

Institute of Sciences, Humanities & Liberal Studies

Department of Languages

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Notes: Writing skills

METHODS OF DEVELOPING PARAGRAPHS

A paragraph has limitations of around 100- 150 words max. It has to be precise and to the point and yet providing complete information related to topic sentence.

The modes for developing paragraphs fall into the following four groups:

Description: A paragraph developed by detail, the topic sentence is supported by factual material, either sense impressions or conceptual facts. Almost all writing has some detail in it. The descriptive mode takes the whole (relationship, place, process, etc.), breaks or divides it into parts or events, and treats each separately. The basic objective of descriptive writing is the depiction of the appearance of people, places, and things. The writer helps recreate for the reader sense impressions (sight, sound, touch, smell, and taste) that have been experienced or observed by the writer. Keep in mind that the purpose of the writing and the audience must be determined: to focus on the writer's experiences is the expressive aim, to inform or explain information is the expository aim, and to persuade or argue the reader to one side of an issue is the persuasive aim.

Narrative: The basic objective of narrative writing is the recreation of a sequence of events. The elements of a good narrative are characters, a natural time sequence, plot, dialogue, and a point worth considering.

Evaluation: The basis of an evaluative paragraph or essay is to put a value on something (literature, drama, objects, food, wine, movies, etc.) To begin an evaluation the writer must first set the criteria on which the object is being judged.

Classification: The classification paragraph is usually expository and is a process of grouping terms or ideas that are related in some specific way.

Other technique of development help the writer to further organize his/her ideas.

Cause/Effect or Effect/Cause-Usually an analysis mode (or descriptive mode) this process of organizing a paragraph breaks the topic into its parts to establish a cause-effect relationship among the parts. It carefully scrutinizes the relationship between cause and effect. This method may also be in the narrative mode of chronological order as one sequence follows another.

Analysis or Process Analysis- This method of developing a paragraph is the process of separating an object or concept into its parts and then explaining how they are related to the whole. The functional analysis is usually a sequence of operations or actions by which something is done or made (how to do it). Generally, it is descriptive in mode with a spatial order of development.

Example or Illustration-Examples and illustrations are used in almost all types or modes of writing to help support points that the writer is making. The example paragraph reaches a conclusion (topic sentence) as a result of observing a number of examples and then forms a generalization called

induction. One of the most effective ways to support the validity of a conclusion is to relate a few typical examples that lead you to such a conclusion in the first place.

An example is a specific detail used to attempt to make an abstract idea concrete or general ideas specific. The illustration paragraph is similar to the example paragraph because it is too

specific in time, place, and action. The main difference is that the illustration paragraph is a story (true or untrue) that supports or develops a main point (the topic sentence). Therefore, an illustration takes the narrative mode and will be in chronological order. When using an illustration to support the validity of a conclusion, make sure that the illustration is concise and to the point, so that the reader does not lose sight of the main idea of the paragraph. The chief value of illustration is its potential to be interesting because all readers like a story.

Comparison or Contrast- Another method of developing paragraphs is through comparison or contrast. Comparison shows similarities while a contrast shows differences. The main reason for using this method is to explain an unfamiliar object or idea by comparing or contrasting it to a familiar object or idea. The writer may develop the paragraph or essay by first discussing all of one subject and then fully presenting the second subject, or the writer might discuss one like or different trait with each subject and then move to other characteristics, thus discussing both subjects together. A third method might be to present all of the ways that the subjects are alike and then discuss all of the ways that the subjects are different.

Problem/Solution- In a problem/solution paragraph or essay the writer begins by explaining the problem (causes and effects may be used) and then presents a solution or several solutions. If the writer is trying to convince the reader of a best

solution, the aim is persuasive.

Definition- A paragraph that is developed by definition answers the question “What is it?” Usually expository or informational, the definition may be one sentence or extended to be a paragraph, theme, or even a book. It is usually combined with other methods of development. The definition is intended to clarify meaning; thus, it should identify essential qualities and limit the term’s meaning.

Facts, Figures or Statistics, Quotations- Using these forms of detail will help develop many topics. It is important to remember that they should be accurate and a source should be given.

Example 1. In explaining the voodoo effect medically, Cannon theorized that what happens to curse victims is a case of self-induced shock brought on by "prolonged and intense emotion." Experiments with animals put under intense stress and case histories of soldiers in battle situations, he says, have shown one of the physical after-effects of intense stress is an extreme drop in blood pressure. Shock occurs as a result of the rush of adrenaline. The body's blood vessels constrict, or tighten up, cutting down the blood supply to the body. Starved of oxygen-carrying blood, vital organs start breaking down, the heart starts faltering and eventually death occurs. This, combined with the fact-that the victim often refuses all food and water, is responsible for the killing effect.

--Lynn Quitman Troyka, Structured Reading, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1978, pg.12