



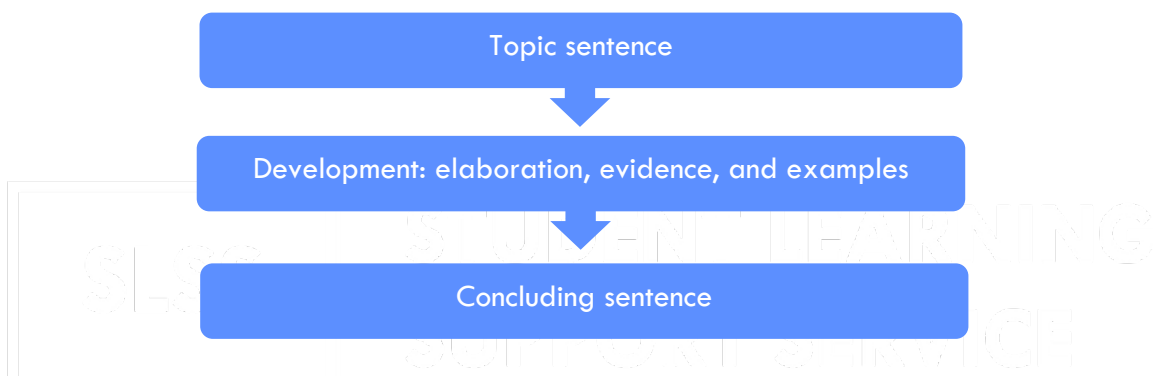
## WHAT IS A GOOD PARAGRAPH?



A paragraph is a **unified** collection of sentences relating to a **single topic**. Paragraphs help the reader by breaking up the page, making it easier to follow the structure and development of our ideas. They play an important role not just in the organisation of our work, but in how we develop, critique, and analyse the information that supports the main **argument** or aim of our writing.

[SEE THE GUIDE ON WRITING AN ARGUMENT](#)

The paragraph's central idea is expressed in a **topic sentence** (usually the first sentence of the paragraph) which introduces the reader to the **topic** (what it is about) and the **controlling idea** (how the topic will be developed). Each additional sentence **develops** this idea through elaboration, evidence, and examples.



## TOPIC SENTENCES

The topic sentence expresses the main idea of the paragraph and shows its relevance to either the overall argument or the previous paragraph. A good topic sentence acts as a signpost that shows the reader what to expect and ensures coherence, unity, and logic in your writing. For example:

Convenience foods are **easy to prepare**.

↑  
Topic

↑  
Controlling Idea

This topic sentence tells us that the writer will talk about convenience foods and their preparation. The topic is convenience foods. The controlling idea says that they are easy to prepare.

## TRANSITIONS AND LOGIC

In addition to telling the reader the topic and controlling idea of the paragraph, topic sentences also play an important role in the logical structure of your writing, telling your reader how ideas are connected to one another. **Transition words** help you build these connections. Some common transition words include:

Extension or reinforcement: 'Moreover', 'Therefore', 'In addition', 'Similarly', 'Likewise', 'As a result'

Contrast: 'However', 'In contrast', 'Although', 'Conversely', 'While', 'Nevertheless'

For example:

**Although** there are nutritional concerns, convenience foods are easy to prepare.

↑  
Transition

↑  
Topic

↑  
Controlling Idea

The transition tells us that the previous paragraph has discussed nutrition and the focus is shifting to a contrasting point.



## DEVELOPING YOUR PARAGRAPH

### ELABORATION

In most forms of writing, it is important not merely to describe or show your knowledge of a topic, but to analyse, critique, and synthesise ideas. This is particularly important in **argumentative writing**. Therefore, the function of the supporting sentences of a paragraph is to:

- elaborate on the new idea or point that you have introduced.
- introduce the necessary evidence to support the main idea.
- offer any necessary evaluation or analysis of the evidence
- introduce any conflicting evidence in order to establish its deficiencies or limitations (if relevant)
- link the evidence to your argument and discuss the implications

### LINKING AND CONCLUDING

End your paragraph with a linking or concluding sentence. This should summarise the main idea of the paragraph and link it back to the topic. It may also give the reader an indication of the topic of the following paragraph.

## FORMATTING PARAGRAPHS



Each new paragraph indicates that a new idea is being presented and its length should be determined by the logic of the paper. In order to develop an idea sufficiently, most paragraphs should be at least three sentences long. Indicate a new paragraph with an extra line space. Alternatively, the first line may be indented. This tells the reader that there has been a transition to a new idea. Extra line space looks like this: ↓

You may find it difficult to fully explore an idea within a single paragraph. If your paragraph becomes too long, more than about five or six sentences, consider where a main idea can be split into sub-ideas. Use **transitional words** to link paragraphs within a larger section.

## EXAMPLE PARAGRAPH

The example below shows a paragraph that might appear in the middle of an essay. This is a general guide only. Always consult your assignment guidelines and rubric.

Topic sentence

Integrating evidence

Linking evidence to argument

Analysis

Concluding sentence

To effectively enhance student learning, not just any game can be adopted within the classroom; instead, these activities must be designed with the learning intentions in mind. Games based on this approach need to allow players to set their own challenges, use their own decision-making to complete the task, and engage in social feedback (Plass, Homer & Kinzer 2015, p.262). This ensures that student learning is “meaningful, organised, and permanent” (Pivec, Dziabenko & Schinnerl 2003, p.220). **It is clear, then, that** some complexity is required to design an effective constructivist game-based learning format. Using the lens of Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development, it is easy to see how video games match constructivist goals as video games are able to start with some guidance and reduce this when it is determined that the student is progressing on their own. **Therefore,** video games scaffold learning while altering the challenge based on the requirements of the learner, enhancing student learning (Nino & Evans 2015, 147).