

Paragraph development

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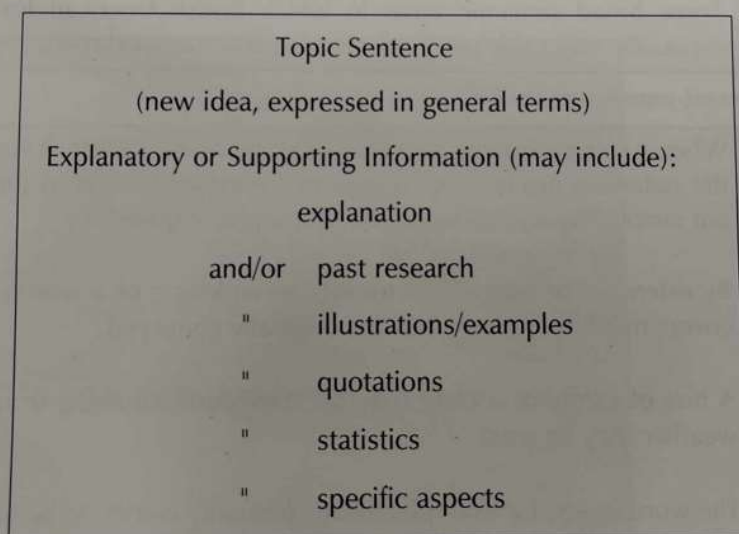
Introductory exercise on paragraph development

In the text below identify the topic sentence and reorder the sentences to form the original paragraph.

a	Finally, as the traditional means of communicating knowledge internationally, journals are accepted and recognised by scholars and researchers. They define what is important, maintain standards and also help to create an invisible college of those concerned with a topic.
b	They use technologies which are available to virtually every nation and to most academic institutions, regardless of age or level of development.
c	Through a well-established international infrastructure of library acquisition, new journals can reach concerned scholarly audiences fairly efficiently.
d	Journals have significant advantages as a means of international scholarly communication. They are relatively inexpensive.

2 Focus on paragraph development

The above paragraph has a typical structure that can be identified in many paragraphs: the topic sentence introduces the new idea, topic, argument or piece of information into the main text. This is then either explained further or supported by subsequent sentences. This structure can be represented like this:



3 Exercises on paragraph development

The sentences in the boxes below (i-iv) are not in order. First, identify the topic sentence and then put the remaining sentences in order.

(i)

a	Britain lost most of its Empire after World War II, but even as the sun was setting on the Empire, the United States was simultaneously rising as a political, economic and military superpower. Thus the spread of English has continued without a break.
b	The widespread use of English and its current position as the world language is not accidental, nor it is attributable to any intrinsic linguistic superiority of English as a language.
c	Wherever the British acquired colonies, they brought English with them as the language of administration.
d	It began with the establishment of the British Empire in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

4 Exercise on dividing a text into paragraphs

In the following text the paragraph divisions are not indicated. Identify the topic sentence(s) and divide the text into paragraphs. There are three paragraphs in the original text.

- Weather conditions in Saudi Arabia vary almost as much as the terrain. In the mountains that fringe the peninsula on the west, south and southeast, annual rainfall is about 50 centimetres and there are often torrential downpours and destructive flash floods; yet parts of the Rub' al-Khali may receive no rain for as long as 10 years. Over much of central, northern and northeastern Arabia, average annual rainfall is 5 to 15 centimetres and highly variable from year to year. Temperature and humidity ranges are equally disparate. In the interior the air is dry, while on the coasts, summer humidity is excessive, particularly at night. In summer, temperatures in some areas may reach 50° C (122° F) in the shade, but in spring, the days are balmy and the nights are clear. In winter, temperatures drop below freezing in the central and northern regions, and snow sometimes falls in the mountains, the northern plateau and even in the capital Riyadh. There are also strong winds, such as the prevailing northwest winds along the eastern coast – the winds called the *shamal* – which frequently whip up dust and sandstorms. The climate of the peninsula, nevertheless, is largely characterised by aridity and heat. As a result, the vegetation, wildlife and domesticated animals of the peninsula share one distinctive feature: a high degree of adaptation to the special demands of life in the desert. The ability of men to adapt and survive in this harsh environment has had important effects on the history of the peninsula and Saudi Arabia.

1

Paragraph development by listing

1.1 Read the model paragraph. As you read, pay close attention to both the meaning and the organisation of the ideas discussed.

Sentence Functions in Paragraph Development

The *sentences* in most well written *paragraphs* may be analysed into *four* general *functions*. First, there are paragraph *introducers*, which are sentences that *establish* the *topic focus* of the paragraph as a whole. Second, there are paragraph *developers*, which *present* examples or *details* of various kinds that support the ideas set forth by the paragraph introducers. Third, there are viewpoint or context *modulators*, which are sentences that *provide* a smooth *transition* between different sets of ideas. Fourth, there are paragraph *terminators*, which logically *conclude* the *ideas* discussed in the paragraph in a psychologically satisfying manner. Not all pieces of writing will conform to this analysis; however, most successful *paragraphs* usually contain some combination of these *four sentence types*.

1.1a Each sentence in the paragraph contains a key idea. The key idea can be expressed in a short phrase often using key words appearing in the sentence. The key words that form the key ideas in each sentence of the model paragraph are in italics. From each of the six sentences, write the italicised words on the following lines.

_____	1
_____	2
_____	3
_____	4
_____	5
_____	6

1.1b What function do paragraph developers serve? Identify the four paragraph developers used in the model paragraph.

1.1c What function do context modulators serve? Do they appear in every well written paragraph? Does this paragraph contain a context modulator?

1.2 Read the model paragraph. This time, as you read try to observe three main parts of paragraph organisation.

Black African Nations

During the decade of the 1960's, most of the European colonies of Sub-Saharan Africa achieved independence. In the west, Nigeria (1960), Sierra Leone (1961), and Gambia (1965)—all former British colonies—joined the family of free and independent nations. In the east, Tanzania (1961), Uganda (1962), Kenya (1963), and Zambia (1964) also became sovereign states free of British rule. As the African empire of Great Britain was being dismantled, France, the other major European coloniser, withdrew from vast areas south of the Sahara. Thirteen former French colonies gained national status in the single year 1960: Mauritania, Senegal, Mali, Ivory Coast, Upper Volta, Togo, Dahomey, Niger, Chad, Central African Republic, Cameroon, Gabon, and Congo. Although a few European colonialists still occupy African territory, the 1960's witnessed the birth of more than twenty free, black nations.

1.2a Does this paragraph contain the essential elements of a well written paragraph—introducer, developers, terminator? Point out the sentence or sentences that serve as the introducer, the developers, the terminator.

1.2b In addition to the three types of sentences mentioned in the previous question, this paragraph contains a viewpoint or context modulator. That is, a sentence that provides a transition between different sets of ideas. Identify the sentence that performs this transition function.

1.2c Review (see sentence 5 of paragraph 1.1 and exercise 1.1d) the function of a paragraph terminator. Is the final sentence of 1.2 an adequate terminator?

1.6 Remember that a list paragraph has several parts. First, paragraph introducers—both a topic introducer and a topic sentence or just a topic sentence—are used to open a paragraph. Next, supporting examples are listed with the aid of connectors. Sometimes transition or modulator sentences are used between different sets of ideas. Finally, a terminator sentence brings the paragraph to a logical conclusion.

With these ideas in mind, write your own list paragraph. Give your paragraph a title. You may choose one of the topics given below.

Internationally known artists (or musicians or actors or writers)

Important national or regional handicrafts

Qualities of a good teacher (or leader or friend)

Athletes from a particular continent or block in the last Olympic Games

Topic of your choice

