

## Writing Strong Paragraphs

Strong body paragraphs are the key to any well-developed argument. These paragraphs provide structure in an essay just as bones provide structure in a body--without them, everything would fall together in a messy heap. Writing effective supporting paragraphs will add power and clarity to your argument. There are four main elements that are present in every good paragraph: topic sentences, paragraph unity, paragraph development, and paragraph closure.

### Topic Sentences

The main point of a paragraph is expressed in the topic sentence, and it is crucial that you make sure each of your paragraphs has a topic sentence. Often, the topic sentence will be the first sentence of your paragraph, functioning as a “promise” to the reader about what is to come. The topic sentence of each paragraph should serve as a “mini-thesis” for the point being made in that paragraph. It not only expresses the “topic” for the paragraph, but also makes some kind of **argumentative point** about that topic. This argumentative point should be related to the main thesis of your essay. If you were to string together all the topic sentences in your paper, you would have a nice summary of your paper’s argument.

### Paragraph Unity

It is very important to make sure each supporting paragraph in your essay has only **one main point**. Furthermore, every sentence in the paragraph should be clearly related to the main point. If there are any sentences in your paragraph that are not related to the main point of the paragraph, you should take them out.

### Paragraph Development

Once you have made sure that each of your paragraphs has a main point and a topic sentence, you should then make sure that each paragraph is adequately developed. Skinny paragraphs are often very unsatisfying to the reader, because they do not provide the reader with enough information to follow your argument. A fully developed paragraph should leave your reader feeling satisfied that all his or her questions have been answered. The key to fully developing your paragraphs is providing enough **evidence** and **analysis** to support the main point you are making.

**--Evidence:** Evidence is any data that supports the main point of the paragraph. It can be a specific example, statistic, fact, or quotation. Any claim that you make in the paragraph should be supported with plenty of evidence.

**--Analysis:** It is important to make sure to fully explain or analyze how your evidence supports your claims. For each piece of evidence you present, make sure you write at least one or two sentences explaining, analyzing or interpreting how that evidence supports your point.

### Paragraph Closure

When the reader gets to the end of your paragraph, he or she should feel a sense of completion or closure. You might think of the final sentence(s) of your paragraph as your last chance to convince your reader of the main point you are trying to make in the paragraph. One way to do this is to paraphrase your topic sentence, making sure to include clear allusions to the evidence and analysis you presented in the paragraph.