rabbits can be produced. The rabbits are identical because they have the same genetic material.

this were carried on with the human race, it would be possible to produce a race of intellectuals, fighters, slaves or whatever is desired.

In normal sexual reproduction however, each parent provides a set of genes and the mixing of these genes determines the characteristics of the offspring. In cloning, there is no mixing of genes. The full gene set of that solitary parent is transmitted to the offspring. Therefore from one Einstein, it would be possible to produce an unlimited number of Einsteins who would be exactly the same in genetic make-up.

Paragraph development by classification

You may choose to develop your paragraph by classifying or organising your content matter into groups. If there are a number of items that need to be discussed, classifying them into smaller units helps your essay appear more organised and coherent.

For example: Each year, thousands of books are added to the shelves of the National Library. In the process of selecting the books, one of the factors the library staff has to consider is the reading taste of the public. The reading taste of the very young is very much dictated by the choice of their parents. Most books borrowed for these pre-schoolers are picture books, as well as books with big bold print to capture the attention of the young browsers. Those in the primary school age range are drawn by adventure books and the more popular series are the Enid Blyton and Hardy Boys series. Because of their growing awareness of the opposite sex, teenagers are very keen on books related to romance and relationships. Those who are working, however, are more keen on books that will help them advance in their career, including books on management skills. These groups of readers are also interested in the 'How To' series, ranging from 'How to get ahead in an organisation' to 'How to manage a multi-national corporation.'

Paragraph development by space and time

Sometimes the topic of an essay requires that the paragraph be developed according to space and time i.e by indicating differences that derive from geographical location, or changes brought about by the passage of time. A common use of development by space is when discussing a contemporary topic like the state of industrialisation in the advanced countries of Japan, America and the United Kingdoms and comparing this to conditions in, say, Latin America. On the other hand, an account of a musician's life, for example, will be developed by examining the different stages of his career, requiring the writer to consider the time element. Events are listed sequentially within a clearly defined time-frame.

For example: Until modern times, population increase was at a very slow rate, with periods of actual decline. It is only within the past 300 years, a tiny fraction of man's tenure on the earth, that world population has grown at consistently high rates. During the preagricultural era, before 8,000 B.C., when man was using only rudimentary tools and weapons, not more than 5 million people inhabited the earth. By the beginning of the Christian era, the number had increased to 250 million. During the Dark Ages, however, a series of plagues in Europe reduced its population so drastically that world population declined. By 1850, however, the rate of population growth had increased and population reached the first billion. By 1930 it had risen to 2 billion and 50 years later, in 1980, total world population reached 4 billion. World population is expected to reach 6.2 billion by the year 2,000.

Paragraph development by cause and effect

The procedure in paragraph development by cause and effect is to state the facts and then give reasons to explain how the facts came about. Some of the transitional words that can be used to signify cause and effect are 'as a result', 'therefore', 'as a consequence', 'hence' or 'on account of'.

For example: There is increasing evidence that with rapid urbanisation and modern living, the modern family is in big trouble. Sociologists believe that if present trends continue, more children will be battered and many of them may need psychiatric treatment. As a result of the increase in divorce rates, more children today are being raised in single-parent homes and this again takes its toll on family relationships. With more women joining the labour force, more children are being fostered out – to relatives, neighbours, and even total strangers who provide child-care services for a fee. So even though family incomes may rise, children are being deprived of their parents' care, guidance and supervision. As a consequence of modern living, there is also a movement from the extended family to the nuclear family and the child loses out on the support that an extended family can give.

Paragraph development by process description

This technique describes the procedure to follow with regard to a particular topic. It gives definite steps in a specific order.

For example: Preparing for an interview involves ensuring that your personal grooming and appearance are satisfactory. Personnel managers advise that applicants

dress smartly and not wear unsuitable clothing that may reflect badly on the applicant's character.

Preparation also involves having all the necessary documents ready. Perhaps, the most important preparation is research into the company the applicant intends to work for. This information can be found in the company's annual reports or by talking to people who are working there. It will definitely impress the interviewers if the applicant knows what the targets of the company are, its working strategies and other details of the company.

Using the various methods of paragraph development

Exercise 6.1

Develop each topic sentence into a suitable paragraph, using one of the techniques described above.

- 1 Studying a second language is useful for four main reasons.
- 2 Man must explore alternative sources of energy.
- 3 Diseases of the present age are very different from diseases of the past.
- 4 Colour is an important element in the world of nature.
- 5 While some countries would benefit from a decreasing population, other countries would benefit from an increasing population.
- 6 The media, which include newspapers, radio, television, films and books, have become an integral part of modern life.
- 7 It would be worthwhile to consider the advantages and disadvantages of streaming students at a very early age.
- 8 Environmental pollution has occurred recently in different forms more malignant than before.
- 9 Recent discoveries in eugenics or genetic engineering are welcomed by some as socially and medically beneficial and feared by others as likely to lead to disastrous consequences for the human race.
- 10 Democracy can mean different things to different people at different times.