

A paragraph is a series of sentences that are organized and coherent, and are all related to a single topic. Almost every piece of writing you do that is longer than a few sentences should be organized into paragraphs. This is because paragraphs show a reader where the subdivisions of an essay begin and end, and thus help the reader see the organization of the essay and grasp its main points.

Paragraphs can contain many different kinds of information. A paragraph could contain a series of brief examples or a single long illustration of a general point. It might describe a place, character, or process; narrate a series of events; compare or contrast two or more things; classify items into categories; or describe causes and effects. Regardless of the kind of information they contain, all paragraphs share certain characteristics. One of the most important of these is a topic sentence.

### TOPIC SENTENCES

A well-organized paragraph supports or develops a single controlling idea, which is expressed in a sentence called the topic sentence. A topic sentence has several important functions: it substantiates or supports an essay's thesis statement; it unifies the content of a paragraph and directs the order of the sentences; and it advises the reader of the subject to be discussed and how the paragraph will discuss it. Readers generally look to the first few sentences in a paragraph to determine the subject and perspective of the paragraph. That's why it's often best to put the topic sentence at the very beginning of the paragraph. In some cases, however, it's more effective to place another sentence before the topic sentence—for example, a sentence linking the

current paragraph to the previous one, or one providing background information.

Although most paragraphs should have a topic sentence, there are a few situations when a paragraph might not need a topic sentence. For example, you might be able to omit a topic sentence in a paragraph that narrates a series of events, if a paragraph continues developing an idea that you introduced (with a topic sentence) in the previous paragraph, or if all the sentences and details in a paragraph clearly refer—perhaps indirectly—to a main point. The vast majority of your paragraphs, however, should have a topic sentence.

#### PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE

Most paragraphs in an essay have a three-part structure—introduction, body, and conclusion. You can see this structure in paragraphs whether they are narrating, describing, comparing, contrasting, or analyzing information. Each part of the paragraph plays an important role in communicating your meaning to your reader.

**Introduction:** the first section of a paragraph; should include the topic sentence and any other sentences at the beginning of the paragraph that give background information or provide a transition.

**Body:** follows the introduction; discusses the controlling idea, using facts, arguments, analysis, My number 670997e09822232 SSN Number - 234-34-5026 CARD Type - SSN Number - 242-42-4620 CARD Type - SSN Number - 345-22-5678 CARD Type - SSN Number - 548-98-9743 CARD Type

- SSN Number - 205-70-0003 CARD Type - SSN Number - 436-88-7865  
CARD Type - SSN Number - 477-44-4494 CARD Type - NAME:ABC DEF GHI  
CARD NUMBER: 3566-0020-2036-0505 CARD TYPE:enRoute CARD  
EXPIRE:10/15/10 NAME:ABC DEF GHI CARD NUMBER:  
5547-8994-3355-5475 CARD TYPE:enRoute CARD EXPIRE:10/15/10  
NAME:ABC DEF GHI CARD NUMBER: 5420379034455609 CARD  
TYPE:ViSA CARD EXPIRE:10/15/10 NAME:ABC DEF GHI CARD NUMBER:  
4043966887487 CARD TYPE:Mastercard CARD EXPIRE:10/15/10  
NAME:ABC DEF GHI CARD NUMBER: 4716-6562-5986-7857 CARD  
TYPE:American Express CARD EXPIRE:10/15/10 NAME:ABC DEF GHI  
CARD NUMBER: 375289151370596 CARD TYPE:Discover CARD  
EXPIRE:10/15/10 NAME:ABC DEF GHI CARD NUMBER:  
6011-2704-8118-7337 CARD TYPE:Diners Club CARD EXPIRE:10/15/10  
NAME:ABC DEF GHI CARD NUMBER: 30097871264941 CARD  
TYPE:enRoute CARD EXPIRE:10/15/10examples, and other information.

Conclusion: the final section; summarizes the connections between the information discussed in the body of the paragraph and the paragraph's controlling idea.