Paragraph Directions

Paragraph Structure

There are three major elements in a well-developed paragraph: a topic sentence, supporting statements, and a concluding sentence. The topic sentence basically tells what the paragraph is about. The three supporting statements develop the topic sentence. The concluding sentence wraps up the paragraph, giving it a satisfying ending.

Topic Sentence

Topic sentences are often the first sentence in the paragraph. However, the topic sentence may sometimes be further into the paragraph. This may be the case if the writer uses the first sentence or two as a transition from the previous paragraph. Wherever the topic sentence is located, it will contain the main idea of the paragraph.

Supporting Sentences

The three supporting sentences are the meat of your paragraph. The topic sentence gets you started, and the concluding sentence finishes. Without the supporting sentences, you have no paragraph.

Concluding Sentences

Concluding sentences are like the bow atop a wrapped gift. They finish off the presentation of your thoughts and wrap up the paragraph. Usually, they are statements that finish off your work. Other concluding sentences, however, are called “zingers.” They finish with a flourish. They are used when the writer wants the words to echo in the reader’s mind long after the book is closed or the paper has been returned.

It is easy to find the placement of concluding sentences. They are at the end of the paragraph. The difficult part is composing a concluding sentence that gives the paragraph a nice finish. Trial and error is the best way to learn the art of writing good concluding sentences.

Transitions

In a paragraph, you move from one thought to another by using transitional words or phrases that direct your reader. Go to the end of these directions to view some transitional words.

Types of Paragraphs

There are four basic types of paragraphs. Each has a specific focus.

Descriptive: The purpose of a descriptive paragraph is to describe something. The object of definition can be a person, a place, a thing, or an idea.

Expository: The purpose of this type of paragraph is to explain something. It may have description, narration, and persuasion in it, but the main purpose of the paragraph is to explain.

Narrative: The purpose of a narrative paragraph is to tell a story. It will have a beginning, a middle, and an end. It may have description and exposition (explanation), but basically, it will tell a story.

Persuasive: The purpose of a persuasive paragraph is to convince the reader to agree with the writer. Many teachers insist that all writing is, to some extent, persuasive. This may be true, but in
any writing designated "persuasive," the focus will be on making the reader see something the same way that the writer sees it, to share a point of view or conviction.

Let's look at some examples of paragraphs.

**Paragraphs Examples**

**Description**

"Two doors from one corner, on the left hand going east, the line was broken by the entry of a court; and just at that point a certain sinister block of building thrust forward its gable on the street. It was two storeys high; showed no window, nothing but a door on the lower storey and a blind forehead of discoloured wall on the upper; and bore in every feature, the marks of prolonged and sordid negligence. The door, which was equipped with neither bell nor knocker, was blistered and distained. Tramps slouched into the recess and struck matches on the panels; children kept shop upon the steps; the schoolboy had tried his knife on the mouldings; and for close on a generation, no one had appeared to drive away these random visitors or to repair their ravages."

--From *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson

**Exposition (Explaining)**

"In this book a number of dialects are used, to wit: the Missouri negro dialect; the extremest form of the backwoods Southwestern dialect; and four modified varieties of this last. The shadings have not been done in a haphazard fashion, or by guesswork; but painstakingly, and with the trustworthy guidance and support of personal familiarity with these several forms of speech.

I make this explanation for the reason that without it many readers would suppose that all these characters were trying to talk alike and not succeeding."

--From *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain

**Narration**

"The apparition of a file of soldiers ringing down the butt-ends of their loaded muskets on our door-step, caused the dinner-party to rise from table in confusion, and caused Mrs. Joe re-entering the kitchen empty-handed, to stop short and stare, in her wondering lament of ‘Gracious goodness gracious me, what's gone - with the - pie!'

The sergeant and I were in the kitchen when Mrs. Joe stood staring; at which crisis I partially recovered the use of my senses. It was the sergeant who had spoken to me, and he was now looking round at the company, with his handcuffs invitingly extended towards them in his right hand, and his left on my shoulder."

--From *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens

**Persuasion**

If you are searching for the perfect exercise, please consider the benefits of a brisk walk. Walking has been proven to reduce stress, lower blood pressure, increase metabolism, increase deep breathing, help cure depression, and lift spirits. While jogging or running can break down tissue in the knees, ankles, and feet, walking briskly with arms freely swinging seldom causes any of these problems. Walking requires no special clothing other than a sturdy pair of shoes, while most other sports require special clothing or equipment. For example, swimming requires a suit, yoga requires a mat and flexible clothing. Walking can be done anytime and anywhere. Walking can be
done alone or with a partner, and many people find that having someone to walk with makes the time pass quickly.

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TRANSITIONAL WORDS

Authors sometime provide readers with clues that help them to follow their train of thought. Words that show the relation of one sentence to another within a paragraph are called transitional expressions. These transitional expressions are used to alert readers to changes in directions or to provide further explanation. Transitional words are like signals and signposts that give directions and information to a driver on an unfamiliar road.

These transitional words can be organized into the following nine categories:

- Further information
- Directional change
- Sequence and order
- Explanation
- Emphasis
- Location and setting
- Compare and contrast
- Summary and conclusion
- Time

Further information

These words are a signal that additional information will be provided to the reader.

- additionally
- in addition
- and
- again
- last of all
- another
- besides
- moreover
- other
- too
- also
- for example
- for instance
- furthermore
- next
- likewise
- further
- furthermore
- finally
- as well
- along with
- and finally
- secondly
- first of all
- more
- one reason
- equally
Directional Change

These words are a signal for the reader to move back to an earlier idea or concept.

on the other hand
otherwise
nevertheless
in spite of
however
despite
although
in contrast
corversely
even though
still
though
rather
but
while
in the meantime

Sequence and order

The author uses these words to order and organize the information being given to the reader.

next
after
before
last
lastly
always
earlier
first
second
third
prior to
till
then
next
for one thing
now
later
in the first place
while
until
later
afterward
finally
immediately

Explanation or clarification
These words are a signal that the author is going to provide further information for the reader.

in other words
specifically
similar to
that is
put another way
in the same way as
for instance
such as
for example
to illustrate

Emphasis

These words are a signal to the reader that the author wants to highlight or emphasize a particular point or event.

again
to emphasize
most of all
the basic concept
important to note
for this reason
should be noted
primary concern
significant factor
to repeat
central issue
main idea
major event
major development

Location and setting

The author uses these words to provide directional clues to the reader.

between
on
above
among
around
beneath
beside
under
to the left or right
in front of
behind
outside
inside
opposite
alongside
next to
near
on top of
over
in back of
behind
beneath
away from
close to
middle
west
east
north
south
across
toward
adjacent
along
against
here
there
in the distance

**Compare and contrast**

The author uses these words to compare and contrast information for the reader.  
(Reminder: comparing two items shows their similarities and contrasting two items shows their differences)

similar
similarly
also
like
likewise
in the same way
as
and
or
also
more than
different than
different from
opposite
though
less than
most
best
better
rather
in the same way
yet
on the other hand
nevertheless
nonetheless
conversely
in contrast, still at the same time

**Summary and conclusion**

These words are a signal that the author is going to conclude or bring together the information being presented to the reader.
consequently
finally
in summary
therefore
hence
thus
in conclusion
in short
to sum up
as a result
due to
accordingly
last of all
in summation
in brief

**Time**

These words relate to the timing or sequence of events being presented to the reader.

tomorrow
today
yesterday
next week, month, year
last week, month, year
finally
soon
later
about
after
before
during
while
afterwards
first
second
third
then
meanwhile
subsequently
immediately
eventually