



Paragraph Structure

An understanding of paragraph structure is essential for any well-developed paper. The main body paragraphs are what help an essay discuss its main ideas, convey an argument, or inform the audience about something they had never been exposed to before. Despite this, the exact structure of a paragraph may receive little thought. It is easy for a writer to approach any paragraph if they understand how one is pieced together.

Topic Sentence	A <i>topic sentence</i> is the first sentence in a body paragraph. It is the main point for what the paragraph is going to be about and serves to explain which part of the thesis the writer will be addressing in the paragraph. Utilizing topic sentences is important because they guide the readers and let them know what they can expect to follow in the paragraph.
Supporting Details	Following the topic sentence are the <i>supporting details</i> . Like the term implies, supporting details “support” the topic sentence. This is where the writer should include examples, direct quotations, statistics, or any other sources that help prove the paragraph’s main point. (For further information on supporting details, please refer to the Writing Center’s “Supporting Details” handout.)
Analysis	Although including evidence that supports the writer’s claims is important, it is equally important to analyze the evidence. In the <i>analysis</i> , the writer should develop the idea presented in the topic sentence that was reinforced with the supporting details. The following questions should be answered in the analysis: How does the evidence presented back up the topic sentence in this paragraph? Why or how is this particular claim supportive of the overall thesis of the paper?
Conclusion	After providing an analysis that explains why the topic of the paragraph is relevant to the rest of the essay, include a <i>conclusion</i> that will wrap up the paragraph. This statement should be a transition sentence that ties up the present paragraph and sets up the main topic of the following paragraph. (For more information on transition sentences, please refer to the Writing Center’s “Transitions” handout.)

The following is an example paragraph using these key components:

Perseverance is key to succeeding whenever anyone is trying to accomplish a goal. Without perseverance, people would give up in the face of adversity. Bert Smith, an established writer, says, “It was perseverance, I think, that helped me get that first book published. It is that persistence and drive that helped me to achieve my goals.” If everyone had the same perspective as Smith, they would not be afraid to take on challenges. This is because, as Smith mentioned, perseverance is both persistence and drive. It is that certain push that allows people to get important things done. If people work and develop that quality, then huge obstacles suddenly seem much smaller and manageable. Perseverance can be the key to anyone’s success.

Some information courtesy of:

“Paragraph Structure.” *University of Maryland University College*. University of Maryland University College. Web.

Rumney, Linwood. “Paragraph Structure.” *Hamilton*. The Trustees of Hamilton College. Web.