

Paragraph Checklist

What comprises a paragraph?

Three qualities of a successful paragraph

- Unity

- Coherence

- Development

Checking Paragraphs

1. What is the topic sentence of each paragraph, and is it stated or implied? Where in the paragraph does it fall? Should it come at some other point? Would any paragraph be improved by deleting or adding a topic sentence?
2. Which sentences, if any, do not relate in some way to the topic sentence? Is there any way to justify their inclusion?
3. What is the most general sentence in each paragraph? If not the topic sentence, should it remain?
4. Is each paragraph organized in a way that is easy for the reader to follow? By what means are sentences linked in each paragraph? Do any more links need to be added? Do any of the transitional expressions try to create links that really do not exist between ideas?
5. How completely does each paragraph develop its topic sentence? What methods of development are used, and are they effective? What other methods might be used? Does the paragraph need more material?
6. How long is each paragraph? Are paragraphs varied in length? Does any paragraph seem too long or too short? Is there anything that might be given strong emphasis by a one-sentence paragraph?
7. How does the introductory paragraph catch the interest of the reader? How exactly does it open—with a question? a quotation? a strong statement? How else might it open?
8. How does the last paragraph draw the writing to a conclusion? What lasting impression will it leave with the reader? Does it close with a vivid image? a question? a quotation? a warning or call to action? How else might it conclude?