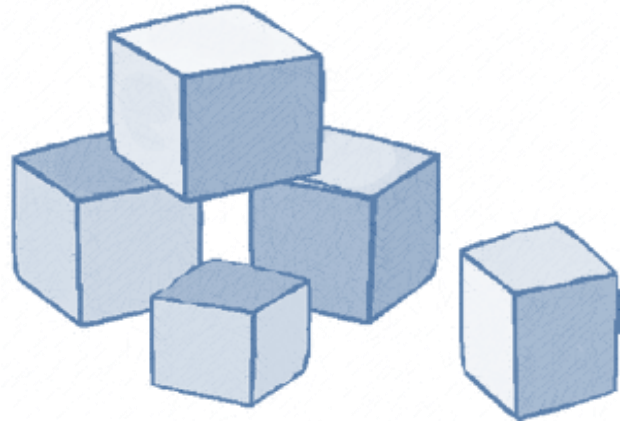


# Paragraphing

Paragraphs give your writing structure: each paragraph should cover one idea or aspect of an idea so that every new paragraph marks a pause in the writing and signals a progression in your argument. Well-defined paragraphs that focus on a particular idea improve the flow of your essay and make the central argument clear for the reader.



Like the essay itself, paragraphs have an **internal structure** of an introduction, main body and conclusion. Paragraphs often include:

- An opening topic sentence to express your main point. It may be useful to use 'connecting words' (such as: however, furthermore) or signposting sentences (another point to consider is...)- see pp. our 'Connecting Your Writing' and 'Signposting' help-sheets.
- Supporting sentences to develop and support the main point, give back up points, give examples, provide relevant quotations, comment on the evidence, show the implications, outline opposing theories etc.
- A concluding sentence to show the significance of the point made, indicating how it answers the question and possibly linking these ideas to the next paragraph.

Paragraphs do not have a specific length. In academic writing, paragraphs frequently develop complex ideas and, therefore, **generally run from half to one full double-line spaced A4 page** in length. If your paragraphs seem short, check whether some of the surrounding paragraphs actually develop the same point. If your paragraphs are too long, check whether the idea would be better explained with more paragraphs.

Take care to **format your paragraphs** in the same way throughout your work: **indent the first line of all new paragraphs by pressing the TAB key once**. Do not indent the first paragraph of the essay, nor the first paragraph after a heading or sub-heading. **Do not skip a line between paragraphs.**