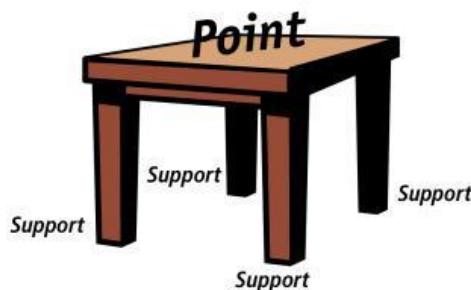


**A** paragraph is a series of sentences that support a main idea, or point. A paragraph typically starts with the main idea or point (also called the **topic sentence**), and the rest of the paragraph provides specific details to support and develop the point. The illustration below shows the relationship between point and support.



## Outlining

An outline is a helpful way to plan a paper or to analyze it. An **outline** shows at a glance the point of a paper and a numbered list of the items that support the point. Here is an example of a paragraph and an outline of the paragraph.

<sup>1</sup>People in my family love our dog Punch. <sup>2</sup>However, I have several reasons for wanting to get rid of Punch. <sup>3</sup>First of all, he knows I don't like him. <sup>4</sup>Sometimes he gives me an evil look and curls his top lip back to show me his teeth. <sup>5</sup>The message is clearly, "Someday I'm going to bite you." <sup>6</sup>Another reason to get rid of Punch is he sheds everywhere. <sup>7</sup>Every surface in our house is covered with Punch hair. <sup>8</sup>I spend more time brushing it off my clothes than I do mowing the lawn. <sup>9</sup>Last of all, Punch is an early riser, while (on weekends) I am not. <sup>10</sup>He will start barking and whining to go outside at 7 a.m., and it's my job to take care of him. <sup>11</sup>When I told my family that I had a list of good reasons for getting rid of Punch, they said they would make up a list of reasons to get rid of me.

**Point:** I have several reasons for wanting to get rid of Punch.

**Supporting detail:** 1. He knows I don't like him.

**Supporting detail:** 2. Punch sheds everywhere.

**Supporting detail:** 3. Punch is an early riser.

**PRACTICE 1**

Look at each of the following five paragraphs and then complete the outline for each paragraph. Notice that words such as *first*, *also*, *another*, and *finally* often signal each new item of support.

- 1Being a celebrity is often difficult. 2First of all, celebrities have to look almost perfect all the time. 3There's always a photographer ready to take an unflattering picture of a famous person looking dumpy in old clothes. 4Celebrities also sacrifice their private lives. 5Their personal struggles, divorces, or family tragedies all end up as front-page news. 6Last, and most frightening of all, celebrities are in constant danger of the wrong kind of attention. 7Threatening letters and even physical attacks from crazy fans are things a celebrity must contend with.

**Point:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Supporting detail: 1.** \_\_\_\_\_

**Supporting detail: 2.** \_\_\_\_\_

**Supporting detail: 3.** \_\_\_\_\_

- 2People lie for different reasons. 3One common reason is to avoid hurting someone's feelings. 4For example, a friend might ask, "Do you like my new haircut?" 5If you think it's ugly, you might still answer, "Yes." 6Another common reason for lying is to avoid a fight. 7Say a friend angers you and then asks, "Are you upset with me?" 8You might answer, "No," to avoid an argument. 9People also lie so that they'll fit in, as when you listen to a boring person and politely say, "That's interesting." 10In addition, people lie to avoid spending more time with someone. 11For instance, you might lie, "I have to go now."

**Point:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Supporting detail: 1.** \_\_\_\_\_

**Supporting detail: 2.** \_\_\_\_\_

**Supporting detail: 3.** \_\_\_\_\_

**Supporting detail: 4.** \_\_\_\_\_

- 3You don't have to scare your family with statistics about heart attacks. 4There are several positive ways to encourage your family to exercise more often. 5To begin with, get them to exercise more often by emphasizing how good they'll feel and how much better they'll look if they work out on a regular basis. 6A second method you can use is to set an example. 7If they see you walking to stores rather than driving, they might be encouraged

to do likewise. <sup>6</sup>Finally, make exercise a family activity. <sup>7</sup>Suggest that the whole family go hiking or camping together, take up early morning jogging, or join the Y at the group rate.

**Point:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Supporting detail: 1.** \_\_\_\_\_

**Supporting detail: 2.** \_\_\_\_\_

**Supporting detail: 3.** \_\_\_\_\_

4. <sup>1</sup>Serious depression, as opposed to the fleeting kind we all feel at times, has definite warning signs. <sup>2</sup>One symptom of depression is a change in sleep patterns—either sleeplessness or sleeping too much. <sup>3</sup>In addition, abnormal eating patterns may develop, either eating too much or loss of appetite. <sup>4</sup>A third sign is trouble in thinking or concentrating—even to the point of finding it difficult to read a magazine or newspaper. <sup>5</sup>And last of all, a general feeling of hopelessness may signal depression. <sup>6</sup>People feel indifferent to their families and jobs and may begin to think that life is not worth living.

**Point:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Supporting detail: 1.** \_\_\_\_\_

**Supporting detail: 2.** \_\_\_\_\_

**Supporting detail: 3.** \_\_\_\_\_

**Supporting detail: 4.** \_\_\_\_\_

5. <sup>1</sup>Several factors can interfere with having a good memory. <sup>2</sup>For one thing, there can be a lack of motivation. <sup>3</sup>Without a real desire to learn or remember something, you probably won't. <sup>4</sup>Also a factor is a lack of practice. <sup>5</sup>To stay sharp, memory skills, like any other skill, must be used on a regular basis. <sup>6</sup>Yet another factor that can hurt memory is self-doubt. <sup>7</sup>If you're convinced you won't remember something, you probably won't. <sup>8</sup>In addition, distraction can interfere with memory. <sup>9</sup>If you're distracted by a television or by conversation nearby, try to find a quiet environment before trying to commit something to memory.

**Point:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Supporting detail: 1.** \_\_\_\_\_

**Supporting detail: 2.** \_\_\_\_\_

**Supporting detail: 3.** \_\_\_\_\_

**Supporting detail: 4.** \_\_\_\_\_