

Writing skills

Paragraphs

What is a paragraph?

A paragraph is a group of connected sentences that is generally made up of **one main idea** and a **group of supporting sentences**.

Parts of a Paragraph

Paragraphs contain **three** main parts:

- **A topic sentence** – contains the main idea of the paragraph. It is often but not always the first sentence of the paragraph.

How do I write a topic sentence?

Summarise the main idea of your paragraph. Show the reader what your paragraph will be about.

- **Supporting sentences** – these sentences develop or give details about the topic sentence. They show the reader that the main idea is valid and important.
- A supporting sentence can:
 - define keywords or phrases
 - explain and clarify ideas
 - give examples and evidence/support from reliable sources
 - expand on the main idea by giving additional details.
- A concluding sentence which summarises the paragraph and/or provides a link to the next paragraph. This sentence is not always necessary in a paragraph.

Helpful Hint –

Remember the acronym **TEE**.

T = Topic sentence

E = Explain ideas

E = Examples

A Sample Paragraph

Topic Sentence:	Press conferences are usually only called by a company when an event has considerable newsworthiness. For example, the All Blacks will decide on a schedule of press conferences to answer media questions when on tour. Management or companies controlling celebrities may call a press conference on their arrival in a country, or major companies may call a press conference when a product recall, major profit or company takeover is announced (Walters & Dana, 2007). The objective is to control the information that is reported in the media so that the organisation is presented in the best possible light.
Supporting sentences flow:	
A concluding sentence summarises and/or gives a link to the next paragraph:	

Adapted from:

Walters, C., & Dana, L. (2007). *Marketing principles* (4th ed.). Pearson Education.

How do I develop cohesion in my paragraph?

Cohesion holds your writing together so that it makes sense. The reader should be able to see how each sentence flows from the previous one and how each is connected to the topic sentence. Good writers can use two techniques to make their ideas flow:

- By using repetition.
 - Readers need some repetition in order to know you are still talking about the same ideas. You can repeat key words, use synonyms or use pronouns to keep your reader following your progression of thought.

AN EXAMPLE

Not all **ideas** are clear. Some **thoughts** need substantial development. Definition, elaboration or examples are all ways to develop an **idea**. **They** can all add substance to a generalised claim.

- By using linking words and phrases (see the [Linking Words and Phrases](#) handout)
 - Linking words show the relationship between ideas.

AN EXAMPLE

ARA offers a wide range of business programmes in a variety of formats. Students can study towards a School of Business certificate, diploma, degree or graduate diploma that is appropriate to their abilities and career goals. **For example**, a Diploma in Marketing is suitable for students who wish to develop a career in sales and promotion. **In addition**, students have a high level of flexibility with classes scheduled both during the day and evenings. **Similarly**, students have the flexibility of learning on line as well as face to face in classrooms. **In other words**, students can choose the programme and learning style that best suits them.

Adapted from:

Rhodes, K., & Freeman, R. (2006). How to write clearly. In P. Adams, R. Openshaw, & V. Trembath (Eds.), *Score more: Essential academic skills for tertiary education* (pp.100-105). Thomson/Dunmore Press.

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