

Appetizing
Paragraphs



The Paragraph

A paragraph is a group of sentences about one main idea (the subject or topic of the paragraph). Sometimes the main idea is clearly stated in one of the sentences (usually the first one), but often the main idea is **implied**.



Clearly-Stated Main Idea

The diamond is perhaps the most valuable gemstone on our planet.

Due to its hardness and endurance, it has many important uses. First of all, because diamonds are so beautiful and lasting, they are used in jewelry and adornments. The Hope diamond, a blue stone, is an example of one of the most beautiful gemstones in the world. Also, because diamonds are the hardest substance on Earth, they are used for jobs such as drilling teeth and sanding car doors. In fact, scientists have recently developed synthetic diamonds that are used to cover substances such as razor blades, watch crystals, and computer disks. Diamonds are so beautiful and useful, that they deserve the title of "King of Gemstones." (From *Dynamic Earth*)



Implied Main Idea

Spunky came to live with us when I was five years old. He was so little we could hold him in the palm of our hands. A little black and white ball of fur, Spunky gave us unconditional love. Of course, of all members of the family, I was his favorite. He followed me around from room to room, hoping I would stop and scratch his head or offer some playtime. Of course I often did. He was my favorite toy!

Main Idea: Spunky and the author had a special bond.

(From *Improving Student Writing* by Jan Goldberg)



Types of Paragraphs

- ➔ Descriptive - uses words (sensory details) to paint a picture of someone or something
- ➔ Narrative - tells a story
- ➔ Persuasive - presents and supports a statement
- ➔ Expository - gives information



Examples

The following appetizing paragraphs are from the works of master wordsmith Roald Dahl.

(By the way, if you want to create real, fun, yummy dishes, read Roald Dahl's cookbook: *Roald Dahl's Revolting Recipes.*)



Descriptive Paragraph

All the furniture, the big table, the chairs, the sofa, the lamps, the little side tables, the cabinets with bottles in it, the ornaments, the electric fire, the carpet, everything was stuck upside down to the ceiling. The pictures were upside down on the walls. And the floor they were standing on was absolutely bare. What's more, it had been painted white to look like the ceiling. (From *The Twits* by Roald Dahl.)



Narrative Paragraph

Just as Mr. and Mrs. Twit were about to enter the house, two black ravens swooped low over their heads. Each bird carried a paint-brush in its claw and each paint brush was smeared with sticky glue. As the ravens whizzed over, they brushed a streak of sticky glue on to the tops of Mr. and Mrs. Twit's heads. They did it with the lightest touch, but even so, the Twits both felt it. (From *The Twits* by Roald Dahl.)



Persuasive Paragraph

In every book or story there has to be somebody you can loathe. In *James* it is the aunts. In *Danny* it is Mr. Hazel. In *Charlie* it is the spoiled and filthy children. In *The Twits* it is Mr. and Mrs. Twit. The fouler and more filthy a person is, the more fun it is to watch him getting scrunched. (From "Ideas To Help Aspiring Writers" by Roald Dahl)



Expository Paragraphs

An expository paragraph may

- 1- describe a sequence of steps or events,
- 2- tell about something that happened and why it happened (cause and effect),
- 3- compare and contrast persons, places, things, ideas, or events,
- 4- explain a problem and its solution, or
- 5- present information about a topic.



Sequence or "How To" Paragraph

Most of the stories I write all begin with a small germ of an idea for a story. I then take that idea and begin working with it. All the finer points of the story are worked out as I sit in my chair and write. Books do grow in other ways. One book I wrote, *The Giraffe and the Pelly and Me*, began with no plot in my head at all but instead with three characters. (From "Creating Characters" by Roald Dahl)



Cause and Effect Paragraph

"Put vun drop, just vun titchy droplet of this liqid into a chocolate or a sveet, and at nine o'clock the next morning the child who ate it vill turn into a mouse in tventy-six seconds! But vun vurd of vorning. Never increase the dose. Never put more than vun drrrop into each sveet or chocolate. And never give more than vun sveet or chocolate to each child. An overdose of Delayed Action Mouse-Maker vill mess up the timing of the alarm-clock and cause the child to turn into a mouse too early. A large overdose might even have an instant effect, and you wouldn't vont that, vould you? You wouldn't vont the children turning into mice rrright there in your sveet-shops. That vould give the game away. So be very carrreful! Do not overdose!" (From The Witches by Roald Dahl)



Compare/Contrast Paragraph

There was a difference between the way the hen was growing and the way Grandma grew. When Grandma grew taller and taller, she got thinner and thinner. The hen didn't. It stayed nice and plump all along. Soon it was taller than George. (From *George's Marvelous Medicine* by Roald Dahl)



Problem/Solution Paragraph

Tortoises used to be brought into England by the thousand, packed in crates, and they came mostly from North Africa. But not many years ago a law was passed that made it illegal to bring any tortoises into the country. This was not done to protect us. The little tortoise was not a danger to anybody. It was done purely out of kindness for the tortoise itself. You see, the traders who brought them in used to cram hundreds of them tightly into the packing crates without food or water and in such horrible conditions that a great many of them always died on the sea-journey over. So rather than allow this cruelty to go on, the government stopped the whole business. (From *Esio Trot* by Roald Dahl)



Informational Paragraph

A mole can dig about three feet of tunnel in an hour, and he usually owns about one hundred yards of his own private tunneling which no other moles go into. All moles prefer to live solitary lives, each one trotting up and down his own network of tunnels day in and night, searching for food. His food consists of worms, leather-jackets, centipedes, and beetle grubs, and the fantastic thing is that he actually has to eat *one half of his own bodyweight* of these tiny delicacies every single day in order to stay alive! No wonder he is a busy fellow.

(From *My Year* by Roald Dahl)



The Hamburger Paragraph

A paragraph can be compared to a hamburger if it begins with a topic sentence (the main idea), continues with supporting details, and ends with a concluding sentence. The top and bottom of the hamburger bun represent the first and last sentences, and the meat/other represent the supporting details.



The Hamburger Paragraph

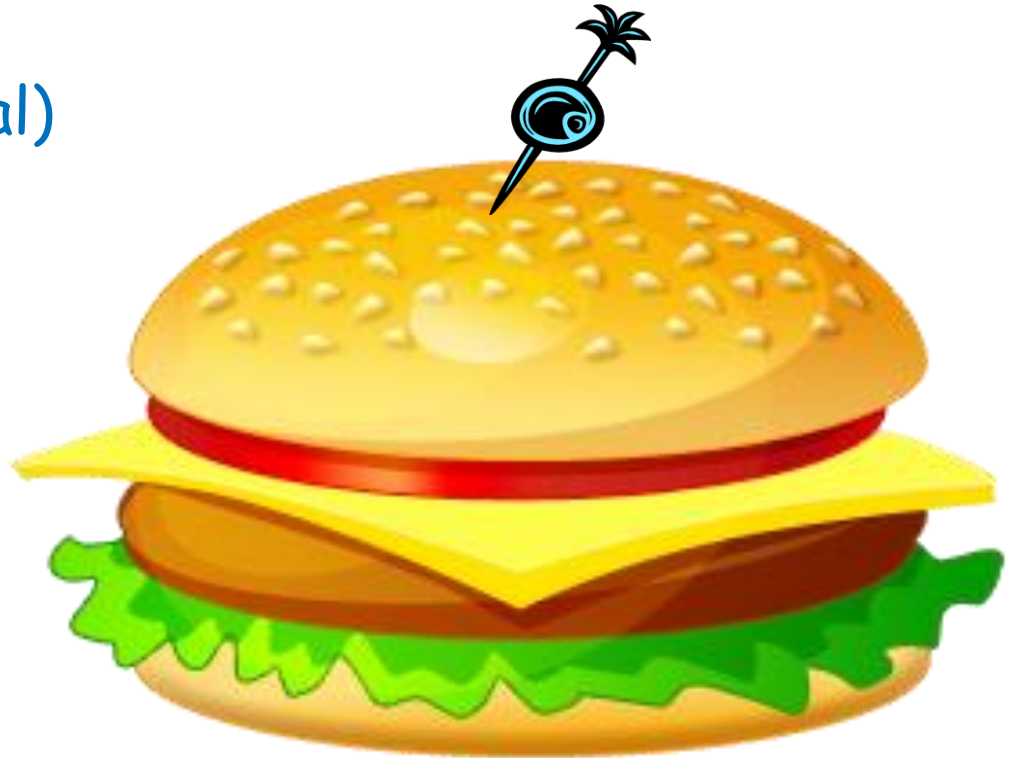
lead or hook (optional)

topic sentence

transitions +

supporting details

concluding sentence





Composing a Hamburger Paragraph

- ➔ Start with a strong topic sentence.
- ➔ Add elaborate supporting details.
- ➔ Use transitions to help your ideas flow smoothly.
- ➔ End with a thoughtful concluding sentence.
- ➔ Revise and edit your work.



Ideas for Topic Sentences

➔ A Number Statement:

There are six sure ways to recognize a witch.

➔ A Compound Sentence:

Witches are dangerous creatures, so children should learn to recognize them.

➔ A Complex Sentence:

If you want to stay safe, you should learn how to recognize a witch.



Ideas for Elaborate Details

- ➔ **An example or explanation:** Tony is my best friend. He helped me be brave when I got an "F" on my progress report and was afraid my dad would yell at me.
- ➔ **A reason:** I like to watch the world from my window. It makes me feel like a secret agent.
- ➔ **An anecdote:** My favorite middle-school year was 6th grade. I'll never forget the day our class participated in International Town with me as one of the team leaders.



Ideas for Elaborate Details (continued)

- ⇒ **A definition:** I don't understand my brother. He asked for an XBOX -- an expensive video game console -- for his birthday, even though he knows our dad is flat broke.
- ⇒ **A description:** I loved my grandfather. He was a beer-drinking, cigar-smoking, cowboy-hat-wearing, leathery old man, but he was sweet and kind to me.
- ⇒ **A researchable fact:** My favorite butterfly is the Monarch, also known as the milkweed butterfly.
- ⇒ **An allusion:** Taylor is a great basketball player. He dunks the ball just like Michael Jordan.



Ideas for Elaborate Details (continued)

- ⇒ **Vivid verbs:** I **gulped** down my food and **dashed** out the door.
- ⇒ **Precise nouns:** My mom bought me an **iPod** for my birthday.
- ⇒ **Artful adjectives:** Her **sky-colored** scarf brought out her **morning-blue** eyes.
- ⇒ **Smart adverbs:** He fought **savagely**.
- ⇒ **High-level vocabulary:** I was **flabbergasted** when I read my report card.



A Few Examples of Transitions

- To **show time**: first, second, third, then, later, suddenly, the next day, at the end
- To **show location**: under, over, through, around, behind
- To **compare**: also, in the same way, like, similarly, a good, a better, the best
- To **contrast**: although, but, however, on the other hand
- To **add information**: and, also, for example, first of all, in addition, finally, one way, another way
- To **emphasize**: in fact, indeed, for this reason, truly
- To **conclude**: all in all, all together, finally, in conclusion



Ideas for a Concluding Sentence

- ⇒ Remind readers of your topic or position, but don't repeat the topic sentence (change the word order and use synonyms).
- ⇒ Summarize your supporting details.
- ⇒ Encourage, convince, or challenge the reader.
- ⇒ End with an insight or reflection on your topic.



The Color-Coded Paragraph

- ➔ Blue for the optional lead or hook (fancy pick or skewer)
- ➔ Yellow for the title, topic, and concluding sentences (top and bottom of hamburger bun)
- ➔ Red for the supporting details (meat/other)
- ➔ Green for the transitions (condiments)



The Color-Coded Paragraph

How to Recognize a Witch

If you are afraid of witches, don't worry. I am going to tell you how to recognize a witch. In the first place, a real witch has no hair. Because of that, they have to wear wigs, and that causes them to get scalp rash. Second, instead of fingers, they have claws like a cat. To hide their claws, they have to wear gloves always, even in summer and inside the house. Third, their spit is blue like blueberry. Sometimes they use their spit to write. Next, their eyes are strange. The little black ball of their eyes changes color. Also, their nose holes are funny-shaped and bigger than usual, and they have an unusual sense of smell. To them children smell like dog's droppings. Finally, they have no toes, which makes wearing fancy women's shoes uncomfortable. Taken together, these are the things that will help you recognize a witch. (Paraphrased from *The Witches* by Roald Dahl)



The Color-Coded Paragraph

Responding to an Expository Prompt

The Expository Paragraph

Do you have problems writing to an expository prompt? I have four suggestions to help you compose a proficient expository paragraph. First of all, begin your paragraph with a clear topic sentence. The easiest way to do this is by restating the prompt. After that, add supporting details, such as examples, explanations, facts, or reasons. These details are the meat of the paragraph. They make the writing "yummy," which means interesting and fun to read. Also, make sure to introduce each supporting detail with an appropriate transition. This will help your sentences flow logically and smoothly. Finally, end your paragraph with a concluding sentence. A conclusion will remind the reader of your topic and will tie your sentences together in a neat little package. Clearly, applying all four of these suggestions will help you write an exemplary expository paragraph.



Try it!

Yummy!





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