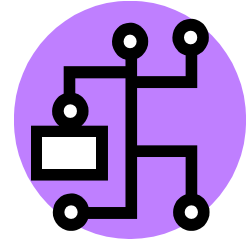


Quick Tip of the Week

Did you know . . .

A **paragraph** is a collection of sentences dealing with a single topic. Good writers know how to stay on topic in their paragraphs, thus helping their readers understand the ideas discussed in their writing. There is one basic rule of paragraphing: Keep a single idea to a single paragraph; simple enough. If you find yourself transitioning into a new idea, then you need to also transition into a new paragraph. To ensure that your paragraphs stay focused and effective, be sure that each of your paragraphs contain the four following elements:



- **Unity**—The entire paragraph should concern itself with a single focus. If it starts with one idea it should not end with or wander into different ideas.
- **Coherence**—is the trait that makes the paragraph easily understandable to a reader. You can create coherence in your paragraphs by creating logical bridges and verbal bridges.
 - **Logical Bridges**—The same idea of a topic is carried over from sentence to sentence.
 - **Verbal Bridges**—Key ideas can be restated in several sentences. Similar words can be repeated in several sentences. Pronouns can refer to nouns in previous sentences. Transition words can be used to link ideas from different sentences.
- **Topic Sentences**— a Sentence that indicates, in a general way, what idea the paragraph is going to deal with. Though topic sentences can appear anywhere in the paragraph, an easy way to make sure your reader understands the topic of the paragraph is to put your topic sentence near the beginning of the paragraph.
- **Adequate Development**— The topic should be discussed fully and adequately. Beware of paragraphs with only two to three sentences as they may not be fully developed.

To make sure your paragraphs are fully developed you can:

- Use examples & illustrations
- Examine effects & consequences
- Cite data
- Use an anecdote or story
- Define terms
- Compare and contrast
- Analyze the topic
- Describe the topic

How do you know when to start a new paragraph? You should start a new paragraph when:

1. **You begin a new idea or point.** If you have an extended idea that spans multiple paragraphs, each new point within that idea should have its own paragraph.
2. **To contrast information or ideas.** Separate paragraphs can serve to contrast sides in a debate, different points in an argument, or any other difference.
3. **When your reader needs a pause.** Breaks in paragraphs function as a short "break" for your readers—adding these in will help your writing more readable. You would create a break if the paragraph becomes too long or the material is complex.
4. **When you are ending your introduction or starting your conclusion.** Your introductory and concluding material should always be in a new paragraph. Many introductions and conclusions have multiple paragraphs depending on their content, length, and the writer's purpose.

One final element that is particularly useful in crafting excellent paragraphs is the use of transitions and sign posts.

Signposts are internal aids to assist readers; they usually consist of several sentences or a paragraph outlining what the article has covered and where the article will be going.

Transitions are usually one or several sentences that "transition" from one idea to the next. Transitions can be used at the end of most paragraphs to help the paragraphs flow one into the next.

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