

HOW TO WRITE A PARAGRAPH

Prof. Jeffrey Auerbach
Department of History
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WHAT IS A PARAGRAPH?

A paragraph is a group of closely-related sentences that develop a single idea or topic.

THE PARTS OF A PARAGRAPH

- Topic Sentence
- Supporting Sentences
- Concluding Sentence

WHAT IS A TOPIC SENTENCE?

The topic sentence:

- Expresses the main idea of the paragraph; what the paragraph is about.
- Is almost always the first sentence.
- Is usually the most general sentence in the paragraph.
- Tip: Start with something simple and straightforward and then make it more sophisticated

EXAMPLE OF A TOPIC SENTENCE

Canada is one of the best countries in the world to live in.

WHAT IS A SUPPORTING SENTENCE?

Supporting Sentences:

- Develop, explain, and support the main idea of the paragraph.
- Contain facts, examples, and details that relate to and say something about the topic of the paragraph.
- Explain why the main idea is true.
- Tip: Try to write at least three supporting sentences per paragraph.

EXAMPLES OF SUPPORTING SENTENCES

Canada has an excellent health care system.

Canada has a high standard of education.

Canada's cities are clean and efficiently managed.

EXAMPLES OF SUPPORTING DETAILS

Canada has an excellent health care system.

- All Canadians have access to medical services at a reasonable price.
- Canadian life expectancy is 81 years, almost 3 years higher than in the U.S.

PUTTING THE EVIDENCE TOGETHER...

Canada is one of the best countries in the world to live in. First, Canada has an excellent health care system. All Canadians have access to medical services at a reasonable price. As a result, Canadian life expectancy at birth is 81 years, almost 3 years higher than in the U.S. Second, Canada has a high standard of education. According to Time, Canada is the only nation in which more than half the population has college degrees. Third, Canada's cities are clean and efficiently managed. Calgary was recently named the cleanest city in the world.

WHAT IS A CONCLUDING SENTENCE?

The Concluding Sentence:

- Is the last sentence of the paragraph.
- Restates the main idea of the paragraph
- Indicates why the topic is important.
- May prepare the reader for the following paragraph.

EXAMPLES OF CONCLUDING SENTENCES

As a result, Canada is an extremely desirable place to live.

For these reasons, Canada attracts a lot of immigrants.

Canada is a great model for other countries to follow.

PUTTING IT TOGETHER...

Canada is one of the best countries in the world to live in. It has an excellent health care system. It also has a high standard of education. Finally, Canada's cities are clean and efficiently managed. For all these reasons, Canada attracts a lot of immigrants, and is a great model for other countries to follow.

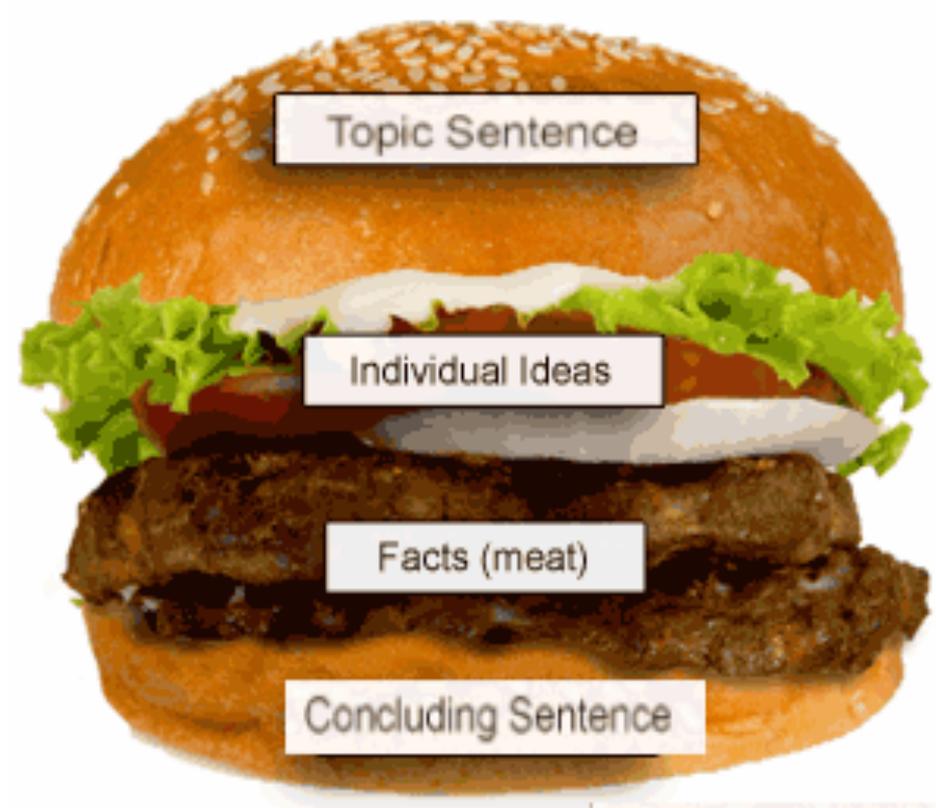
CHECK THE STRUCTURE OF THIS PARAGRAPH...

Through the centuries rats have managed to survive all our efforts to destroy them. We have poisoned them and trapped them. We have fumigated, flooded, and burned them. Some rats even survived atomic bomb tests conducted in the Pacific after World War II. In spite of all our efforts, these enemies of ours continue to prove that they are the most indestructible of pests.

IDENTIFYING THE TOPIC, SUPPORTING, AND CONCLUDING SENTENCES...

Through the centuries rats have managed to survive all our efforts to destroy them. We have poisoned them and trapped them. We have fumigated, flooded, and burned them. Some rats even survived atomic bomb tests conducted in the Pacific after World War II. In spite of all our efforts, these enemies of ours continue to prove that they are the most indestructible of pests.

THE HAMBURGER SCHOOL



REVIEW

- Start with a topic sentence that states the main point of the paragraph.
- Write three supporting or “detail” sentences that are about the topic and help illustrate the main point.
- Write a concluding sentence that restates the topic using different words and indicates why the topic of the paragraph is significant.
- Don’t forget to proofread and polish!

PARAGRAPHS SHOULD BE:

- Unified – All the sentences in the paragraph should be related to the main idea.
- Related to your thesis.
- Coherent – The sentences should proceed in a logical manner.
- Well Developed – Every idea discussed in the paragraph should be explained and supported with evidence

Slave Spirituals

Slave spirituals often had hidden double meanings. On one level, spirituals referenced heaven, Jesus, and the soul; but on another level, the songs spoke about slave resistance. For example, according to Frederick Douglass, the song “O Canaan, Sweet Canaan” spoke of slaves’ longing for heaven, but it also expressed their desire to escape to the North. Careful listeners heard this second meaning in the following lyrics: “I don’t expect to stay / Much longer here. / Run to Jesus, shun the danger. / I don’t expect to stay.” When slaves sang this song, they could have been speaking of their departure from this life and their arrival in heaven; however, they also could have been describing their plans to leave the South and run, not to Jesus, but to the North. Slaves even used songs like “Steal Away to Jesus (at midnight)” to announce to other slaves the time and place of secret, forbidden meetings. What whites heard as merely spiritual songs, slaves discerned as detailed messages. The hidden meanings in spirituals allowed slaves to sing what they could not say.

The Civil War resulted in a constitutional revolution in several ways (*topic sentence #1*). First, the 13th Amendment, which abolished slavery (*Evidence 1*), ended an institution in America that had lasted well over two centuries (*significance*). Such a monumental change in the Constitution is certainly grounds for considering this amendment revolutionary (*relates to thesis*). Moreover, two more amendments were passed within a few years of the Civil War. The 14th and 15th Amendments gave African Americans citizenship and the right to vote, (*Evidence 2*) rights that had never been given to Blacks throughout the U.S. These two amendments were also revolutionary, as African Americans now enjoyed rights that up until this time had been largely denied (*significance/relate to thesis*). Furthermore, although the Constitution did not specifically declare that the federal government had gained more power over the states, the fact that the Union won the war and forced the South to accept these amendments ultimately proved that nullification issues would no longer plague the U.S. as they had earlier in the 19th century. (*Additional evidence/significance*) Ultimately, this forever altered the way the federal government and the states would interact. (*relates to theses*).

Lawrence Bergreen: *Over the Edge of the World*

Magellan's circumnavigation [of the globe] forever altered the Western world's ideas about cosmology – the study of the universe and our place in it – as well as geography. It demonstrated, among other things, that the earth was round, that the Americas were not part of India but were actually a separate continent, and that oceans covered most of the earth's surface. The voyage conclusively demonstrated that the earth is, after all, one world. But it also demonstrated that it was a world of unceasing conflict, both natural and human. The cost of these discoveries in terms of loss of life and suffering was greater than anyone could have anticipated at the start of the expedition. [The voyagers] had survived an expedition to the ends of the earth, but more than that, they had endured a voyage into the darkest recesses of the human soul.