

MEAL Paragraph Pattern

Good paragraphs don't always have to have a set number of sentences, but they should have a *balance of specific information (Evidence) and explanation/discussion of evidence (Analysis)*.

Main Idea (aka Topic Sentence) – make a strong statement (based on question/prompt) to be **proven** in your paragraph (not a plot point or an obvious fact)

Evidence #1 – First specific detail to prove topic

Analysis #1 – Sentence(s) to clarify the first piece of evidence, to explain why this detail is significant, to add more information to tie the specific proof back to main idea of paragraph/essay thesis

Evidence #2

Analysis #2

Evidence #3

Analysis #3

Link (aka Concluding Sentence) – Final thought on main idea of paragraph, restated with emphasis! Don't simply repeat. Link may connect back to entire essay thesis.

Writing Checklist

- Stay focused on your topic – no unnecessary information/plot summary in paragraph
- Check diction
 - Use interesting vocabulary - descriptive adjectives and power verbs
 - AVOID slang and text language (*kinda, cause, u*)
 - AVOID vague words (*stuff, things, etc., a lot, good, bad*)
 - AVOID 2nd person “*you*” – better to stick to 3rd person (he, people, character name)
 - AVOID 1st person, unless you are relaying a personal experience
 - AVOID *maybe, perhaps, seems to be* – be definitive!
- AVOID contractions; more formal to write out words and you also have less grammatical issues (...and it is *could have*, NOT *could of*)
 - AVOID being too informal or conversational with your words; takes seriousness away from paper
- Use strong transitions to link ideas (use the list; don't make them up)
- Check the spelling of homonyms – see the NO EXCUSE list - *there, their, they're; too, to, two; effect, affect; then, than; are, our; lose, loose*
- Check syntax
 - Do you have complete sentences (no run-ons or incompletes)?
 - Are your sentences clear?
 - Move beyond short, choppy sentences as you fully explain proof
- Stay in one verb tense throughout the entire paragraph (present is best)
- Check punctuation – especially commas and apostrophes
- Don't overuse questions; better to make strong statements
- Think about your tone/voice – it should match your topic and be sincere.
- PROOFREAD!