

Introduction to Paragraph Writing

What is a Paragraph?

A **paragraph** is a short collection of well-organised sentences which revolve around a single theme and is coherent.

Parts of a Paragraph

- **Introduction:** It constitutes the opening sentences of the paragraph. It introduces the main idea. Good introductions often capture the interest of the reader.
- **Body (Supporting Sentences):** It constitutes the supporting sentences and ideas. It provides the reader with additional details about the main idea.
- **Conclusion:** It ties up loose ends of the paragraph and helps in reiterating or highlighting the main idea.

Characteristics of a Well-written Paragraph

- **Concise:** A good paragraph expresses everything it has to say briefly.
- **Unified:** A paragraph revolves around a single idea. The first line of the paragraph often gives the main idea. All the other details support the main idea of the passage.
- **Sequenced:** The sentences of the paragraph cannot be written haphazardly. The ideas progress in a sequential order.
- **Coherent:** The sentences in the paragraph do not function independently. They are well-connected to be readable. If a paragraph is not coherent, then it may sound illogical or clumsy to the reader.
- **Complete:** A complete paragraph expresses everything without leaving any gaps as far as the information is concerned. It does not end abruptly without offering a sensible conclusion.

Sample 1

Strike when the Iron is Hot

The proverb is a reference to how the blacksmith heats the iron to make it malleable. Once it is cooled, the blacksmith loses the opportunity to mould it into the desired shape. Our lives are like iron; when opportunity presents itself, we should be ready to use it in order to change our lives. Once the time has passed, there is no point in sulking about lost opportunities. Wise men stay alert and recognise opportunities when they present themselves. The foolish ones on the other hand stand by and watch as opportunities pass by. Our reluctance to take risks can often leave us empty handed. Therefore, it is essential that we make the best use of our abilities and opportunities to progress in life.

- The sentences underlined in **RED** comprise the **introduction** of the paragraph. It simplifies or explains the idea given in the title for the reader.
- The sentences underlined in **PURPLE** comprise the **body** of the paragraph. It provides all the information to support the main idea of the paragraph.
- The sentences underlined in **BLUE** comprise the **conclusion** of the paragraph. It reiterates or highlights the main idea and the final opinion of the writer.
- The paragraph conveys its main ideas briefly. It is therefore **concise**.
- The entire paragraph focuses on a single idea. It therefore has unity.
- In the paragraph, the ideas in the introduction are well connected to the body of the paragraph.
- That in turn is connected to the conclusion of the paragraph. Connectives are added to connect the ideas smoothly and logically. It is therefore **sequential** and **coherent**.
- The paragraph does not end abruptly. It repeats the idea that is explained in the beginning of the paragraph. By using closing sentences such as 'The proverb therefore...', it puts emphasis on the writer's final opinion. The paragraph is therefore **complete**.
- Hence, we can say that the above paragraph is well-written.

Types of Paragraphs

- **Descriptive Paragraph:** As the name suggests, through the **Descriptive Paragraph**, the writer describes something to the reader. It may be based on what the writer has seen, heard or felt. The writer uses rich descriptions that appeals to the reader's senses. This helps the reader place himself in a world that the writer creates.

Sample 2

Hermes: The Messenger of Gods

Hermes is a Greek Olympian God. Born to Zeus and Maia, Hermes is known for his quick thinking and cunning nature. He is the youngest of the Olympians and is known to move quickly between the worlds of the divine and the mortal. Because of this ability, Hermes often acts as a messenger between men and the Olympians. A benevolent God, Hermes protects travelers and athletes. He is also known to be mischievous as he often plays tricks on other gods. He does it for his own amusement or in a bid to save humans from the gods' wrath. Hermes is also the speediest of all gods since he has wings attached to his sandals. Interestingly, Hermes could never resist the urge to steal even when he was an infant. Therefore, he is also credited as the patron God of all thieves.



Sample 3

Out of the gravel there are peonies growing. They come up through the loose grey pebbles, their buds testing the air like snails' eyes, then swelling and opening, huge dark-red flowers all shining and glossy like satin. Then they burst and fall to the ground. In the one instant before they come apart, they are like the peonies in the front garden at Mr. Kinnear's, that first day, only those were white. Nancy was cutting them. She wore a pale dress with pink rosebuds and a triple-flounced skirt, and a straw bonnet that hid her face. She carried a flat basket, to put the flowers in; she bent from the hips like a lady, holding her waist straight. When she heard us and turned to look, she put her hand up to her throat as if startled.

- From *Alias Grace* by Margaret Atwood

- **Narrative Paragraph:** This type of paragraph tells a story or an incident to the reader. In other words, it simply narrates a tale that is meaningful. Such paragraphs often follow a linear or a chronological order of narration.

The following sample is taken from the novel “*Mrs. Dalloway*” by Virginia Woolf.

Sample 4

What a lark! What a plunge! For so it had always seemed to her when, with a little squeak of the hinges, which she could hear now, she had burst open the French windows and plunged at Bourton into the open air. How fresh, how calm, stiller than this of course, the air was in the early morning; like the flap of a wave; the kiss of a wave; chill and sharp and yet (for a girl of eighteen as she then was) solemn, feeling as she did, standing there at the open window, that something awful was about to happen; looking at the flowers, at the trees with the smoke winding off them and the rooks rising, falling; standing and looking until Peter Walsh said, “Musing among the vegetables?” – was that it? – “I prefer men to cauliflowers” – was that it? He must have said it at breakfast one morning when she had gone out onto the terrace – Peter Walsh.



Sample 5

Mr Bucket was the only person in the family with a job. He worked in a toothpaste factory, where he sat all day long at a bench and screwed the little caps on to the tops of the tubes of toothpaste after the tubes had been filled. But a toothpaste cap-screwdriver is never paid very much money, and poor Mr Bucket, however hard he worked, and however fast he screwed on the caps, was never able to make enough to buy one half of the things that so large a family needed. There wasn't even enough money to buy proper food for them all. The only meals they could afford were bread and margarine for breakfast,

boiled potatoes and cabbage for lunch, and cabbage soup for supper. Sundays were a bit better. They all looked forward to Sundays because then, although they had exactly the same, everyone was allowed a second helping.

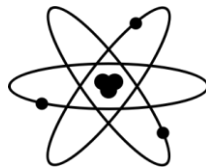
- From *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* by Roald Dahl

- **Expository Paragraph:** This type of paragraph explains an instruction, a method or a process. The purpose of such a paragraph is to simply explain something to the reader. Often, the writer of such paragraphs does a lot of research on the topics he or she wishes to explain. The writer uses expository paragraphs to share the knowledge that he or she already has with the readers.

Sample 6

Why do Atoms Explode when they are Split?

Atoms of radioactive elements can be split. According to Albert Einstein, mass and energy are interchangeable under certain conditions. When the atom splits, the process is called nuclear fission. In this case, a tiny amount of mass is converted into energy. The energy thus released cannot do much damage. However, a number of subatomic particles called neutrons are also released during this process. Each neutron will hit a radioactive element releasing more neutrons in the process. This results in a chain reaction and a tremendous amount of energy is created. This energy is converted into heat which expands uncontrollably causing an explosion. Hence, atoms do not explode in the literal sense. They create energy which can cause explosions.



Sample 7

Papermaking

Everybody knows that paper is made out of trees. But when one looks at trees, one cannot imagine something as soft and fragile as paper is made out of something that is so hard and strong. Plant matter such as wood is made of fibres known as cellulose. It is the primary ingredient in papermaking. Raw wood is first converted into a pulp consisting of a mixture of cellulose, lignin, water and some chemicals. Pulp can be made mechanically through grinders or through a chemical process. The short fibres are created through mechanical grinding. The paper thus created is weak and is used for making newspapers, magazines and phonebooks. Through chemical pulping process, stronger varieties of paper are made. The cellulose pulp is sprayed on moving conveyor screens to make mats. These mats are then dried, coloured and cut according to the requirement.

- **Persuasive Paragraph:** This type of paragraph is used to capture the reader's interest or to make them understand and accept the writer's point of view. Persuasive paragraphs are useful for building arguments. Such passages are rhetorical in nature and may use facts and details to make the argument stronger and more believable. The writer has to be confident of his or her opinion to sound credible to readers. The aim of the writer is to influence the beliefs of readers.

Sample 8

The Importance of Breakfast

You may already know that it is important to have a king-sized breakfast every morning. Do you know why? Your body is famished in the morning because you haven't eaten for about 8–10 hours. Breakfast is therefore the first meal of the day, and hence, the most important one as well. Imagine driving a car without fuel; this is exactly how your body feels without the fuel provided by a nutritious breakfast. Many people these days resort to skipping breakfast in a bid to lose weight. Nutritionists are appalled by this trend since it is mandatory to have breakfast within two hours of waking up. Depriving the body of energy can cause serious health problems in the long run. Forget silly celebrities and their inane ways to lose weight. Never ever miss breakfast!



Sample 9

Power of Positive Thinking

Positive thinking is an attitude or a mindset characterised by optimism and happiness. A positive person hopes for the best and anticipates success in his life. Although many may scoff at the idea of always being positive, it has a plethora of benefits not only for the mind but also for the body. Positivity imparts happiness to the soul and makes one lighter. This causes us to exude good will and joy. People are drawn towards such individuals. Being negative in one's words and actions causes the exact opposite reaction. It is a known fact that people try to avoid people who relay negativity. They do not want to be around someone who brings down the energy of the room. Positive feedback to yourself can improve your health and increase your chances of success in life. It is advisable that one refrains from using harsh words in their thoughts or words. Be kind and gentle towards yourself, be encouraging and be comforting. Only then can one achieve everything they want in life.

Steps to Write a Paragraph

- **Step 1:** Think about the idea given in the title or the prompt.
 - What type of paragraph will be appropriate?
 - What could be the main ideas?
 - How to write the introduction, the body and the conclusion?
 - Write all the ideas.

Example:

‘India: The World’s Biggest Democracy’

- In this case, a descriptive paragraph would be appropriate.
 - Main ideas would include
 - a) Why India is the biggest democracy?
 - b) What are the hallmarks of Indian democracy?
 - c) India’s diversity
 - d) Instances when democracy in India played a definite role
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- **Step 2:** Structure your paragraph.
 - Do not use more than two sentences for the introduction and conclusion.
 - It is important to plan your paragraph instead of writing spontaneously.
 - Arrange the ideas in a chronological order if you are attempting a narrative paragraph.
 - Arrange them in the increasing order of importance in a descriptive, expository or persuasive paragraph.
 - Remember to conclude the paragraph.
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- **Step 3:** Use a consistent tense form while writing the paragraph.
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- **Step 4:** Keep in mind the ‘Characteristics of a Well-written Paragraph’ that we discussed at the beginning of the lesson.
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- **Step 5:** Recheck for any grammatical errors after writing a paragraph.

A Checklist:

- Every idea in the paragraph supports a single point of view.
- The paragraph revolves around the topic given in the prompt.
- All the sentences are written in the correct order and that no sentence is out of place.
- There is no ambiguity in the passage.
- No clumsy or repetitive sentences.
- The main idea shines through.
- The idea is introduced properly.
- Transition words are used correctly to connect sentences.
- Doesn't end abruptly without a proper conclusion.
- Easy to read from the reader's point of view.
- No grammatical errors.