



# PARAGRAPH BASICS

As you improve your English writing skills, your teachers will begin asking you to write **paragraphs**.

A paragraph is a unit of information. Paragraphs usually contain several sentences grouped together around a **main idea**. Learning how to write an organized paragraph will improve your essays and demonstrate your thinking skills.

Basic paragraphs include three elements:

- The **topic sentence**, often found at the beginning of the paragraph, tells the reader the main idea, or topic, of the paragraph.
- The sentences following the topic sentence contain **supporting details** that develop the main idea of the paragraph. Supporting details may include facts or quotes from your research, personal anecdotes, or other information.
- At the end of the sentence is a **concluding sentence** that summarizes the main point of the paragraph.

Here is a simple example paragraph.

Roasting a chicken is very simple. The only ingredients you need for a perfect roasted chicken are the chicken, some salt, and an onion or lemon to stuff in the chicken. Once you have your ingredients, rub salt on the outside of the chicken and let it sit at room temperature for one hour. Preheat the oven to 450 degrees. After the chicken has been salted for one hour, stuff it with the onion or lemon and put it in the oven. Roast it for 15 minutes per pound. Once the chicken is done, pull it out of the oven and let it rest for at least 10 minutes. After that, you will have a perfect roasted chicken for you and your family to enjoy.

In this example, “Roasting a chicken is very simple” is the topic sentence. The sentences that follow provide supporting details. The last sentence sums up the point of the paragraph.

## PRACTICE

Plan a paragraph based on the format discussed in this handout.

What is the main idea of your paragraph? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the topic sentence of your paragraph, based on your main idea?

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What is a supporting detail you can use to develop this main idea?

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What is another supporting detail you can use to develop this main idea?

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What is another supporting detail you can use to develop this main idea?

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Write a concluding sentence using your main idea and supporting details.

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Now put the ideas you've listed above into a complete paragraph. If you want to make sure that you've written a strong paragraph, feel free to bring your work to the English Center for a tutor to check.