

Basic Paragraph Format

Note: This document should only be used as a reference and should not replace assignment guidelines.

A paragraph discusses one idea in detail and aids the development of an overall topic for the essay. Paragraph length will vary depending on the purpose of the paragraph.

Parts of a Paragraph

The basic paragraph consists of three parts: a topic sentence, supporting details, and a concluding sentence. This basic paragraph format will help you to write and organize one paragraph and transition to the next.

Topic Sentence

The main idea of each paragraph is stated in a topic sentence that shows how the idea relates to the thesis or overall focus of the paper. Generally, the topic sentence is the first sentence of a paragraph. All subsequent points made in the paragraphs should support the topic sentence.

Supporting Details

Supporting details elaborate upon and prove the topic sentence. Supporting details should be drawn from a variety of sources including research and experiences, depending on the assignment, and include the writer's own analysis. The following are common sources of supporting details:

- Expert Opinion
- Facts and Statistics
- Personal Experiences
- Others' Experiences
- Brief Stories
- Research Studies
- Your Own Analysis
- Interviews

Concluding Sentence

Each paragraph should end with a final statement that ties together the ideas brought up in the paragraph and emphasizes the main idea one last time. If the assignment is longer, it should transition to the ideas of the next paragraph.

Example Paragraph

The diagram shows an example paragraph with four labels on the left pointing to specific parts of the text in a box on the right:

- Topic Sentence** points to: "The root cause of childhood Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) is difficult to determine, since many biological, genetic, and ~~environmental factors may contribute.~~"
- Supporting Detail #1** points to: "While genetics can help explain the prevalence of ADD in children and families, they do not necessarily ~~explain its cause (Winger 2012).~~"
- Supporting Detail #2** points to: "Environmental factors such as social interaction, attachment, and other factors can also play a huge role in the development of ADD but are not necessarily its root, according to ~~Graymond (2011, p. 33).~~"
- Concluding Sentence** points to: "Research suggests that genetic and environmental interactions ~~may both be important~~ in conditioning the risk of ADD as well as its severity and progression. In the classic question of "nature v. nurture," in this case, the answer appears to be both."