

LEARNING DEVELOPMENT

Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL)



THE UNIVERSITY OF
NEWCASTLE
AUSTRALIA

Writing Paragraphs

While there are various formulas you can follow to write a paragraph in your essay, they all require you to do the same thing: elaborate on one key issue that you have highlighted in your introduction. It is important that you only focus on one idea per paragraph, and that these ideas specifically relate to the question. You must make it clear to the reader that you are following the map outlined in your introduction.

Paragraphs should always:

- Commence with a **topic** sentence. The topic sentence signals to the reader what your paragraph is going to be about.
- Contain evidence to validate/support your answer.
- Tie back to the essay question.
- Include the “content” words from the question.

Paragraphs should never:

- Contain more than one key idea.
- Raise an idea that you cannot support with evidence.
- Bring in new information that is not relevant to the topic.

Basic Paragraph Structure

P	POINT: Outline your main point/topic for this paragraph
E	EVIDENCE: Support your point with evidence and examples
E	EXPLANATION: Explain how this evidence supports your answer
L	LINK: Refer this point back to the question, integrating key words where possible/appropriate



Example:

Advocates of online learning often refer to its advantages over traditional instructor-led training.

The most immediate advantage is that online learning facilitates ease of delivery where employees may be geographically dispersed (Noe, 2002), or where the task of organising a physical space for training would take time or even production space (Dobbs, 2000).

Consequently, a significant advantage of online learning is that it is cost effective: the company does not incur travel expenses or lose production hours.

Given these savings in costs, it would seem that computer technology may easily replace the HRM professional. (Adapted from McNeil, 2006).



*Even though each paragraph addresses a different point, they should still be linked together in some way so that your discussion is cohesive. For this reason, it's helpful to use transition phrases to indicate how the different points you make relate to one another (Germov, 2000). **Transition words and phrases** like "Similarly," "In contrast," "However," and "In the same way that..." are a good way to do this. Consider the example below:*

P1	In order to support the educational needs of ATSI students, all teachers should undergo professional training to assist with their development of culturally appropriate pedagogies.
E	At present, many pre-service teachers find they are ill-equipped to teach Indigenous students, primarily because they lack knowledge about Aboriginal culture and history. (Craven, Yeung, & Han, 2014). Lavery, Cain and Hampton (2014) argue that in order to negate this disconnect, teacher institutes should develop links with Aboriginal communities, and that pre-service learning should include immersion and partnership programs with ATSI communities.
E	Ultimately, it is imperative that teachers construct a rich and culturally sensitive repertoire for teaching Indigenous students.
L	For this reason, appropriate professional development through collaboration with ATSI communities should become a mandatory component of pedagogical training for both beginning and experienced teachers.

P2	In addition to ongoing pedagogical training, another key strategy for supporting the needs of ATSI students is adherence to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.
E	As Standard 1 contends, understanding the physical, social and intellectual development of students and how this impacts learning is necessary to support their educational needs (2014). In particular, Standard 1.3 stipulates that teachers must pay attention to students of diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds (2014). As James (2014) reports, understanding the cultural background of ATSI students and their linguistic capability can result in improved educational outcomes for these students.
E	With this in mind, there is little doubt that cultural awareness, which is now imbedded in teaching standards and curriculum documentation, has become a prominent aspect of education today.
L	By harnessing these existing teaching standards and curriculum expectations, teachers can encourage deeper engagement with learning material, and better accommodate the individual needs of ATSI students.

Adapted from actual student work. Permission to reproduce this work, for this purpose, was received from the student.

Refer to Learning Development's **Transition Words** resource for more information and further examples of when and how to use these terms.

Things to Remember:

- Never have more than one key idea in a paragraph.
- Don't ignore the "direction" word in the essay, as this word tells you what kind of approach you are expected to maintain throughout your discussion.
- Back up, back up, back up! If you can't back up an argument with evidence, don't use it!
- Always link each paragraph to the question – a good way to do this is to integrate key words in the question (or synonyms of those words) throughout your essay.

References

- Germov, J. (2000). *Get great marks for your essays* (2nd ed.). St Leonards, N.S.W: Allen & Unwin.
- McNeil, K. (2006). *Newcastle Graduate School of Business: Student manual 2006*. Newcastle: University of Newcastle.

Planning Paragraphs

Topic:

Content words from question:

Direction word:

P.E.E.L PARAGRAPH

P:	POINT
E:	EVIDENCE
E:	EXPLANATION
L:	LINK