

# Paragraphs

The purpose (and definition) of a paragraph is that it deals with just *one* topic or major point of argument in an essay. That topic or argument should normally be announced in the opening sentence, which is sometimes called a *topic sentence*.

The sentences which immediately follow the topic sentence should expand and develop the statement, explaining its significance to the question in general.

This opening statement and amplification should then be followed by evidence to support the argument being made. You should provide illustrative examples which are discussed as an explanation of the central idea.

Paragraphs should normally be between 50 words minimum and 200 words maximum in length, but might be longer if in an extended essay you were explaining a topic in considerable detail.

The last sentence of a paragraph should try to round off consideration of the topic in some way. It *may* also contain some statement which links it to the one which comes next.

Consecutive paragraphs *may* be linked with terms such as 'However' and 'On the other hand' so as to provide a sense of continuity in your argument. However, if you are in any doubt let them stand separately and speak for themselves.

The recommended organisation of a typical paragraph in academic writing is therefore rather like a smaller version of the structure of the complete essay.

- The opening topic sentence
- A fuller explanation of the topic sentence
- Supporting sentences which explain its significance
- The discussion of examples or evidence
- A concluding sentence