

Advanced Grammar & Composition

Week 9 - Supplemental Lessons

The Paragraph

A paragraph is like a story—it has a beginning, middle, and end. The first sentence is the beginning: known as the **introductory** or **topic sentence**, it introduces the topic or main idea to your reader. Your goal for this sentence is to **grab your reader’s attention**. Imagine someone is walking through the kitchen and your paragraph is on a sheet of paper on the table. If they happened to glance at it and read the first line, what could you write that would make them sit down to read the rest? (Check out [UNC: Introductions](#). These are tips on writing concluding paragraphs that work for concluding sentences too!)

Every paragraph begins with an indent (the first line of each paragraph shifts to the right). The middle of the paragraph is made up of **at least three middle** or **body sentences**. This is the meat of your paragraph sandwich, where you tell your reader everything you want them to know about your topic. Your four goals are **detail, order, focus, and flow**. The middle sentences should explain or discuss your topic in detail, with no room for confusion or questions, using precise and vivid vocabulary. They should be organized in an order that makes sense (for example, in chronological order or in order of importance), and every single sentence should relate directly back to the topic or main idea in your introductory sentence. The sentences should flow smoothly from one to the next both by connecting your ideas and using transition words (click [here](#) for a helpful list!).

The end of the paragraph is your **concluding sentence**. Fairy tales end with the sentence, “They lived happily ever after.” This gives the story a sense of positive finality: we know the story is at an end, and the characters are happy. Your goal is to craft a final sentence with the same feeling of closure—and just like the introductory sentence, find an interesting way to do it that will make your reader glad they sat down to read your paragraph. (Check out [UNC: Conclusions](#). These are tips on writing concluding paragraphs that work for concluding sentences too!)