

Paragraph Structure

A paragraph is a **unit of thought**, not of length. It is series of sentences about a single topic or idea. All the sentences in a paragraph must relate to this idea.

- The **first sentence** of a paragraph is called **the topic sentence**. Its purpose is to introduce the reader to the main idea of the paragraph.
- The sentences that follow the topic sentence **then explain, develop, and illustrate** the main idea. These supporting sentences must follow a logical order of development. If the topic or idea changes, then a new paragraph should be started.
- Clearly show the beginning of a paragraph by indenting five spaces **or** by double-double spacing between paragraphs. The visual division between paragraphs helps the reader to understand the structure of the writing and therefore to process the ideas more easily.
- There are no set rules about paragraph length. A paragraph is seldom only one sentence, because you cannot develop an idea in one sentence.