

# The Writing Center

## DLA: Basic Paragraph Development



This DLA is a writable PDF form. You can enter your answers directly into this document.

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**Do not complete this form in a web browser. You will not be able to save your work.**

Student Name:

### Important Note

To get completion credit for this DLA, make sure you complete all the required activities. If you'd like help while working on a specific DLA, you can meet with a specialist at the Writing Center. Keep in mind that you might need to schedule a second appointment to review your work, check your understanding, and get your completion credit. You can only review **ONE** DLA per appointment. (Check the last section of this DLA for information on making your appointment and receiving completion credit for your work).

### Activities (approximately 1 hour)

Read the information, complete the activities that follow, and be prepared to discuss your answers when you meet with a tutor.

### What is a paragraph?

- A paragraph is a series of sentences that are organized and coherent and are all related to a single topic.
- A paragraph is a short piece of writing that presents a main point and supports it.

### Parts of a Paragraph

A basic paragraph has three parts: 1) a topic sentence, 2) supporting sentences, and 3) a concluding sentence.

1. Topic Sentence
  - a. Topic
  - b. Controlling Idea
2. Supporting Sentences
  - a. Evidence + Support (Details/Explanation)
3. Concluding Sentence
  - a. Closer
  - b. Why is the topic important?

### Topic Sentence (TS)

A well-organized paragraph supports or develops a single controlling idea, which is expressed in a sentence called the topic sentence.

#### A topic sentence has several important functions:

- Advises the reader of the subject to be discussed and how the paragraph will discuss it.
- Unifies the content of a paragraph and directs the order of the sentences.
- Supports an essay's thesis statement for essays of five paragraphs or more.
- May provide a transition from a preceding paragraph for compositions of more than one paragraph.

**Topic sentences should have a controlling idea. The controlling idea gives focus and organizes your paragraph. A good controlling idea will limit the topic but leave room for explanation.**

Topic: The main subject matter or idea covered in the paragraph.

Controlling idea: This idea focuses the topic by providing direction to the composition.

The following topic sentences all contain a topic and a controlling idea. When paragraphs contain a clearly stated topic sentence such as one of the following, the reader will know what to expect and understand the ideas better.

Examples of topic sentences:

- There are several advantages to online education.

Topic: Online education      Controlling idea: several advantages

- Effective leadership requires specific qualities that anyone can develop.

Topic: Effective leadership      Controlling idea: requires specific qualities that anyone can develop

## **Supporting Sentences**

Supporting sentences, also called the body of the paragraph, are used to support, explain, illustrate, or provide evidence for the idea expressed in the topic sentence. Supporting sentences often elaborate on the topic sentence in a logical manner.

The following are common sources of supporting details:

- Statistics, polls, percentages
- Facts, details, reasons, examples
- Personal experience, stories, anecdotes, examples from your life

**Note:** Always explain and elaborate on the content of your supporting sentences. They should clearly guide the reader through your thinking process and the main idea of the paragraph (TS).

### ***Strategy To Develop Supporting Sentences***

Once you have a topic sentence, a good way to decide what kind of details you will need in the body of your paragraph is to think of questions a reader would make after seeing your topic sentence.

Here is an example of critical thinking questions:

#### **What questions can you think of for the following TS?**

Topic sentence: Florida is a great place for family vacations.

- Why is Florida a great place for family vacations?
- Where would you stay in Florida on your family vacation?

## **Concluding Sentence**

The concluding sentence is the last sentence in a paragraph.

The concluding sentence:

- restates the big idea of the topic sentence using different words or a different order.
- summarizes the big idea of the paragraph without repeating the exact same words.
- gives the reader something to think about and explains the importance of the main idea.
- transitions to the next paragraph if you are writing an essay.

### ***Closing the Paragraph and Stating the Importance***

- The concluding sentence “wraps up” or closes the paragraph by referring back to the main idea, making a final observation, or explaining why the topic is important.

**Example 1:**

**Topic sentence:** The amount of time spent indoors during quarantine emphasized the importance of checking in on one's mental health.

**Concluding Sentence:** As people start to reflect on the effects of living isolated during or after quarantine, it is key that they consider the mental aspect of their everyday lives.

**Example 2:**

**Topic Sentence:** Studies have shown that women are less likely to be believed when talking about their symptoms to medical providers.

**Concluding Sentence:** The treatment of women in the medical field is still an area of concern in today's hospitals.

**Sample Paragraph**

Canada is one of the best countries in the world to live in. First, Canada has an excellent health care system. All Canadians have access to medical services at a reasonable price. Second, Canada has a high standard of education. Students are taught by well-trained teachers and are encouraged to continue studying at university. Finally, Canada's cities are clean and efficiently managed. Canadian cities have many parks and lots of space for people to live. As a result, Canada is a desirable place to live. **Concluding Sentence**

Supporting Sentences

**Activities**

Check off each box once you have completed the activity.

 **1. DLA Review**

Write your answers to the questions below.

1. What is a topic sentence?
2. What are supporting sentences?
3. What is a concluding sentence?

## **□ 2. Identify the Parts of a Basic Paragraph**

Identify and label (or highlight) the following paragraph with each part of a basic paragraph.

**Topic Sentence + Controlling idea**

*Supporting Sentences*

Concluding Sentence

Online education has become more popular than other forms of distance education because it offers learners a great deal of flexibility. For example, instead of wasting gas coming to campus, students can learn from the comfort of their home. This is a great option, especially for stay-at-home parents or parents with children. They can take care of their family while learning online. Another reason why online classes are popular is that students can manage their work schedule better with online classes. Because most of the online class materials are readily available, learners can manage their time more effectively around their busy work schedule. Since students do not have to attend in-person classes, this option saves time and gives students more opportunities to work and provide for their families, which is important to many working adults that are in school. For many students, it is a solution to managing family, work, and other activities while still being able to take classes.

### 3. ***Outline a Basic Paragraph***

Choose one of the following topics:

- Positive life lessons you have learned during the quarantine
- Your experience coming to the US
- A review of your favorite book, television show, or movie

Use the following outline to help develop your basic body paragraph.

1. Topic Sentence:	
a. Topic:	
b. Controlling Idea:	
2. Supporting Sentences:	
a. Evidence + Support (Details/Explanation)	
b. Evidence + Support (Details/Explanation)	
3. Concluding Sentence:	
a. Closer:	
b. Why is this topic important?	

### 3. ***Writing Practice***

Now, take the outline you created in the previous activity and write an 8-10 sentence basic paragraph that has:

1. a topic sentence with a controlling idea
2. supporting sentences with two examples/evidence and 3-4 detailed explanation sentences
3. a concluding sentence that summarizes the main idea and closes the paragraph

## 4. Review the DLA/Receive Completion Credit

1. Go to [EAB Navigate](#) and make an appointment (online or in-person).
2. Attend your session and be prepared to explain your understanding of the information you've learned in the DLA. Consider the main concept you learned and how you might use this in your future assignments/classes.
3. If your professor asks you to provide proof, you can review the "appointment summary report" through EAB Navigate (app or desktop). You will find all Writing Center appointments under "appointment summary reports" (app or desktop). Look for the summary report for your DLA appointment. This is where your writing specialist will indicate the title of your DLA and state whether it is "completed" or "not completed." If it is marked as "not completed," book a follow up appointment to complete.

Note: Appointment summary reports are also sent weekly to your instructor on record. If there is an issue, please contact us at [writingcenter@mtsac.edu](mailto:writingcenter@mtsac.edu) or (909) 274-5325.

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