

Good Body Paragraphs

A paragraph is a text unit of several sentences dealing with a single issue, topic or aspect. It should not therefore (except in special circumstances) be a single sentence, nor should it deal with a range of topics. The paragraph should develop one idea, through illustration or analysis, to a conclusion. It should normally start with a topic sentence indicating what it is about, develop this topic through further sentences until the topic is concluded and a new topic or a different aspect is ready to be broached. In linking sentences logically and coherently to one another, the writer should ensure that transition devices (e.g. *however, similarly, in consequence*, etc) are used appropriately wherever there is a danger that the connection between two sentences may be unclear. Reference back to previous sentences (e.g. *this, these, such, this question, these issues, this situation*) should also be used wherever it can help make the flow of logic clearer. When an already mentioned theme and new information about it are dealt with in one sentence, the theme should normally come first and the new information second, so as to facilitate the reader's understanding.

From Central European University http://www.ceu.hu/downloads/ceu_thesis_guidelines.doc

“Effective paragraphs of this type [persuasive] tend to share certain characteristics, outlined below:

- a topic sentence that presents a specific claim
- abundant evidence that supports the claim presented in the topic sentence
- explanation of how each piece of supporting evidence logically supports the claim
- reminders throughout the paragraph of the specific claim being supported
- quotations that are logically, smoothly, and grammatically integrated into the writer's own sentences (with the correct punctuation, when punctuation is needed)

Strong organization and the effective support and development of ideas are important characteristics of a well-written paragraph and essay.”¹

“Possibly the most serious—and most common—weakness of all essays by novice writers is *the lack of effectively developed body paragraphs*.”²

“Every paragraph in a paper should be

- Unified - The sentences should all refer to the main idea, or thesis, of the paper (Rosen and Behrens 119).
- Coherent-The sentences should be arranged in a logical manner and should follow a definite plan for development (Rosen and Behrens 119).
- Well-Developed - Every idea discussed in the paragraph should be adequately explained and supported through evidence and details that work together to explain the paper's controlling idea (Rosen and Behrens 119).”³

¹ Randy Rambo, “Bad Paragraph/Good Paragraph: Effectively Developing a Persuasive Paragraph,” 6 Aug. 2004; (accessed 12 Oct. 2004); available from http://www.ivcc.edu/eng1002/handout_effectiveorganization.htm.

² Jean Wyrick, *Steps to Writing Well* (Boston: Wadsworth, 2005), 59.

³ “The Path to Good Paragraph Development”, The Writing Center, accessed 11 Oct. 2004 avail. from <http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/paragraphs.html>.

Four Movements of a Well Developed Paragraph in Most Academic Contexts

- I. Topic Sentence: Concisely introduce the topic of the paragraph and situate it within the essay.
- II. Unpack: Explain, discuss the meaning of the topic sentence in your own words (2-3 sentences).
- III. Support: Briefly quote, summarize or paraphrase material from the text that both supports your topic sentence and furthers the discussion (not merely to prove that the text actually says what you say it says).
- IV. Unpack: Discuss, interpret, or analyze the supporting material; point out its meaning and significance to your topic sentence (2-3 sentences). Movements III and IV may be repeated as needed.

SAMPLE

[I] The final way Basil implies that the Holy Spirit is God is by arguing for the indivisible wholeness of the Spirit. [II] For Basil, the Holy Spirit is never partial or divided into parts or aspects. Although humans or other creatures may experience the Holy Spirit partially, this is due to their limitation, not the limitation of the Holy Spirit. [III] Basil uses the image of the sun as a metaphor to explain the experience and reality of the Holy Spirit. Just as one experiences only as much of the sun as one is able without affecting the wholeness of the sun, so our limited experiences of the Holy Spirit do not limit the Holy Spirit (Basil, *The Eastern Fathers*, 105). [IV] For Basil, the Holy Spirit can never be less than all the Holy Spirit. The fact that creatures are not overwhelmed by the Holy Spirit has to do with their limited perception, not a lessening of the Holy Spirit. [III] Because the Holy Spirit is the “Sovereign of sanctification,” all creatures rely on Him to achieve “their proper and natural end” (Basil, *The Eastern Fathers*, 105). [IV] All creatures, including humans, must experience the Holy Spirit to find their natural end. This means that even the weakest, least holy creature experiences the Holy Spirit. Similarly, the most holy creatures also experience the Holy Spirit. Because the Holy Spirit can be experienced by such a variety without change to itself, Basil implies that the Holy Spirit must be divine.

–Scott Gillis