



## **Developing a Paragraph**

❖ A paragraph is a section of writing that focuses on a unified idea.

There are three main components that contribute to a well-written paragraph:

- Unity
  - The entire paragraph should have one focus; it should not veer in different directions.
- Coherence
  - Make sure that your sentences flow in a clear and logical order.
- Development
  - After introducing your ideas, you should follow them up with some sort of example or explanation in order to fully develop them.

Parts of a paragraph:

### **Topic sentence(s) or main point**

Your paragraph should introduce some main idea. This can be done by writing a topic sentence, which is usually a sentence that explains exactly what the entire paragraph will be about.

*Example of a topic sentence:*

Women in nineteenth-century England were constrained in nearly every aspect of their lives due to the rigidly constructed rules concerning gender and class.

### **Supporting details, explanations, and/or examples**



Once you have established your main idea, you can add to it by giving further explanation.

*Expanding on main idea:*

Females were thought to be docile and fragile, needing both protection and supervision. Men, on the other hand, were considered strong, intelligent, and capable. Thus, men worked outside of the home, while women were expected to uphold the feminine ideal of the “angel in the house”: a sympathetic, selfless figure whose only aspirations were to please her husband and tend to the children.

### **Closing/transition sentence(s)**

To wrap up, complete the main idea in order to reiterate the relevance of the paragraph and tie it into your paper as a whole.

*Wrapping up:*

These constraints were placed on women to keep the male in control, thus perpetuating patriarchal society.

(cont'd)



## Things to avoid:

- **Starting a paragraph with “This paragraph will explain” or “This paragraph will be about.”** Don’t announce the topic— just state what it is.
- **Veering in different directions.** Check to make sure each sentence fits in the paragraph. Ask yourself how each sentence is helping you to prove or illustrate the point stated in the topic sentence.
- **Paragraphs that are too short or too long.** As long as the paragraph centers on one main idea and has a purpose in your paper, it is a paragraph. However, most paragraphs tend to be at least 3-5 sentences long. They also should not be longer than a page to help keep the paragraph focused and your reader engaged.

\*\*\*\*\*

*The following resources were consulted in the design of this handout:*

“Paragraph Development.” *UNC-CH Writing Center*. 2005. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

<<http://www.unc.edu>>.

“The Paragraph.” *OWL: Online Writing Lab*. 2001. Purdue University.

<[http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/print/general/gl\\_pgrph2.html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/print/general/gl_pgrph2.html)>.

\*\*\*\*\*

*Permission is granted to duplicate and distribute this handout, providing that the following information remain intact:*

This page is located at: <http://www.strose.edu/writingcenter>

The College of Saint Rose Writing Center, 2008

Designed by Jessica Brouker