

Paragraph writing

Topic Sentence

What is the topic sentence?

The topic sentence is the first sentence in a paragraph.

What does it do?

It introduces the main idea of the paragraph.

How do I write one?

Summarize the main idea of your paragraph. Indicate to the reader what your paragraph will be about.

Example:

There are three reasons why Canada is one of the best countries in the world. First, Canada has an excellent health care system. All Canadians have access to medical services at a reasonable price. Second, Canada has a high standard of education. Students are taught by well-trained teachers and are encouraged to continue studying at university. Finally, Canada's cities are clean and efficiently managed. Canadian cities have many parks and lots of space for people to live. As a result, Canada is a desirable place to live.

Supporting Details

What are supporting sentences?

They come after the topic sentence, making up the body of a paragraph.

What do they do?

They give details to develop and support the main idea of the paragraph.

How do I write them?

You should give supporting facts, details, and examples.

Example:

There are three reasons why Canada is one of the best countries in the world. **First, Canada has an excellent health care system. All Canadians have access to medical services at a reasonable price. Second, Canada has a high standard of education. Students are taught by well-trained teachers and are encouraged to continue studying at university. Finally, Canada's cities are clean and efficiently managed. Canadian cities have many parks and lots of space for people to live.** As a result, Canada is a desirable place to live.

Closing Sentence

What is the closing sentence?

The closing sentence is the last sentence in a paragraph.

What does it do?

It restates the main idea of your paragraph.

How do I write one?

Restate the main idea of the paragraph using different words.

Example:

There are three reasons why Canada is one of the best countries in the world. First, Canada has an excellent health care system. All Canadians have access to medical services at a reasonable price. Second, Canada has a high standard of education. Students are taught by well-trained teachers and are encouraged to continue studying at university. Finally, Canada's cities are clean and efficiently managed. Canadian cities have many parks and lots of space for people to live. **As a result, Canada is a desirable place to live.**

Prewriting Paragraphs

What is the prewriting stage?

The prewriting stage is when you think carefully and organize your ideas for your paragraph before you begin writing.

Six Prewriting Steps:

- 1. Think carefully about what you are going to write.** Ask yourself: What question am I going to answer in this paragraph or essay? How can I best answer this question? What is the most important part of my answer? How can I make an introductory sentence (or thesis statement) from the most important part of my answer? What facts or ideas can I use to support my introductory sentence? How can I make this paragraph or essay interesting? Do I need more facts on this topic? Where can I find more facts on this topic?
- 2. Open your notebook.** Write out your answers to the above questions. You do not need to spend a lot of time doing this; just write enough to help you remember why and how you are going to write your paragraph or essay.
- 3. Collect facts related to your paragraph or essay topic.** Look for and write down facts that will help you to answer your question. Timesaving hint: make sure the facts you are writing are related to the exact question you are going to answer in your paragraph or essay.
- 4. Write down your own ideas.** Ask yourself: What else do I want to say about this topic? Why should people be interested in this topic? Why is this topic important?
- 5. Find the main idea of your paragraph or essay.** Choose the most important point you are going to present. If you cannot decide which point is the most important, just choose one point and stick to it throughout your paragraph or essay.
- 6. Organize your facts and ideas in a way that develops your main idea.** Once you have chosen the most important point of your paragraph or essay, you must find the best way to tell your reader about it. Look at the facts you have written. Look at your own ideas on the topic. Decide which facts and ideas will best support the main idea of your paragraph. Once you have chosen the facts and ideas you plan to use, ask yourself which order to put them in the paragraph. Write down your own note set that you can use to guide yourself as you write your paragraph or essay.

Writing Paragraphs

What is the writing stage?

The writing stage is when you turn your ideas into sentences.

Five Writing Steps:

1. Open your notebook and word processor.
2. Write the topic sentence, supporting sentences, and closing sentence.
3. Write clear and simple sentences to express your meaning.
4. Focus on the main idea of your paragraph.
5. Use the dictionary to help you find additional words to express your ideas.

Editing Paragraphs

What is the editing stage?

The editing stage is when you check your paragraph for mistakes and correct them.

Grammar and Spelling

1. Check your spelling.
2. Check your grammar.
3. Read your essay again.
4. Make sure each sentence has a subject.
5. See if your subjects and verbs agree with each other.
6. Check the verb tenses of each sentence.
7. Make sure that each sentence makes sense.

Style and Organization

1. Make sure your paragraph has a topic sentence.
2. Make sure your supporting sentences focus on the main idea.
3. Make sure you have a closing sentence.
4. Check that all your sentences focus on the main idea.
5. See if your paragraph is interesting.

Publishing Paragraphs

What is the publishing stage?

The publishing stage is when you produce a final copy of your paragraph to hand in.

Three Publishing Steps:

1. Make a paper copy of your paragraph.
 2. Show your work to your teacher, tutor, or parents.
 3. Ask them for hints on how to improve your writing.

Definition Paragraph

When writing a definition paragraph, you take a thing or an idea and explain what it is.

Example: Write a paragraph giving the definition of a pest.

The following words can help you to write a good definition paragraph:

1. "is defined as"

Example: A pest **is defined as** any animal or plant that damages crops, forests, or property.

2. "is a kind of"

Example: A pest **is a kind of** animal or plant that damages crops, forests, or property.

Classification Paragraph

When writing a classification paragraph, you group things or ideas into specific categories.

Example: Write a paragraph discussing two types of energy resources.

The following words can help you to write a good classification paragraph:

Helper Words:
<u>is a kind of</u>
<u>can be divided into</u>
<u>is a type of</u>
<u>falls under</u>
<u>belongs to</u>
<u>is a part of</u>
<u>fits into</u>
<u>is grouped with</u>
<u>is related to</u>
<u>is associated with</u>

is a kind of : Coal **is a kind of** non-renewable resource.

can be divided into : Energy resources **can be divided into** two types.

is a type of : Coal **is a type of** non-renewable resource.

falls under : Coal **falls under** the category of non-renewable resources.

- belongs to** : Coal **belongs to** the category of non-renewable resources.
- is a part of** : Coal **is a part of** the category of non-renewable resources.
- fits into** : Coal **fits into** the category of non-renewable resources.
- is grouped with** : Coal **is grouped with** non-renewable resources.
- is related to** : Coal **is related to** other non-renewable resources.
- is associated with** : Coal **is associated with** other non-renewable resources.

Description Paragraph

In a description paragraph, you are writing about what a person, place, or thing is like. Sometimes, you may describe where a place is located.

Examples: Write a paragraph describing what a polar bear looks like.

Describe where Canada's industry is located.

The following words can help you to write a good description paragraph:

Helper Words:

Properties	Measurement	Analogy	Location
<u>size</u>	<u>length</u>	<u>is like</u>	<u>in</u>
<u>colour</u>	<u>width</u>	<u>resembles</u>	<u>above</u>
<u>shape</u>	<u>mass/weight</u>		<u>below</u>
<u>purpose</u>	<u>speed</u>		<u>beside</u>
			<u>near</u>
			<u>north/east/south/west</u>

Properties

- size** : Polar bears are big in **size**.
- colour** : Polar bears are usually white in **colour**.
- shape** : Polar bears have a special **shape**.
- purpose** : The **purpose** of the polar bear's fur is to keep it warm.

Measurement

- length** : The **length** of a polar bear's claws is 20 cm.
- width** : The **width** of a polar bear's head is about 50 cm.
- mass / weight** : Polar bears **weigh** up to 650 kg.

speed : Polar bears can swim at a **speed** of 40 km per hour.

Analogy

is like : A polar bear **is like** other bears in shape.

resembles : A polar bear **resembles** other bears in shape.

Location

In : Most of Canada's manufacturing is located **in** Ontario and Quebec.

Above : The ceiling is **above** us.

Below : Most of Ontario is **below** Hudson Bay.

Beside : Quebec is located **beside** Ontario.

Near : Many companies are located **near** Toronto.

north / east / south / west : Ontario is **west** of Quebec.

Compare and Contrast Paragraph

In a compare and contrast paragraph, you write about the similarities and differences between two or more people, places, things, or ideas.

Example: Write a paragraph comparing the weather in Vancouver and Halifax.

The following words can help you to write a good compare and contrast paragraph:

Helper Words:

Similarities	Differences
<u>is similar to</u>	<u>the other hand</u>
<u>both</u>	<u>however</u>
<u>also</u>	<u>but</u>
<u>too</u>	<u>in contrast</u>
<u>as well</u>	<u>differs from</u>
	<u>while</u>
	<u>unlike</u>

Similarities

is similar to : Spring weather in Vancouver **is similar to** spring weather in Halifax.

Both : **Both** Vancouver and Halifax have rain in the spring.

Also : Halifax **also** has a rainy spring season.
Too : Halifax has a rainy spring season, **too**.
as well : **As well**, Halifax has rainy spring season.

Differences

on the other hand : **On the other hand**, winter is much colder in Halifax.
However : **However**, winter is much colder in Halifax.
But : Vancouver has a mild winter, **but** Halifax has a cold one.
in contrast to : **In contrast to** Vancouver, Halifax has a cold winter.
differs from : Halifax **differs from** Vancouver by having a cold winter.
While : **While** Vancouver has a mild winter, Halifax has a cold winter.

Sequence Paragraph

In a sequencing paragraph, you are writing to describe a series of events or a process in some sort of order. Usually, this order is based on time.

Example: Write a paragraph outlining how a person becomes the prime minister.

The following words can help you to write a good sequence paragraph.

Helper Words:

Order	Time
<u>first, second, third, etc.</u>	<u>recently</u>
<u>in the beginning</u>	<u>previously</u>
<u>before</u>	<u>afterwards</u>
<u>then</u>	<u>when</u>
<u>after</u>	<u>after</u>
<u>finally</u>	
<u>at last</u>	
<u>subsequently</u>	

Order

first, second, third, etc.

Example: **First**, you need to become a leader of a political party. **Second**, you need to win a seat in the House of Commons. **Third**, your party must have a majority of seats.

in the beginning : **In the beginning**, you need to become a leader of a political party.

Before : **Before** becoming the prime minister, you need to become the leader of a political party.

Then : **Then**, you must win a seat in the House of Commons.

After : **After** winning a seat in the House of Commons, you must make sure you have a majority of seats.

Finally : **Finally**, after all these steps, you can call yourself the prime minister.

at last : **At last**, you can call yourself the prime minister.

Subsequently : **Subsequently**, you must make sure you have a majority of seats in the House of Commons.

Time

Recently : She was **recently** elected prime minister.

Previously : She is the new prime minister. **Previously**, she worked as a lawyer in Toronto.

Afterwards : She won the party leadership last year. **Afterwards**, she won the election.

When : **When** she won the party leadership, she was still working as a lawyer.

After : **After** winning a seat in the House of Commons, you must make sure you have a majority of seats.

Choice Paragraph

In a paragraph where you have to make a choice, you need to choose which object, idea, or action that you prefer. Often, you will need to give your opinion on a choice of actions or events.

Example: Write a paragraph stating whether you would prefer to play hockey or lacrosse.

The following words can help you to write a good choice paragraph:

Helper Words:

Point of View	Personal Opinion
<u>in my opinion</u>	<u>like/dislike</u>
<u>belief</u>	<u>hope</u>
<u>idea</u>	<u>feel</u>
<u>understanding</u>	
<u>I think that</u>	
<u>I consider</u>	
<u>I believe</u>	
<u>it seems to me</u>	
<u>I prefer</u>	

Point of View

in my opinion

Example: **In my opinion**, hockey is more fun than lacrosse.

belief

Example: My **belief** is that hockey is more fun than lacrosse.

idea

Example: My **idea** is that hockey is more fun than lacrosse.

understanding

Example: My **understanding** is that hockey is more fun than lacrosse.

I think that

Example: **I think that** I would prefer to play hockey and not lacrosse.

I consider

Example: **I consider** hockey to be more exciting than lacrosse.

I believe

Example: **I believe** hockey is more exciting than lacrosse.

it seems to me

Example: **It seems to me** that hockey is more exciting than lacrosse.

I prefer

Example: **I prefer** hockey over lacrosse.

Personal Opinions

like/dislike : I **like** the sport of hockey because it is fast and exciting.

Hope : I **hope** that I can play hockey in the future.

Feel : I **feel** that hockey is my favorite sport.

Explanation Paragraph

In an explanation paragraph, you need to explain how or why something happens. Very often in social studies class, you will be asked to explore causes and effects of certain events.

Example: Write a paragraph explaining why so many Europeans moved to Canada during the nineteenth century.

The following words can help you to write a good explanation paragraph:

Helper Words:

Cause	Effect
<u>because</u>	<u>therefore</u>
<u>since</u>	<u>thus</u>
<u>as a result of</u>	<u>consequently</u>
<u>is due to</u>	<u>hence</u>
	<u>it follows that</u>
	<u>if . . . then</u>

Cause

Because : People moved to Canada from Europe during the nineteenth century **because** they had poor living conditions in Europe.

Since : **Since** living conditions in Europe were terrible, many people moved to Canada.

as a result of

Example: People moved to Canada from Europe **as a result of** poor living conditions in Europe.

is due to / was due to

Example: The large influx of people to Canada **was due to** economic pressures in Europe.

Effect

Therefore : Living conditions in Europe were terrible. **Therefore**, many people moved to Canada for a better life.

Thus : Living conditions in Europe were terrible. **Thus**, many people moved to Canada for a better life.

Consequently : Living conditions were terrible in Europe. **Consequently**, many people moved to Canada.

Hence : Living conditions were terrible in Europe. **Hence**, many people moved to Canada.

it follows that : Living conditions were terrible in Europe. **It follows that** many people moved to Canada.

if ... then : **If** living conditions were better in Europe, **then** fewer people would have moved to Canada.

Evaluation Paragraph

In an evaluation paragraph, you make judgments about people, ideas, and possible actions. You need to make your evaluation based on certain criteria that you develop. In the paragraph, you will state your evaluation or recommendation and then support it by referring to your criteria.

Example: Write a paragraph evaluating whether pesticides should be used on farms.

The following words can help you to write a good evaluation paragraph:

Helper Words

Criteria for Evaluation	Recommendation
<u>good / bad</u>	<u>suggest</u>
<u>correct / incorrect</u>	<u>recommend</u>
<u>moral / immoral</u>	<u>advise</u>
<u>right / wrong</u>	<u>argue</u>
<u>important / trivial</u>	

Criteria

good / bad : The use of pesticides such as DDT is **bad** for the environment.

correct / incorrect : The belief that pesticides must be used is **incorrect**.

moral / immoral : The use of pesticides to control pests is **immoral** because it harms the environment.

right / wrong : It is **wrong** to use pesticides because they harm the environment.

important / trivial : The issue of pesticides is an **important** one because it affects the environment.

Recommendation

Suggest : I **suggest** that pesticides should not be used to control pests.

Recommend : I **recommend** that pesticides should not be used because they are harmful to the environment.

Advise : I would **advise** farmers not to use pesticides if possible.

Argue : I would **argue** that pesticides should not be used because they harm the environment.