



W02 Writing Lesson: Meet the Paragraph

To-Do Date: Jan 13 at 2:59pm

Special Note

As stated in the syllabus of this course, you are expected to be honest in your coursework and complete all of your work on your own. This includes writing assignments. All of the writing you do throughout this course needs to come from your own brain. Using the words or ideas of another person without giving them proper credit is considered cheating (also known as plagiarism) and is therefore not allowed in this course and all other courses you will take throughout this program. If you plagiarize, your teacher will notify you and consequences will occur. Before you continue with this writing lesson, read the Academic Dishonesty section of this [University Policies](https://content.byui.edu/integ/gen/d24f576f-d34b-47be-a466-d00bd4792fb6/0/UniversityPoliciesPath.html)  (<https://content.byui.edu/integ/gen/d24f576f-d34b-47be-a466-d00bd4792fb6/0/UniversityPoliciesPath.html>) document.  (<https://pathwaysupport.org/handbook/10-student-honor/honor-code/#other>)

Introduction

This week in your [Life Skills Lesson](https://byui.instructure.com/courses/178804/pages/w02-life-skills-lesson-why-education) (<https://byui.instructure.com/courses/178804/pages/w02-life-skills-lesson-why-education>), you learned about the Learning Model as well as the importance of education. This week for your [Application Activity](https://byui.instructure.com/courses/178804/assignments/8226931) (<https://byui.instructure.com/courses/178804/assignments/8226931>), you will have the opportunity to submit your first writing assignment centered on the importance of education as it relates to you and your future within this program.

Before we dive into this week's Writing Lesson, please take a moment to review this week's writing prompt:



Writing Prompt

<https://content.byui.edu/integ/gen/b8b83119-9acc-4a7b-bc84-efacf9043998/0/Home.html>

Drawing on everything you've learned this week about the basic paragraph, write a clear, focused paragraph in response to the following question:

Why am I enrolled in PathwayConnect?

You will be graded on how well you answer the question and apply the following components of the basic paragraph:

- A strong *topic sentence* with a single controlling idea
- At least *two* different types of *supporting details*
- A *conclusion sentence*

Aim for a paragraph in between 150–200 words.

In order for you to effectively fulfill this assignment, you will need to know how to construct a concise (brief) and well-supported paragraph. That is what this week's Writing Lesson will focus on helping you do.

Lesson

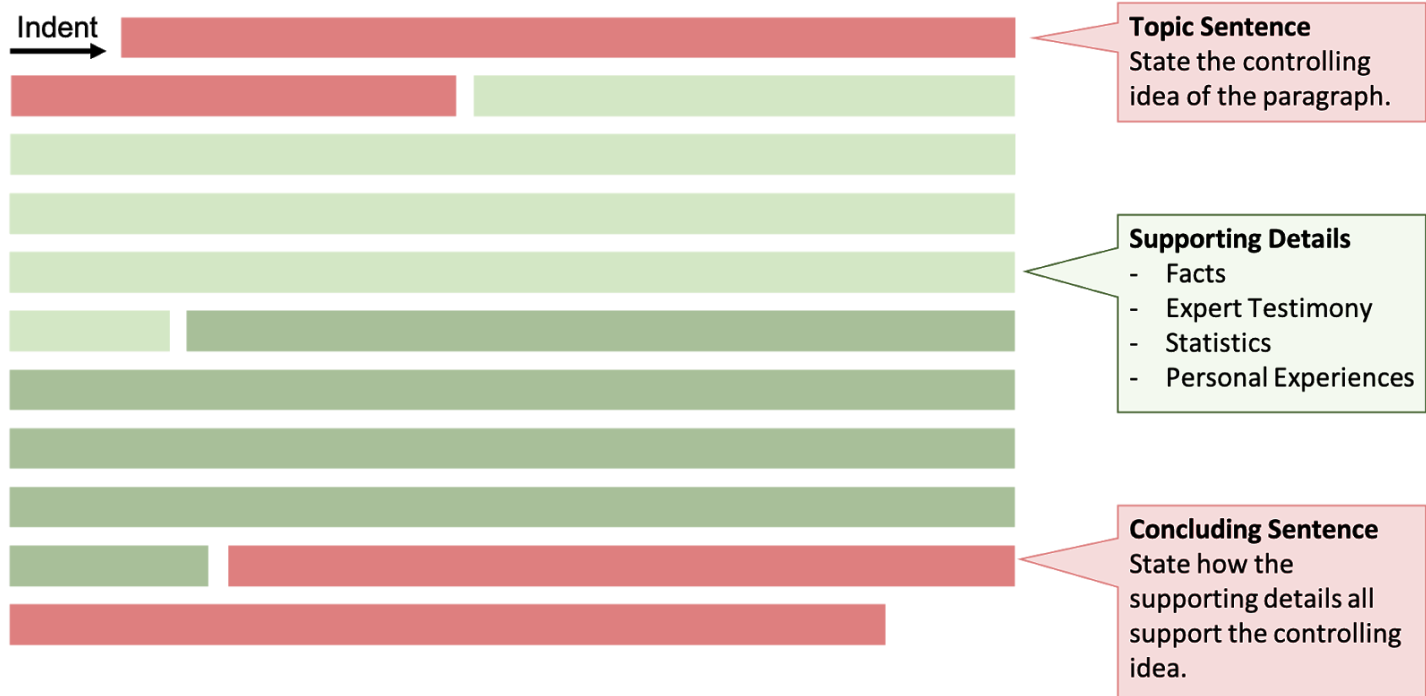
Meet the Paragraph

There are many types of paragraphs. Indeed, over the next couple weeks, you will learn about two *additional* types of paragraphs that will enable you to string your paragraphs together to form a cohesive essay. To start though, let's take a look at the **basic paragraph**.

In general, the basic, well-constructed paragraph should contain at least the following:

1. Single controlling idea
2. Topic sentence
3. Supporting details
4. Concluding sentence

The paragraph should also be indented. This means that there are several spaces before the first sentence. You can achieve this by pressing the space bar several times, or by pressing the Tab key on a computer keyboard. All writing assignment paragraphs must be indented in this course.



W02 Meet the Paragraph Accessible Version

<https://byui.instructure.com/courses/178804/files/76462174/download?wrap=1> ↓

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Parts of the Basic Paragraph

Single Controlling Idea

The first thing you need to keep in mind when writing a paragraph is the need for a single controlling idea. A common trap many inexperienced writers fall into is the trap of trying to pack too much information into each

paragraph that is written. Sometimes it happens in an effort to get a point (or series of points) across more quickly. Other times, it may be the simple result of wanting to add some complexity and depth to the writing. Whatever the reason, far more often the exact opposite tends to occur-- the points being made get buried or confused by competing information and/or the complexity or depth of the message is lost to the reader as he/she struggles to identify what the intended core message is.

This is why it is always best to limit each paragraph to one controlling idea. To explore this idea further, let's take a closer look at this week's paragraph assignment. The prompt above indicates that your paragraph should be answering the following question:

Why am I enrolled in PathwayConnect?

Single Controlling Idea

The controlling idea of a paragraph is the main idea or point the writer is trying to make.

Truthfully, there are probably a few reasons why you joined the program. You may have joined because you want to earn a degree, grow spiritually, and set a good example for your children. Or, perhaps you joined because you followed a prompting to do so and you somehow know it will bless the lives of you and your family. However lengthy the list of reasons, for this particular assignment, you will need to select just *one* reason for joining PathwayConnect so it can serve as the single controlling idea of that paragraph.

Ponder and Record

- Why did you join PathwayConnect?
- What one, specific reason do you intend to focus on for this paragraph assignment?

Topic Sentence

Another component every basic paragraph should contain is a clearly-stated topic sentence at the beginning of the paragraph.

To acquire a deeper understanding of this important component, let's look again at the prompt question your paragraph will be responding to this week:

*Why am I enrolled in
PathwayConnect?*

Topic Sentence

The purpose of the topic sentence is to indicate what controlling idea that paragraph is going to explore.

Although you may have many reasons for joining the program, this particular paragraph assignment is asking you to select just *one* of those reasons. Once that reason has been selected, your next step will be to create a topic sentence based on that reason to serve as the road map for the rest of that paragraph.

For example, imagine for a moment that the reason you selected was:

"Because I want to become something more than I currently am."

This reason should then serve as the controlling idea for this paragraph—a reason that should be identified by a topic sentence that states something similar to the following:

I am enrolled in the PathwayConnect program because I want to become something more than I currently am.

Notice how that sentence immediately focuses the reader's attention on what idea that particular body paragraph will explore?

Ponder and Record

- Based on the controlling idea you selected in the last section (your specific reason for joining PathwayConnect) what might your topic sentence for this paragraph assignment be?

Supporting Details

Once you state the controlling idea in the topic sentence, your next order of business should be providing adequate support for that idea or argument. Such supporting details can take many forms, but they generally tend to include one or more of the following:

- Facts
- Expert testimony
- Statistics
- Personal experiences

Let's take a brief look at each of these types of supporting details. Take note of how they might be used to support a strong topic sentence.

Facts

The technical definition of a **fact** is *a thing that is known and can be proven to be true with evidence*. In our day and age, many things are commonly known to be true and proven (in other words, don't need to be drawn from a book or other citable source), such as the sun rising in the east and setting in the west, the existence of other galaxies outside ours, and the fact that trees generally need sunlight, water, and carbon dioxide to grow. There are also other types of less obvious things that have generally been accepted as fact, such as college grads earn significantly more income compared to high school grads.

Commonly known and accepted facts such as this serve as great supporting details as they tend to require less convincing to be accepted by readers. Using the topic sentence created in the previous section, let's take a look at how a fact-based supporting detail might strengthen and support the controlling idea of this paragraph.

Fact

A thing that is known and can be proven to be true with evidence

If you'll remember, the topic sentence of the paragraph is:

I am enrolled in the PathwayConnect program because I want to become something more than I currently am.

The way a fact-based supporting detail could be used to support this topic sentence would be to follow the sentence up with:

*One of the ways I feel this program will help me become more than I currently am is by helping me to better support my family. **Research has consistently shown that college graduates earn a significantly higher salary than high school graduates.** I know I can not easily advance in my current career without additional education. Going after a college degree is sure to improve my circumstances. This will help me on my journey to become more than I currently am.*

Notice how the supporting detail bolded above cites (refers to) a well-known fact? Do you see how the writer added sentences before and after the fact? These additional sentences help the reader understand how the fact connects to the controlling idea.

Ponder and Record

- What fact-based support might you pick to support the topic sentence of your paragraph?

Expert Testimony

Another type of supporting detail you could use in your paragraph is an expert testimony. You will learn more about how to properly integrate and cite expert testimony quotes in a future lesson. For the sake of this lesson and assignment, start familiarizing yourself with who these “experts” might be in a given field as well as how those testimonies or quotes might effectively support your topic sentences.

To gain a deeper understanding of these principles, take a look at how an “expert testimony” from Clark G. Gilbert, former President of BYU-Pathway Worldwide, about this unique program and what it has to offer can support the selected topic sentence above (“*I am enrolled in the PathwayConnect program because I want to become something more than I currently am*”):

Expert Testimony

A quote or statement made by a qualified person about a specific issue they are considered “expert” (or accomplished) in.

*Clark G. Gilbert, President of BYU-Pathway Worldwide, has routinely said that we belong to a Church that not only values hard work, but also “investment in our future.” He has also quoted President Gordon B. Hinckley’s promise that we “**have the potential to become anything to which [we] set our mind to and...walk the high road that leads to achievement and***

happiness.” Like President Gilbert, I firmly believe that this program can exact change for the better in me if I allow it to.

Notice how the expert testimony above directly supports the topic sentence’s focus on “becoming?” Also notice how the surrounding sentences directly tie that expert testimony back to the topic sentence? Finally, notice how the “expert testimony” selected came from someone deemed “expert” or accomplished in the area of PathwayConnect (the President of BYU-Pathway Worldwide)?

Ponder and Record

- What expert testimony could you use to support your topic sentence?
- Who is an “expert” in the area your topic sentence focuses on?

Statistics

Another type of supporting detail you could choose to use is a statistic. Something is considered a statistic when it is a piece of data from a study or other piece of numerical data. While generally most helpful for more academic-based papers (i.e. informative, persuasive, etc.), statistical supporting details could definitely add value to even the most reflective piece of writing.

Statistical supporting details are something you have likely seen or heard multiple times in your life thus far. You hear them on the news when they are reporting on election polls, you read them in magazine articles or

Statistic

A piece of data from a study or other piece of numerical data.

even ads when they are advertising the benefits of avoiding smoking or alcohol, and you also hear them cited during General Conference on the annual reports and even in some talks. You see them so often because statistics are a great way to simply and powerfully illustrate or support an important point being made with something more concrete.

To see the power of this type of supporting detail in action, let’s revisit the topic sentence (“*I am enrolled in the PathwayConnect program because I want to become something more than I currently am*”) and see how it might be effectively supported by a statistic:

*According to recent surveys of matriculated Pathway Connect students, students are reporting increased gain in their own personal discipleship. **Indeed, 91% reported an increase in their personal testimony, 84% reported that they are more regularly studying their scriptures, 84% also indicated that they are more regularly praying, and 91% reported that they have a stronger faith in Jesus Christ** as a result of participating in this program. These statistics*

show that I will most assuredly become something greater in terms of my own personal discipleship.

Notice how the bolded statistics above directly support and correlate with the topic sentence's focus on "becoming?" Also notice how the additional sentences support and reinforce the connection between the two?

Ponder and Record

- What statistics could you use to support your topic sentence?

Personal Experience

The final type of supporting detail you could use to support your topic sentence is personal experience. Personal experience can be a powerful supporting detail in any type of writing when used at the proper time and context. However, it is oftentimes most effectively used in more reflective writing assignments (such as the paragraph assignment you will be completing this week).

A **personal experience** is generally a brief story about a specific experience (or moment in time) from your own life that illustrates a specific point that your topic sentence is trying to make. For this particular assignment, a personal

Personal Experience

Generally, it is a brief story or experience from your own life that illustrates a specific point.

experience-based supporting detail might look like the following (in relation to this topic sentence: "*I am enrolled in the PathwayConnect program because I want to become something more than I currently am*"):

For the last ten years, I haven't made much progress in my career. I have the work experience I need to progress, but not the level of education. When I asked my boss what I could do to improve and earn a better living wage for me and my family, he suggested that I go for a bachelor's degree. This is because a bachelors is the baseline level of education needed for management positions within my current company. Though I know it will be hard to try and balance work, home, and now school, I know that I cannot progress and become what I want to become without that degree.

Notice how the personal experience directly supports the idea of "becoming" identified in the topic sentence? Do you also notice how the following sentence ties the supporting detail back to the controlling idea stated in the topic sentence?

As you review the types of supporting detail you can choose from, try to focus on the ones that would best support the controlling idea stated in your topic sentence . This assignment requires you to

select two types of supporting details that will help you strengthen and focus your topic sentence and paragraph, so be thoughtful about which ones you choose to employ in your paragraph.

Ponder and Record

- What personal experience could you share to support your topic sentence?
- What two types of supporting details will you use in your own paragraph?

Concluding Sentence

The final section of the basic paragraph contains a **concluding sentence**. Its purpose is to essentially provide the closure on that particular topic or idea before concluding the paragraph. The concluding sentence is not a simple restatement of the topic sentence, but rather a brief summary of how the supporting details shared in the paragraph support the controlling idea of that paragraph.

Let's take a look at the example topic sentence shared earlier in this lesson:

I am enrolled in the PathwayConnect program because I want to become something more than I currently am.

Were you to add on some supporting detail sentences to that topic sentence, the paragraph might start to look something like this:

*I am enrolled in the PathwayConnect program because I want to become something more than I currently am. One of the ways I feel this program will help me become more than I currently am is by helping me to better support my family. **Research has consistently shown that college graduates earn a significantly higher salary than high school graduates.** I know I cannot easily advance in my current career without additional education, so going after a college degree is sure to improve my circumstances and help me on my journey to become more than I currently am. I also see some added benefits in my own spiritual journey of "becoming." According to recent surveys of matriculated Pathway Connect students, students are reporting increased gain in their own personal discipleship. **Indeed, 91% reported an increase in their personal testimony, 84% reported that they are more regularly studying their scriptures, 84% also indicated that they are more regularly praying, and 91% reported that they have a stronger faith in Jesus Christ** as a result of participating in this program. These statistics show that I will most assuredly become something greater in terms of my own personal discipleship.*

Notice the use of concrete facts and statistics work together to support the controlling idea as stated in the topic sentence of the paragraph?

Once those supporting details have been established, the best way to close a paragraph is by revisiting the topic sentence, and very briefly, the themes of the supporting details as well:

Clearly there are inherent educational, financial, and even personal developmental benefits to me being part of this program. These benefits are sure to help me become something more than I currently am.

Notice how the writer reiterates the topic or idea of the paragraph by reinforcing the economic benefits of getting a college education? Also notice how the sentence touches on the second supporting detail (increased disciple leadership) as well as the topic sentence's theme of "becoming"? These truly are the two ideals to strive for when creating your concluding sentence:

1. Sum up the supporting details of the paragraph.
2. Reinforce the topic sentence.

If you can effectively accomplish both objectives as well as the three others discussed above (having a single controlling idea, a strong topic sentence, and supporting details), then you will have a really solid basic paragraph.