

How to Write a Good Paragraph

A paragraph is a block of text, used in most assignment types. Just as your sentences show how you've divided your information into logical pieces, your paragraphs show how you've divided your argument into logical stages. For instance,

- an essay paragraph usually presents and argues one claim (all the claims in order make the argument)
- a report paragraph usually has one of the report's functions (such as describing a methodology or recommendations).

Both sentences and paragraphs help your reader see how you've organised your work. When writing a paragraph, the most important thing is to arrange your sentences so your reader can start at the beginning and read through. That means the sentences must all be related, and each new sentence must clearly develop from the sentences before it. Grammar makes this easier and more effective.

For example, look at this paragraph.

In terms of structure, there is no one design which ideally suits all variables. Organisational structure can be described as the internal scaffolding of business operations. The structure of a business is designed to support and enhance operational activities as well as providing an effective communication link to appropriately manage a workforce. As organisations differ greatly from industry to industry, these differences are obvious and immense.

The grammar is mostly good, but each sentence is making a different point and heading off in its own direction. Even though each sentence's grammar is fine, the writer still needs to consider the whole paragraph's grammar.

The first two sentences can show how this works.

In terms of structure, there is no one design which ideally suits all variables. Organisational structure can be described as the internal scaffolding of business operations.

The first sentence is great – introduces the topic, has a definite subject and predicate, and makes the writer's purpose clear. The second sentence is also grammatically good, but it still needs to be coherent – that is, it must follow on from the first sentence.

As always, start by thinking about the meaning – what *is* the relationship between these ideas? Here, the second sentence is a definition, which the first sentence uses. They could therefore work better the other way around (a statement follows on from a definition more easily than a definition from a statement).

You then use grammar to *show* that the second sentence is using the first sentence's definition. Similar to writing a single sentence, you can do this with

Conjunctions	Structure is the internal scaffolding of a business, <u>and</u> in terms of structure no one design ideally suits all variables.
Repetition	Structure is the internal scaffolding of a business. In terms of <u>structure</u> , no one design ideally suits all variables.
Pronouns Determiners	Structure is the internal scaffolding of a business. In <u>these</u> terms, no one design ideally suits all variables.
Participles	Structure is the internal scaffolding of a business, <u>indicating</u> that no one design ideally suits all variables.
Adjective clauses	Structure is the internal scaffolding of a business, in <u>which</u> terms no one design ideally suits all variables.

Each has its own strengths and is suitable for different types of statements (remember, always choose what works best in *this* situation for *this* meaning). In most good academic writing, you'll have a mixture of these sentence types as you move through the different stages of what you're saying.

When you've done that, think about how the third sentence can be shown to develop from the first two, then the fourth sentence, and so on, until the whole paragraph clearly works together (that is, coheres) to make its main point.

Organisational structure can be described as the internal scaffolding of business operations, and in these terms there is no one design which ideally suits all variables. This is because the design of a business aims to support and enhance its operational activities as well as providing an effective communication link to appropriately manage its workforce. With operational activities and workforces differing greatly between industries as well as individually, the most appropriate structure will also necessarily differ.

Three important points

- The cohesive device (underlined in the examples) should come near the start of the new information – usually its subject or earlier. Every time you bring in a new idea, let your reader see its connection to your previous points as early as possible. Remember, your argument's stronger if the reader can see straight away how the sentences work together.
- Don't add too many pieces to one sentence – keep it as easy as possible to read while still making your point.
- Vary the tactics; don't just keep using one the whole time. Starting every sentence with a conjunction (Therefore... In addition... However... Furthermore... In conclusion...) is a very common mistake, and always sounds like the writer's bored. Use the tactics in a sequence that clearly and accurately reflects your meaning without making the reader work too hard.