

Help Centres – English Support



Basic Outline for a Paragraph

What is a paragraph?

A paragraph is a collection of sentences on one topic. It can stand alone or be part of a longer work, such as an essay.

What are the parts of a paragraph?

1. **Topic sentence.** This is often the first sentence in the paragraph. It states the main idea. If the paragraph is part of an essay, the topic sentence will also clearly support the thesis. The topic sentence should be general enough that all the supporting sentences can demonstrate or expand the topic sentence.

Topic: How to Choose a College or University

2. **Supporting ideas/sentences.** These five or more sentences develop the idea stated in the topic sentence. They should give supporting facts, details, and examples. They should not develop any other ideas.

Supporting ideas: 1. Good Location, 2. Affordable, 3. Good preparation for career

3. **Concluding sentence.** This last sentence of the paragraph restates the main idea and draws a conclusion about the ideas presented in the supporting sentences.
4. **Transitions.** These are words and phrases that show how the supporting ideas work together to develop the main idea of the paragraph.

Example paragraph: *Try to identify the parts of the paragraph and transition words*

Choosing a college or university can be a very difficult decision. The most difficult part is finding a university that prepares you well for your future career. In order to get a good job, the curriculum that is taught must be thorough and up-to-date. In addition, the professors must be highly qualified and respected in their fields. Another difficulty in choosing a university or college is affordability. You need to be able to pay the tuition fees and living expenses. Some institutions might be able to offer you scholarships if you cannot afford the fees. A good location is also very important when choosing a school. The environment should be safe and quiet to facilitate studying. Moreover, there should be possibilities near the school for part-time or summer jobs in your major, so you can get some practical work experience. You should consider all of these points carefully when you are choosing the best college or university for you.

Paragraph Outline:

Think of an activity you enjoy. Spend a few minutes brainstorming ideas about why you enjoy this activity, then use the outline below to get started.

Topic Sentence: _____

1st Supporting Idea:

(Facts, Detail, Example, or Explanation): _____

2nd Supporting Idea:

(Fact, Detail, Example, or Explanation): _____

3rd Supporting Detail:

(Fact, Detail, Example, or Explanation): _____

Concluding Sentence: _____
