

Paragraph Level Logic



CONSTRUCTING GOOD PARAGRAPHS



Adapted from <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/606/1/> and
<http://english.byu.edu/writingcenter/handouts/OrganizationStructure/paragraphunity.htm>

Definition

- A paragraph is a collection of ***related sentences*** dealing with a ***single topic***.

Basic Rules

- Keep one idea to one paragraph.
- If you begin to transition into a new idea, begin a new paragraph.
- If a single paragraph becomes long, consider elaborating on each point in separate paragraphs.

What is a paragraph?

Example

- Saner, Wisconsin is the snow-mobile capital of the world. The buzzing of the engines fills the air, and their tank-like tracks crisscross the snow. The snow reminds me of Mom's mashed potatoes, covered with furrows I would draw with my fork. Mom's mashed potatoes usually made me sick; that's why I was playing with them. I like to make a hole in the middle of the potatoes and fill it with melted butter. This behavior has been the subject of long chats with my analyst.

What could the author have focused on?

Elements of a Paragraph

- In addition to being restricted to one topic, effective paragraphs should contain each of the following:
 - A Topic Sentence
 - Adequate Development
 - Coherence

A Topic Sentence

- Every paragraph should have a topic sentence.
- The topic sentence explains, in a general way, what the paragraph is about.
- The best way to make sure your reader understands is make the first sentence the topic sentence.

Adequate Development

- The topic of the paragraph should be fully discussed.
- Beware of paragraphs with only two or three sentences.
- Method to create well-developed paragraphs
 - Use examples/illustrations
 - Cite data
 - Define terms
 - Compare/Contrast
 - Evaluate causes and reasons
 - Examine effects
 - Analyze the topic

Coherence

- Coherence is the trait that makes the paragraph easily understandable.
- This is often referred to as “flow.”

Example-Non Coherent

- The means by which Asian companies have sought to compete with American products in market segments in the Western Pacific region will constitute the objective of the first phase of our study. The labor costs of our Asian competitors and their ability to introduce new products quickly are the main issues to be examined in detail. A plan that will demonstrate how American industry can restructure its operations so that it can better exploit unexpected market opportunities, particularly in the Pacific Rim, will be developed from this study.

A study it being done, but what is being studied and what is expected?

Example-Coherent

- In the first phase of our *study*, we will examine *market segments* in the Western Pacific region to determine how *Asian companies* have competed with *American* products. The *study* will examine, in detail, *labor costs* and the ability of *Asian competitors* to introduce new products quickly. By *studying* these elements, we will develop a plan that will demonstrate how *American industry* can restructure its operations so that it can better exploit unexpected *market opportunities*, particularly in the *Pacific Rim*.

Tips For Writing Coherent Paragraphs

- **Repetition of words**
 - *study, market, Asian, American* are repeated multiple times
- **Related words**
 - *Asian companies* → *Asian competitors*
 - *market segments* → *labor costs*

Tips – Transitional Words

- Use transitional words to link ideas from different sentences.
- Transitions (found in bold in this paragraph) are functional words or word groups, **even** whole paragraphs, that connect and show relationships between ideas in a piece of writing. **Moreover**, they show on paper that writers are aware that a reader can't read their minds. Anything that does this job, **then**, is a transition—even if it is a punctuation mark, **such as** a dash, colon, or semicolon; if it connects or shows relationships, it is a transition.

Linking - Poor

- Experiments show that important tasks can be accomplished with a hand axe. *Homo erectus* possessed other tools suitable for some purposes. The hand axe was costly to produce in terms of time, labor, and skill, and required larger blocks of fine-grained, faultless stone. Flint and basalt are fine-grained, faultless stones. The hand axe presented a hazard.

Linking - Better

I wonder what
“these” means....

- Experiments show that **this** important task can be accomplished with a hand axe. **But** *Homo erectus* possessed other tools suitable for that purpose. **Compared with these**, the hand axe was costly to produce in terms of time, labor, and skill, and required larger blocks of fine-grained, faultless stone, **such as** flint or basalt. The hand axe **also** presented a hazard.

Problems with “Linking”

A memo was received September 1 requesting this information. The objective of this report is to present the best method for delivery of an equimolar mixture of carbon dioxide and argon to purge oxygen out of the welding environment in the MIG welding process. The compressibility of carbon dioxide and the equimolar mixture is given at 25°C for a range of pressures from 100 to 750 psia.

By isothermally increasing the volume by a set amount and measuring the new pressures compressibility factors were able to be determined.

Yikes! Too jumpy!

Actual Paragraph from MS Prospectus

Petroleum, also known as crude oil, is a naturally occurring mixture of hydrocarbons of varying molecular weights. Crude oil can be separated into various fuels ranging from lighter hydrocarbons such as methane, propane, and butane, to medium molecular weight hydrocarbons such as gasoline, and kerosene, to heavy hydrocarbons such as diesel fuel, heavy fuel oil (HFO) [1]. Heavy fuel oils are the residual product of crude oil that has gone through the distillation process. During this process crude oil is put into distillation towers and heated. As the oil increases temperature, compounds of varying molecular structures evaporate and can be separated and condensed downstream. This is how many types of fuels are collected or, in other words, refined from the crude oil. The residue from this process is very viscous, has a very high boiling temperature, and as mentioned above is known as No. 6 heavy fuel oil [2].