

# Structuring Paragraphs

Here you can learn

- **the basics of structuring paragraphs.**

An associated worksheet is available.

## General Information

A paragraph is a group of closely related sentences that develop one main idea. Good paragraphing will help your readers understand your text and ideally encourage them to keep reading. Paragraphs are the key method of organizing ideas within an academic text.

## Paragraph Structure

The classic paragraph structure has three parts: introduction, body and conclusion.

- |                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| <b>Introduction:</b> | The introduction usually includes a <i>topic sentence</i> that describes the paragraph topic. Topic sentences are discussed in more detail below.  |
| <b>Body:</b>         | The body of the paragraph is made of <i>supporting sentences</i> . This part of the paragraph provides evidence, analysis, facts, statistics, examples, explanations, quotations, and other details. These sentences must be related to the paragraph's central topic. They should flow logically using connecting words and other techniques that create cohesion (see <u>Information Sheet 7: Improving Cohesion in your Text</u> ). |
| <b>Conclusion:</b>   | The concluding sentence of a paragraph can have a number of important functions. It should signal the end of the paragraph and can act as a bridge to the next paragraph. It can remind the reader of the key point or points in a longer paragraph. It may repeat the topic sentence, albeit in different words. However, a concluding sentence is not necessary for every paragraph in a longer text.                                |

## Topic Sentences

The topic sentence outlines the main idea of a paragraph. It is usually one of the first sentences of a paragraph. The underlined sentence in the paragraph below clearly indicates the topic of the paragraph. The other underlined words help the cohesion in the paragraph.

It is not just ecological and methodological issues that complicate studies of Si – some of our biggest gaps in understanding relate to the physical environment and its impacts on plant ability to accumulate Si. The role of soil-based factors in Si accumulation is crucial but under-researched; remarkably, relatively little is known about the Si fluxes between soil and plants or about the most important Si pools used by plants (Gocke et al. 2013). Another knowledge gap is how Si availability is affected by the soil microbial community or by soil fauna, although recent studies are beginning to address this (Alfredsson et al. 2016). Plant Si uptake can be increased by mycorrhizal fungi (Kothari, Marschner & Romheld 1990), but the mechanisms by which this might occur remain unclear. Adapted from: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1365-2435.12711>

## Paragraph Length

In academic writing, one sentence paragraphs are unusual.

There is no rule for how long a paragraph should be. However, long blocks of text can be daunting and may put readers off reading your work. If a paragraph appears particularly long, ask yourself if you have really only discussed one main idea or if there is a logical place to begin a new paragraph. If a paragraph is too short, it may be that the idea has not been developed in enough detail, i.e., is it long enough to develop the central idea of the paragraph?

## Paragraph Cohesion

The sentences within a paragraph should have a logical order and flow. There are a number of techniques to create cohesion including use of connecting words and pronouns and repeating key nouns and phrases. For more information, see Information Sheet 7: Improving Cohesion in Your Text.

## Useful Resources

Brandon, L. & Brandon, K. 2014. *At a Glance: Writing Paragraphs and Beyond*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Boston, Cengage Learning.

## Final Comments/Tips

- Readers of English texts like to have paragraphs of roughly the same length. Paragraph length depends to a certain extent on the scientific discipline and the paper section. Investigate the journals you read and check typical paragraph length.

