



# THE BASIC PARAGRAPH

The basic structure of the paragraph including a special section on illustrative and descriptive paragraphs

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# THE BASIC PARAGRAPH

## Just what is a paragraph?

A paragraph, simply put, is a connect group of information that follows one main topic. Usually it is at least 3-4 sentences long.

An example of a paragraph is to the right.

As you can see from the example, the paragraph doesn't really have to be about anything—just as long as the rest of the paragraph keeps on the same subject. In this case, it was the over-use of the word, 'well'.

People use 'well' way too much. Today, I saw a guy on the bus he used the word 'well' over 30 times. To make matters worse, the 30 times were all in the same sentence! Can you imagine using 'well' that many times in a sentence? Well, can you? Oh no, now I am using 'well' too! I told you, people use 'well' way too much!

# WHAT'S NOT A PARAGRAPH

## What a paragraph isn't.

A paragraph isn't just any 3-4 sentences strung in together in a clump.

For example, can you make sense to the 4 sentences to the right? Do they have any sort of unity?

To avoid this, you should focus on a topic sentence. We will look at that aspect in the next slide.

I love cats. Some people dress in shirts. For dessert, Barbara Wellers would eat nails. Judas Priest is playing in Montreal tonight.

# THE TOPIC SENTENCE

## The Topic Sentence informs the rest of the paragraph

Think of a paragraph as a bag of goods.

You want to keep only one type of thing into one bag. Maybe you want to keep only CDs in one bag. Maybe you want all of your punk rock CDs in a bag and all of your country music in another.

Whatever it is, you just want one thing in that bag. Now, so you don't forget, you have to label the bag.

The label is the topic sentence and everything in the bag belongs to that topic.

First you need a topic sentence. The topic sentence is what the rest of the paragraph will discuss.

For example, if I wanted to discuss Las Vegas, my topic sentence might be, '**Las Vegas is more than just casinos**'.

Write down your own topic sentence. It can be anything you can support. A few examples:

- I like the summer time.
- The Chicago Bears will sadly not win the Super Bowl.
- The Rolling Stones are the best band in music.
- I like \_\_\_\_\_ (put whatever you like in the blank).

# MAKING YOUR OWN PARAGRAPH

It's your turn to make a paragraph.

If you have your topic sentence, then the rest really is just supporting it with 2-3 other sentences.

Look at the example to the right for how the Las Vegas topic sentence is shaping up.

Las Vegas is more than just casinos. Sure, Las Vegas may have a lot of casinos, but we also have areas like Red Rock Canyon where people can go hiking and biking. Las Vegas also is home to one of the top ranked Taekwondo teams coming out from NV Taekwondo. Finally, Las Vegas is home to Nellis Air Force Base. As one can see, Las Vegas is a lot more than just casinos.

That's it. I started with the topic sentence (in red) and then I supported it with details. That's all there is to it. Remember, do not forget to cite if you use another person's idea or words!

# ILLUSTRATIVE PARAGRAPH

## What is an illustrative paragraph?

An illustrative paragraph is the type of paragraph that the writer uses to go from a figurative item to more specific occurrences.

For example, the paragraph at the right.

**Yoga is good for you.** I've seen people who couldn't otherwise work out do yoga. Yoga also helps people with their flexibility which is a need for many people as they age. Furthermore, yoga is a calming technique that helps people de-stress from a busy life.

The figurative or more general is in **red**. The rest is a detailed support for the more general topic. Illustrative paragraphs are really good at demonstrating the main supports for a general subject. For example, a lot of advertisers uses an illustrative approach to list the qualities of their product.



# DESCRIPTIVE PARAGRAPH

## What is a descriptive paragraph?

A descriptive paragraph is the type of paragraph that the writer uses for 'showing' instead of just 'telling' what is happening.

For example, the paragraph at the right.

We came upon a green dragon adorned with blue flakes for scales. A great jet of orange-red flame spouted from its mouth. The mouth itself was long, almost too long for its strong slithering neck, and filled with teeth. Some of the teeth were bigger than a school bus; its tongue felt like a wet carpet and its breath suffocated us with a sulfuric air that was heavy enough to taste.

As you can see, the descriptive paragraph does just that. In work related areas, a police officer or a technician often uses descriptive paragraphs to detail every part of the scene or problem.