



Paragraph Development

What is a paragraph?

Except for special-purpose paragraphs, such as introductions and conclusions, paragraphs are clusters of information supporting an essay's main point (or advancing a story's action).

How to make a paragraph using TSRA method (Developed by Trela Anderson of George Mason University)?

1. **T= Topic Sentence** --- First sentence of a paragraph: determines the focus of the paragraph.
 - **Note:** Topic sentences are generalizations in need of support, so once you have written a topic sentence, ask yourself, "How do I know that this is true?" Your answer will suggest how to develop the paragraph.
2. **S/R= Support/Research** --- Quotes, Paraphrases, Details, and Examples from outside sources.
3. **A = Analysis, Addition, or Alternative** ---Your own thoughts responding to or building on the evidence you just provided. This is a key move that tells the audience how you want them to interpret the evidence you gave.

Analysis	Examine or interpret the quote/paraphrase
Addition	Add new knowledge to the quote/paraphrase -- - something the author has not mentioned or considered; equivalent to "Yes, and . . ."
Alternative	Suggest a viewpoint or strategy different from that within the quote/paraphrase; equivalent to "Yes, but . . ."

Note: Sometimes a response to research does not immediately come to mind. It's okay. Simply leave a white / blank space (**highlight it so you know to come back to it later**) in your paper and respond to the source later. Responses to research are important because you do not want to write a paper void of your own critical responses; doing so signifies a lack of critical thinking. Your own voice is missing.

Example of the TSRA Model in Published Writing (Provided by Trela Anderson of George Mason University):

An increase in readership promotes better reading skills among students (**Topic Sentence**). Reading skills should be explicitly taught in content areas for underprepared students in the upper grade levels (Hirai, Borrego, Garza & Klook, 2010) (**Support/ Research**). Demographic data for the academically underprepared incoming students at Fayetteville State University indicated poor academic performance, low motivation, apparent weak study habits, and lack of essential reading comprehension skills. As faculty, we noticed that such students were more likely to earn final grades of D or F or withdraw from the course (**Analysis**).

How long should my paragraph be?

Most readers feel comfortable reading paragraphs that range between 100 and 200 words. Shorter paragraphs force too much starting and stopping, and longer ones strain the reader's attention span. The exceptions to this rule are:

- 1) 200+ words - scholarly writing, where they suggest seriousness and depth (the type that we as college students most often use);
- 2) Shorter than 100 words - in informal essays to quicken the pace; and in business letters, where readers routinely skim for main ideas.

When should I start a new paragraph?

Here are the reasons to start a new paragraph:

- To separate the introduction and conclusion from the rest of the paragraphs;
- To signal a shift to a new idea;
- To emphasize a point (by placing it at the beginning or the end, not in the middle, of a paragraph);
- To highlight a contrast;
- To signal a change of speakers (in a dialogue about a certain issue, agreeing or disagreeing with the point made previously);
- To provide readers a needed pause if the paragraph before was a long one;

- To break up text that looks too dense.

Beware of using too many short, choppy paragraphs. Readers want to see how your ideas connect, and they become irritated when you break their momentum (attention) by forcing them to pause every few sentences

When should I combine paragraphs?

- To clarify the essay's' organization;
- To connect closely related ideas;
- To maintain momentum (attention);
- To bind together text that looks too choppy.

Content and examples used from:

"Bedford Basics: A Workbook for Writers"; D. Hacker, W.V. Goor; Prince George's Community College; Third Edition; 1998.

Excerpt from "Reading Across the Curriculum: A Framework for Improving the Reading Abilities and Habits of College Students"; T. Anderson and J. Kim; Journal of College Literacy and Learning; Volume 37; 2011.

"Five-paragraph essay"; Wikipedia; 19 February 2019; Accessed 19 March 2019. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Five-paragraph_essay

Our font choice: Dyslexie is designed to ease the reading process for people with dyslexia.