

Structuring Paragraphs

Written essays and assignments depend on structural clarity to effectively communicate ideas. With each idea divided into a separate paragraph the text becomes more accessible for its reader and easier to mark.

The clearer the structure of your work the easier your examiners job will be; by providing a clear and structured answer you improve your chances of better marks.

The building blocks of paragraphs are sentences. In a coherent paragraph each sentence must perform a particular role. Here are some types of sentences frequently used to make up a paragraph:

1. **'Introductory Sentence(s)'**: Usually only stated in the opening paragraph, the 'Introduction Sentence' outlines the main focus of the essay/assignment.
2. **'Topic Sentence(s)'**: This introduces the specific topic of the paragraph in question.
3. **'Topic Developing Sentence(s)'**: This sentence gives additional information about the topic.
4. **'Topic Expanding Sentence(s)'**: Outlines the 'slant' or 'argument' of the paragraph. Usually this sentence requires a signposting term such as: 'However'; 'Conversely'; 'Frequently'; 'Additionally' etc.
5. **'Topic Concluding Sentence(s)'**: Concludes the discussion of the topic. Can also be used as a link to the next paragraph.

Here is an example of how these sentences can make up a paragraph:

Hand-shaking is a greeting convention in many cultures. People routinely shake hands at a first meeting. In some cultures, the practice is to shake hands on parting also. This can be symbolic of drawing business to a close. However, in other cultures the greeting and farewell are supplemented by a kissing gesture where two people touch cheek to cheek. In France, there appears to be some protocol to this behaviour, which is rarely understood by those from other cultures. Salutations vary across the globe and traditions often differ even within one country.