

# PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE : answer key

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**TASK 1: What are the 5 key features of a good paragraph? Discuss with a partner and make a list**

1. It must have a **topic sentence** (usually, but not always, the first sentence).
2. Subsequent sentences (**body sentences**) should support and develop the topic sentence.
3. Only **one main/controlling idea** should be developed.
4. The sentences should **flow smoothly and logically**.
5. A **concluding sentence** may be added but is not always essential. It is generally (but not always) the last sentence in a paragraph.

## TOPIC SENTENCES, BODY SENTENCES, CONCLUDING SENTENCES AND PATTERNS OF ORGANISATION

**TASK 2: Look at the following paragraph. Which sentence is the topic sentence? What is its purpose? Underline the body sentences and wavy underline the concluding sentence. What is the function of the concluding sentence?** Paragraph is from previous lesson on Sentence Structure. The topic sentence tells the reader what the paragraph will be about. The concluding sentence echoes the topic sentence (TS: **Although few people realize it, 1869 was a landmark year in genetic research, because it was the year in which Swiss physiological chemist Friedrich Miescher first identified what he called "nuclein" inside the nuclei of human white blood cells.**; CS: **Sensing the importance of his findings, Miescher wrote...**), rounding the paragraph off and making it balanced and able to stand alone (though this example is from a longer article). The pattern of the body sentences is chronological (describing a history/process).

Although few people realize it, 1869 was a landmark year in genetic research, because it was the year in which Swiss physiological chemist Friedrich Miescher first identified what he called "nuclein" inside the nuclei of human white blood cells. (The term "nuclein" was later changed to "nucleic acid" and eventually to "deoxyribonucleic acid," or "DNA.") Miescher's plan was to isolate and characterize not the nuclein, (which nobody at that time realized existed) but instead the protein components of leukocytes (white blood cells). Miescher thus made arrangements for a local surgical clinic to send him used, pus-coated patient bandages; once he received the bandages, he planned to wash them, filter out the leukocytes, and extract and identify the various proteins within the white blood cells. But when he came across a substance from the cell nuclei that had chemical properties unlike any protein, including a much higher phosphorous content and resistance to proteolysis (protein digestion), Miescher realized that he had discovered a new substance (Dahm, 2008). Sensing the importance of his findings, Miescher wrote, "It seems probable to me that a whole family of such slightly varying phosphorous-containing substances will appear, as a group of nucleins, equivalent to proteins."

A **topic sentence** consists of a topic (a broad or general theme) and a main idea or controlling idea (which limits focus to one specific aspect of that theme).

**Complete the statement:**

In the above paragraph the topic is early genetic research and the main idea is Miescher's discovery of nuclein/nucleic acid

### TASK 3: In each of the 2 paragraphs below

- i. locate the topic sentence and identify the topic and main idea
- ii. underline the body sentences and state what type of rhetorical/organizational pattern is used (narrative, description, process, examples, definition, analysis, classification, comparison/contrast, cause/effect, analogy)
- iii. locate the concluding sentence and state its function.

#### Paragraph 1

As you read this sentence, you are one of approximately 1.6 billion people – nearly one third of the world’s population – who will use English in some form today. **Although English is the mother tongue of only 380 million people, it is the language of the lion’s share of the world’s books, academic papers, newspapers, and magazines.** American radio, television, and blockbuster films export English-language pop culture worldwide. More than 80 percent of the content posted on the Internet is in English, even though an estimated 44 percent of online users speak another language at home. Not surprisingly, both the global supply of and the demand for English instruction are exploding. **Whether we consider English a “killer language” or not, whether we regard its spread as benign globalization or linguistic imperialism, its expansive reach is undeniable and, for the time being, unstoppable.** Never before in human history has one language been spoken (let alone semi-spoken) so widely and by so many.

Source: Joshua A. Fishman 1998; The New Linguistic Order. *Foreign Policy*, Winter 1998-99 p 26

- i. **TS:** Although English is the mother tongue of only 380 million people, it is the language of the **lion’s share** of the world’s books, academic papers, newspapers, and magazines. **Topic:** English/use of English globally; **main idea:** extent of its use in media and literature despite relatively small number of mother tongue speakers. Sentence 1 is a fact/statistic which contextualizes the topic sentence.
- ii. **Rhetorical/organisational pattern:** Examples: 1) American radio, TV and film; 2) Internet
- iii. **CS:** Whether we consider English a “killer language” or not, whether we regard its spread as benign globalization or linguistic imperialism, its **expansive reach** is undeniable and, for the time being, unstoppable. Function: echoes (“lion’s share” + “expansive reach”) point made in TS. Last sentence is a more general closing statement of fact. Paragraph would still be complete and well-balanced without it.

#### Paragraph 2

Paragraph 5

**There is no reason to assume that English will always be necessary, as it is today, for technology, higher education, and social mobility, particularly after its regional rivals experience their own growth spurts.** Civilization will not sink into the sea if and when that happens. The decline of French from its peak of influence has not irreparably harmed art, music, or diplomacy. The similar decline of German has not harmed the exact sciences. Ancient Greek, Aramaic, Latin and Sanskrit – once world languages representing military might, sophistication, commerce and spirituality – are mere relics in the modern world. The might of English will not long outlive the technical, commercial, and military ascendancy of its Anglo-American power base, particularly if a stronger power arises to challenge it. But just because the use of English around the world might decline does not mean the values associated today with its spread must also decline. **Ultimately, democracy, international trade, and economic development can flourish in any tongue.**

Source: Joshua A. Fishman 1998; The New Linguistic Order. *Foreign Policy*, Winter 1998-99 pp 29

- i. TS: There is no reason to assume that English will always be necessary, as it is today, for technology, higher education, and social mobility, particularly after its regional rivals experience their own growth spurts. Topic: English/current pre-eminence of English for technology/education/social mobility; main idea: continued pre-eminence not inevitable.
- ii. Examples: 1) decline of French; 2) decline of German; 3) decline of Ancient Greek, Aramaic, Latin and Sanskrit
- iii. CS: Ultimately, democracy, international trade, and economic development can flourish in any tongue. Function: briefly summarises points made in topic and body sentences.

**TASK 4:** For each of the paragraphs that follow identify the pattern of organization used (narrative, description, process, examples, definition, analysis, classification, comparison/contrast, cause/effect, analogy). Notice how the paragraphs begin and end, how they are developed, and how many different sentence types are used.

- 1. **definition**
- 2. **cause/effect**
- 3. **analogy**
- 4. **classification**
- 5. **narrative**
- 6. **comparison/contrast**
- 7. **examples**
- 8. **analysis**
- 9. **process**
- 10. **description**