

# Paragraphs



GRACE  
ACE & WRITING CENTER

## PARAGRAPHS: MUSCLE TISSUE THAT BUILDS A STRONG ARGUMENT

Before you can develop your paragraphs, you need to decide on the argument you pose or the working thesis statement of your paper.

Each paragraph MUST be related to this argument or statement.

### STRUCTURE

1. Topic statement: What is this paragraph about?
  - a. Supporting evidence that links the topic of this paragraph to your thesis statement or supports your argument.
  - b. Analysis of the evidence presented, that shows you understand the material and can add your own critical thinking and ideas to the argument.
  - c. Transition

### EVIDENCE

The evidence you present in your paper is the connective tissue that binds your whole argument together. If you have weak evidence or find your evidence in unauthoritative sources, your whole argument will fall apart.

### PARAGRAPH LENGTH

How long should my paragraphs be?

It doesn't matter how short your paragraph is, as long as it displays unified content. Paragraphs that are too long should be split, though.

### STEPS TO DEVELOPING STRONG PARAGRAPHS

- 1 Decide on a controlling idea and create a topic sentence** - Paragraph development begins with the formulation of the controlling idea. This idea directs the paragraph's development.
- 2 Explain the controlling idea** - The writer explains his/her thinking about the main topic, idea, or focus of the paragraph.
- 3 Give an example (or multiple examples)** - Paragraph development progresses with the expression of some type of support or evidence for the idea and the explanation that came before it.
- 4 Explain the example(s)** - This explanation shows readers why you chose to use this/or these particular examples as evidence to support the major claim, or focus, in your paragraph. NONE of your examples should be left unexplained
- 5 Complete the paragraph's idea or transition into the next paragraph**

Works consulted: [The Writing Center at the University of North Carolina](#)