

3 The Development of a Paragraph

In this unit, you will learn ...

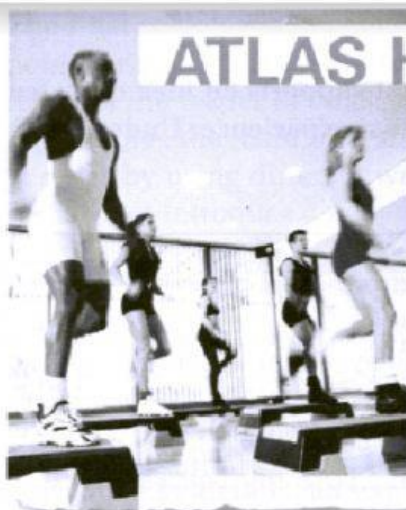
- methods of paragraph support and development.
- how to write concluding sentences.
- how to do peer editing.

Paragraph development

After you have chosen a topic and written a topic sentence, you *develop* your main idea by adding more information to explain what you mean. This unit will explain three common ways to develop a paragraph: giving *details*, giving an *explanation*, and giving an *example*.

Details

- 1 Details are specific points that tell more about a general statement. Read this brochure from a health club. Notice the details that help develop the paragraph.



ATLAS HEALTH CENTRE

You'll love working out at the Atlas Health Centre, and you'll love what it does for you! We have state-of-the-art exercise equipment in large, air-conditioned rooms. You can work out alone or with the help of one of our professional personal trainers. If you like exercising with friends, join an aerobics or swimming class—or even try kickboxing! Our staff nutrition experts are always on hand to talk with you about health issues. When you've finished, you can relax with a whirlpool bath or a sauna. Come and exercise with us at Atlas, and you'll soon be feeling strong and looking good.

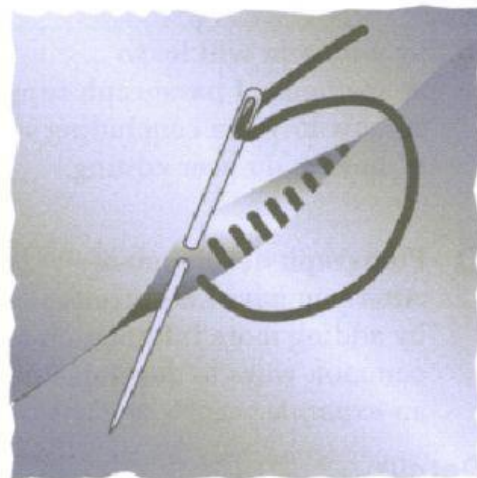
- 2 In the paragraph above, underline the topic sentence. Below, list the details used to support the topic sentence. Compare your answers with a partner.

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.
- e.
- f.

Explanation

- 3 An explanation tells the reader what something means or how something works. In this paragraph, underline the topic sentence. Then answer the questions.

'A stitch in time saves nine.' My mother, who likes sewing, used this simple saying to teach me the value of working on problems when they are still small. Originally, the saying referred to sewing—if you have a small hole in a shirt, you can repair it with one stitch. But if you wait, the hole will get larger, and it will take you nine stitches. This simple sentence reminds me to take care of small problems before they become big problems.



- a. What is the writer trying to explain?
- b. Is she successful? Do you understand the explanation? yes / no

Example

- 4 An example is a specific person, place, thing, or event that supports an idea or statement. This paragraph includes an example from the writer's own experience. Underline the topic sentence.

Even when a first date is a disaster, a couple can still become good friends. For example, my first date with Greg was terrible. I thought he was coming to pick me up at 6.30, but instead he came at 6.00. I didn't have time to do my hair, and my make-up looked messy. When I got into his car, I scraped my leg against the car door and tore my tights. Next, he took me to an Italian restaurant for dinner, and I accidentally dropped some spaghetti on my shirt. Then we went to a film. Greg asked me which film I wanted to see, and I chose a romantic comedy. He fell asleep during the film, and I got angry. Now that Greg and I are good friends, we can look back and laugh at how terrible that first date was!

- 5 Why do you think the writer chose to use an example to develop the paragraph in exercise 4 above? Write your reason here, and then compare with a partner.

.....

Choosing a means of support

- 6** Would you develop each of these topics with details, an explanation, or an example? Explain your choices to a partner. (More than one answer is possible.)

- a. what freedom means to me
- b. an unusual holiday
- c. weddings in my country
- d. why I don't like swimming
- e. the ideal job

- 7** Develop your own paragraph. Look back at the topic sentences you wrote in Unit 2, exercise 6 on page 15. Follow these steps.

Step one: Choose one that you would like to develop into a paragraph.

Step two: Brainstorm some ideas using any method you like.

Step three: Develop your paragraph with supporting sentences.

Step four: Exchange paragraphs with a partner. Say what kind of support your partner used. Could your partner tell what kind of support you used?

Concluding sentences

How to end a paragraph

The final sentence of a paragraph is called the *concluding sentence*. It sums up the main points or restates the main idea in a different way. A sentence that sums up the paragraph reminds the reader of what the writer's main idea and supporting points were. A sentence that restates the main idea should give the same information in a slightly different way, perhaps by using different words or by using different word order. A concluding sentence should not introduce a new point.

- 8** Read the example paragraphs in exercises 3 and 4 on page 18 again. Underline the concluding sentences. Do the concluding sentences sum up the information in the paragraph or restate the main idea?
- 9** Work with a partner. Take turns reading these paragraphs aloud. Is the main idea developed by details, an explanation, or an example? Is there a concluding sentence? Circle yes or no. If there is no concluding sentence, write one with your partner.

Even simple study habits can improve your marks. At university I learned how important it is to get enough sleep. When you are well-rested, it is easier to learn. Research shows that when people don't get enough sleep, their memories aren't as effective. If students are really tired, they might even fall asleep in class! It's easy to see how getting enough sleep can improve your performance at university.

- a. means of support:
concluding sentence? yes / no
.....

My favourite subject is psychology. I enjoy learning about the ways people think and behave. I am also interested in learning about the way children's minds develop.

- b. means of support:
concluding sentence? yes / no
.....

I am too nervous to sing karaoke songs with my friends. The last time I tried was on my birthday, when my friends took me to a karaoke club. I told my friends I didn't want to sing, but they encouraged me until I said yes. When I stood up in front of the microphone, I was so scared, I felt dizzy. It was hard to hear the music, and my mouth was too dry to make a sound. I just stood there until a friend jumped up next to me and finished the song.

- c. means of support:
concluding sentence? yes / no
.....

I will never eat dinner at The Little French Bistro again. The restaurant is not very clean. You can see dust in the corners and on the shelves. The food is expensive, but the portions are small. I never feel full after I've finished eating. In addition, the waiters are not very friendly. For these reasons, I will not visit that restaurant again.



- d. means of support:
concluding sentence? yes / no
.....

For me, a friend is someone who accepts you the way you are. A friend doesn't want you to change your personality or your style. I like people who don't care if the people they are with are wearing popular clothes or listening to trendy music.

- e. means of support:
concluding sentence? yes / no
.....

Peer editing

What is peer editing?

Showing your work to another student is a very useful way to improve your writing. This is called *peer editing*. You read your partner's writing and your partner reads yours. You comment on your partner's writing and your partner comments on yours. You might talk together, write comments on a sheet that your instructor gives you, or write directly on your partner's work.

Here is the first draft of the paragraph about the writer's first date with Greg. The writer has shown the paragraph to another student, who wrote some comments.

<i>Topic sentence</i>	Even when a first date is a disaster, a couple can still
<i>Developed by example</i>	become good friends. For example, my first date with
	<i>Can you make this stronger?</i>
	Greg <u>wasn't very good</u> . I thought he was coming to pick
	<i>When did he come?</i>
	me up at 6.30, <u>but he didn't</u> . When I got into his car,
	<i>Explain how you tore them.</i> <i>Tell me more about this.</i>
	<u>I tore my tights</u> . Next, I accidentally <u>got some spaghetti</u> on
	<i>What kind of film?</i> <i>How did you feel about that?</i>
	my shirt. Then we went to <u>a film</u> . <u>He fell asleep</u> during the
<i>Concluding sentence</i>	film. Now that Greg and I are good friends, <u>we can look</u>
	<i>Good!</i> <i>The same as the topic sentence</i>
	<u>back and laugh</u> because <u>even when a first date is a</u>
	<u>disaster, a couple can still become good friends</u> .

10 Look at the handwritten comments on the paragraph above, and answer these questions with a partner.

- How many of the comments are statements? How many are questions?
- Why do you think the peer editor sometimes wrote questions instead of statements? For example, why did she write 'Can you make this stronger?' instead of 'Please make this stronger'?
- Why do you think the peer editor marked the topic sentence and the concluding sentence?
- Do you agree with the peer editor's comments?
- What do you think the writer will do next?
- Go back to exercise 4 on page 18 and read the paragraph about the date again. Did the writer use the reader's suggestions?

➤ Why do writers use peer editing?

There are two reasons for peer editing. The first is to get a reader's opinion about your writing. A reader can tell you that ...

- you should add more details or explanation.
- something is not organised clearly.
- you have some information that is not relevant.
- there is something that is hard to understand.

These comments will help you write your next draft.

The second reason to share writing with others is for you to read more examples of writing. Other people will have had experiences that you haven't. They may show you fresh ways of writing about experiences. Reading their paragraphs and essays can give you good ideas to use yourself in the future.

➤ How do I peer edit?

- Read your partner's work several times. The first time, just read from the beginning to the end. Ask yourself, 'What is it about? What is the writer's purpose?'
- On your second reading, go more slowly and look at specific parts of the writing and make notes.
 - Look for topic sentences and concluding sentences.
 - Note places where you have trouble understanding something, where there seems to be unnecessary information, or where there is not enough information.
 - Let the writer know which parts of the text are especially strong or interesting.
 - Ask questions. This is a good way to let the writer know where he or she could add more information.
 - Circle or underline words, phrases, and sentences that you wish to comment on.
- Don't look for grammar or spelling mistakes. Pay attention just to the content and organisation of the work.



Giving constructive suggestions

11 For each pair of sentences, check (✓) the one that you feel would be most helpful to the writer. Share your answers with a partner, and explain your choices.

- a. ☐ This is a weak topic sentence.
☐ Can you make this topic sentence stronger?
- b. ☐ Did you remember a concluding sentence?
☐ Why didn't you write a concluding sentence?
- c. ☐ You didn't write enough.
☐ Please explain more about your holiday. Where did you stay? What did you do during the day?
- d. ☐ I'm not sure what this part means.
☐ This must be wrong. I can't understand it.
- e. ☐ I think this sentence should come before the next one.
☐ Your organisation is pretty bad. You'd better change it.
- f. ☐ Why do you keep saying the same thing over and over again?
☐ I think these two sentences are really saying the same thing.
- g. ☐ I can't understand why you're talking about your sister.
☐ Your paragraph is about your brother, but this sentence is about your sister. Are you sure it's relevant?
- h. ☐ This is a good paragraph. Nice work! I wish I could write as well as you.
☐ I like your topic sentence because it has a strong main idea. Your example is funny. I wish I could meet your brother!

12 Read this paragraph aloud with a partner. Then peer edit it together. Then join another pair and share your comments.

My father is a teacher. I admire him a lot. I am considering becoming a teacher, too. My older brother works for a big company. My father really loves learning, so he is a natural teacher. My father always helped me with my homework. I think I will become a teacher.

- 13** Write a second draft of the paragraph in exercise 12 on page 23. Use the comments you and your partner made. Then exchange paragraphs with your partner. Discuss how your versions are different from the original. Do you think the second drafts are better? Why or why not?

Review

- 14** Read these statements. Write T (true) or F (false). If the statement is false, change it to make it true. Then compare your answers with a partner.
- a. Details give more specific information than the topic sentence.
 - b. An explanation tells the reader what something is or how it works.
 - c. A detail is usually a short, personal story.
 - d. The concluding sentence uses the same words as the topic sentence.
 - e. The concluding sentence should finish the paragraph with a new idea.
 - f. A peer editor should mark any spelling and grammatical mistakes carefully.
 - g. A peer editor should give some positive comments.
 - h. Peer editing helps the writer, not the reader.
 - i. If a peer editor can't understand something that you wrote, then you know he or she isn't a very good reader.
 - j. A peer editor should be able to identify your topic sentence, main idea, and concluding sentence easily.