



# Academic Writing

*from paragraph to essay*

# **The Structure of a Paragraph**

**1- Definition of a paragraph**

**2- Parts of a paragraph**

**3- The topic sentence**

## Learning English

My idea was that learning English would be fun, but it appeared that it is not free of difficulties, especially in speaking and writing. Speaking a new language , though rewarding, is accompanied with some troubles. It is not always easy to keep thinking in English and forget all about my native tongue. So, I need some time to get my ideas prepared before I can put them in correct English sentences. Furthermore, some new words are too difficult to utter properly; I need to check them in the dictionary again and again. Writing, too, is too difficult. One needs to check spelling, grammar and style to guarantee an acceptable piece of composition. Beside all these, one should take care of unity and relatedness to the topic sentence and that is not an easy task, too. Anyway, I will try my best to be a good hard-working language learner.

# 1- Paragraph : Definition

- ▶ A paragraph is a group of sentences about a single topic.
- ▶ The sentences explain the writer's **main idea**.
- ▶ Number of sentences is ( About 5 - 10)
- ▶ Sentence 1 is **indented**.

# Identifying Complete Sentences

- ❖ A sentence is a **group** of words that expresses a **complete thought**.
- ❖ “Complete thought” **does not** mean a specific number of words: A sentence can be short or long:
  - ❖ Shortest Sentence = Two Words
  - ❖ Long sentence = Too many words
- ❖ Sentence Parts : **Subject** + **Predicate**
- ❖ **Subject** = **What we talk about**
- ❖ **Predicate** = **What we say about the subject**

## Switzerland — Something Interesting at Every Turn

*By Ken Jones*

If you dream of travelling to a country with beautiful mountains, delicious food, wonderful places to go sight-seeing and polite people, you should visit Switzerland. If you look at the map, the first thing you notice is that



Switzerland has many mountains, including some of the highest in Europe. Climbing or skiing down the mountains is great fun. Another thing you will notice is that Switzerland shares its borders with five different countries: France, Germany, Italy, Austria and Liechtenstein. In fact, there are four official languages in Switzerland: German, French, Italian and Romansch. All these groups of people make Swiss culture very interesting. Finally, Switzerland has many cities and interesting places to visit. Cities such as Bern have modern buildings like the Paul Klee Zentrum, yet the traditional alpine refuges in the mountains show that the country's old traditions are still alive. All the people, places and things to see definitely make Switzerland a great place for a holiday.

# Ex. 2

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THE STRUCTURE OF A PARAGRAPH 11

2

a. What is the topic of the paragraph?  
.....

b. What is the main idea about the topic?  
.....

c. What ideas help explain the main idea?  
.....  
.....  
.....

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2

▶ Answer the question

▶ a) **Traveling**

▶ b) The main idea is that Switzerland is a very good choice.

▶ c) **Ideas about the mountains, Various Peoples, Different languages (cultures), Cities (Big and small) .**

▶



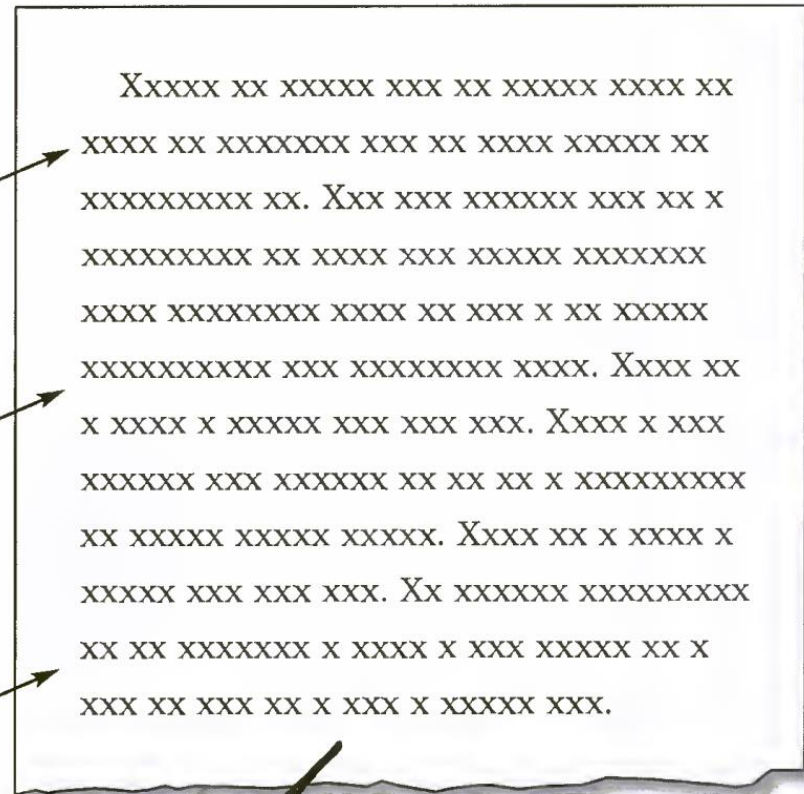
# Paragraph Organisation

- ▶ Paragraph Types: according to structure
- ▶ Independent = self-sufficient (whole text)
- ▶ Dependent Paragraph= part of a bigger text (essay, article, etc,)
- ▶ Parts of Independent Paragraph:
  - ▶ 1- Topic sentence
  - ▶ 2- Support sentences
    - ▶ 2-a- Major support sentences
    - ▶ b- Minor support sentences
  - ▶ 3- Concluding sentence

# Paragraph Organisation

A paragraph has three basic parts:

1. **The topic sentence.** This is the main idea of the paragraph. It is usually the first sentence of the paragraph, and it is the most general sentence of the paragraph.
2. **The supporting sentences.** These are sentences that talk about or explain the topic sentence. They are more detailed ideas that follow the topic sentence.
3. **The concluding sentence.** This may be found as the last sentence of a paragraph. It can finish a paragraph by repeating the main idea or just giving a final comment about the topic.



## ▶ Ex. 2

- ▶ Topic sentence- If you dream of travelling....
- ▶ Supporting sentences- If you look at the map....
- ▶ Concluding sentence- All the places, people and things....

- 3 Put a tick (✓) next to the group of sentences that makes a good paragraph. Why are the other groups of sentences not good paragraphs?

a.

*My best friend has many different hobbies, such as skiing, cooking, and playing the piano, and she is very good at all of these activities. For example, she has played the piano for ten years and has won three piano competitions. She also likes to spend time travelling, and she has been to many different countries in the world. She grew up speaking Spanish and English, but now she can also speak French and Italian. I like my best friend very much.*

b.

*Classes in literature are useful no matter what job you intend to have when you finish university. Books are about life. People who study literature learn the skill of reading carefully and understanding characters, situations, and relationships. This kind of understanding can be useful to teachers and business people alike. Literature classes also require a lot of writing, so they help students develop the skill of clear communication. Of course, a professional writer needs to have this skill, but it is an equally important skill for an engineer. Finally, reading literature helps develop an understanding of many different points of view. Reading a novel by a Russian author, for example, will help a reader learn more about Russian culture. For anyone whose job may bring them into contact with Russian colleagues, this insight can help encourage better cross-cultural understanding. Studying literature is studying life, so it is relevant to almost any job you can think of.*

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c.

*One good way to learn another language is to live in a country where that language is used. When you live in another country, the language is around you all the time, so you can learn to listen to and speak it more easily.*

## 2

### The topic and the main idea

#### ➤ The topic sentence ...

- usually comes first in a paragraph.
- gives the writer's main idea or opinion about the topic and helps the reader understand what the paragraph is going to talk about.

▶ Ex.3

- ▶ A. Not Good paragraph ( More than one Topic)
- ▶ B. Good paragraph
- ▶ C. Not good paragraph (There are few information, there aren't supporting sentences)

## Ex.4

4 Circle the topic of the sentence. Underline the main idea about the topic.

a. Switzerland is a very interesting country to visit.

b. Dogs make excellent pets.

c. A really good place to study is the library at my school.

d. Learning a foreign language creates job opportunities.

e. Football is my favourite sport because it is exciting to watch.

f. One of the most valuable tools for students is the computer.

g. My sister and I have very different personalities.

h. Summer is the best time to travel in my country.

i. My hometown is a friendly place to live.

5 For each of these paragraphs, choose the sentence from the list below that would make the best topic sentence.

a.

.....  
..... When Ken wanted to enter a good university, he studied hard to pass the examination. The first time he took the exam, he did not do well, and he felt very discouraged. But he knew he wanted to study at that university, so he studied more. The next year, he tried taking the exam again. The second time, he did very well, and now he is studying engineering. I believe Ken is a good role model for me, and he has taught me that never giving up is the best way to succeed.



1. One of my closest friends, named Ken, is a person I can trust.
2. My friend Ken is a very successful student.
3. I admire my friend Ken because he doesn't give up.



b.

..... Many children begin learning to play football when they are very young. You can often see them playing at school or in the streets around their houses. At secondary school, students may play football in a team and compete in championships. If a player is very good, he might go on to play for a professional team. People in my country love watching football on television and also go to matches whenever they can. Many people have a favourite team or player, and everyone loves to talk about matches and competitions. Football is really like a national sport in my country.



1. I love playing football, and I hope I can become a professional player one day.
- 2. There are many popular sports in my country, but the most popular sport is football.
3. Football is a difficult sport to learn to play well.

**6 Write a topic sentence for three of these topics.**

- a. a favourite place to relax
- b. a grandparent
- c. a pet I have known
- d. a favourite food to eat
- e. playing a musical instrument

topic: .....

.....  
.....

topic: .....

.....  
.....

topic: .....

.....  
.....

## Ex. 6

A. There are many places to relax, but the beach is the best for me

B. I have never thought of becoming a grandparent.

C. I have always liked to have a pet.

D. Falafel will always be my favourite fast food meal

E. Playing a guitar has been my childhood dream.

## Review

- 7 These sentences are mixed up parts of one paragraph. Number the parts in order:  
1. topic sentence, 2. supporting sentences, and 3. concluding sentence.

*What should I study at university?*

- a. .... *It wasn't an easy decision, but for the reasons listed above, I have decided to study journalism.*
- b. .... *It can be difficult to choose a subject to study at university because there are so many choices, but by considering my skills and interests, I have decided to study journalism.*
- c. .... *I have always enjoyed writing, so it is sensible to choose a subject that involves writing. When I begin working, I would like to have the opportunity to travel, and travel is often an important part of a journalist's job. Finally, I am also interested in photography, and pictures are very important in journalism.*

## Ex.7

a. concluding sentence

b. topic sentence

c. supporting sentence

**8** Use words or phrases in the box to complete the sentences.

concluding sentence    indented    main idea    paragraph  
supporting sentences    topic    topic sentence

- a. The ..... is usually the first sentence in a ..... . It gives the ..... and the .....
- b. The first sentence of a paragraph can be .....
- c. The ..... come after the topic sentence, and they explain the topic sentence.
- d. The ..... comes at the end of a paragraph.

## Ex.8

a. topic sentence/paragraph.

Topic/main idea

b. intended

c. supporting sentences

d. concluding sentence

(T.S.) During my summer holidays, I love camping by the river in the woods near my grandmother's home. <sup>(1)</sup> There are so many things to do that I am never bored. <sup>1a</sup> I swim and fish in the river. <sup>1b</sup> I climb trees when I feel energetic and lie in the sun when I feel lazy. <sup>1c</sup> I watch the birds and animals as they care for their young. <sup>(2)</sup> I also love the food that I cook over my open wood fire. <sup>2a</sup> The slightly smoky meat, black on the outside and red in the middle, is delicious. <sup>2b</sup> The fish that I catch in the nearby stream just a few minutes before I cook them, would be good enough for a king. (C.S.) Then after two weeks of relaxation, good food, and good exercise, I return to town refreshed, healthy, and ready to begin work again.