

Basic Paragraph Organization



While the prompt and type of essay will dictate the style and specific information included in a paragraph, there are several guiding principles that apply to all paragraphs.

What Makes a Good Paragraph?

In general, every paragraph should have the following characteristics:

- **Unified:** A paragraph is a grouping of sentences that form a cohesive idea; therefore, any information in the paragraph should flow from one main idea.
- **Linked to Central Idea or Thesis:** One central idea, claim, or thesis statement should drive the direction of the entire paper, which means every paragraph needs to link back to and provide support for the main idea, claim, or thesis.
- **Organized Logically:** A paragraph is not a collection of random sentences. Rather, it is a collection of sentences that should progress from idea to idea and build upon each other in a logical way. The organization of your ideas, even at the paragraph level, builds your credibility as a writer and improves the quality and validity of your work

Basic Paragraph Example

Topic Sentence:

A topic sentence is like a mini-thesis for your paragraph, providing the main idea or claim of the paragraph and connecting this paragraph to your paper's overall main idea or thesis. Often, the first sentence of a paragraph will also be a transition from the previous paragraph.

As important as it is for Rosalind to demonstrate her independence, it is equally important for Orlando to play the part of a romantic hero. In the article "Shakespeare's Romantic Heroes: Orlando Reconsidered," Thomas Kelly explains that Orlando is not just a random match meant to showcase the dominant figure of Rosalind, but that he is also perfectly suited to her and totally in control of himself, making himself into a typical romantic hero (14). It is Orlando's composure at the hands of Rosalind's constant verbal attacks that demonstrates the calming qualities that make Orlando such a good match for the feisty Rosalind. In proving himself to Rosalind, Orlando isn't merely bending to her will, but rather demonstrating the qualities he already has that make him well suited to her. It is only when the two come together that their complimentary attributes shine, signifying that they are stronger as a pair than they will ever be individually.

Evidence and Supporting Details:

After introducing the central idea or claim of the paragraph in the topic sentence, you must support the idea or claim with evidence. Evidence can be quotes, examples, statistics, personal experiences, logic, or any other material acceptable for the assignment and supportive of the paragraph's idea or claim.

Analysis: Providing analysis is the process of demonstrating how your evidence proves your point and how that point links back to your overall main idea or thesis.

Concluding Sentence: Your paragraph should end with a strong concluding sentence that links your paragraph back to your overall idea or thesis, reinforces the sub-claim or idea made in your paragraph, and prepares the reader to transition into a new paragraph.