

Structure of a Paragraph

Your essay **MUST** be organized into separate paragraphs, each with its own controlling idea. In general, a paragraph should be structured like this:

1. Topic sentence (ts). The ts should explain the controlling idea of the paragraph, kind of like a thesis statement for a single paragraph. What are trying to accomplish in this paragraph? What do you want your reader to understand in this section of your essay?
2. Supporting Details (sd). Provide details that support or explain the main point you're trying to make in your paragraph.
3. Example (e). The kind of example you provide might vary depending on the genre of the text you're writing. If you're writing a textual analysis or some other essay that requires sources, your example will probably be a **quote sandwich**. In personal writing, you might provide **an anecdote** from your own experience that helps explain something clearly. Keep in mind, though, that any sources you include in your essay should be quoted at least twice, and every quote needs to be part of a quote sandwich.
4. Concluding sentence (cs). The concluding sentence ties together your discussion in the paragraph and connects it back to your main point in the project as a whole. This is where you explain the **significance** of the ideas in this paragraph.

Topic Sentences

Your topic sentences need to convey **your own ideas to your audience in your own voice!** Good topic sentences help convey your purpose for writing, and in doing so, they help to keep your reader focused on your contribution to the discussion, which makes your essay appear more organized.

Topic Sentences ARE NOT:

- Vague (“There are many important aspects of tutoring.”)
- Source introductions (“In Neal Lerner’s essay...”)
- Quotes (“To be or not to be. That is the question.”)
- Items in a list (“The next idea I want to talk about is...”)

Topic Sentences ARE:

- Specific, detailed, expressive
- Expressions of purpose or focus for a given paragraph
- Reflective of your positions and ideas
- Signals for your reader to follow
- Connected to your main point in a meaningful way