



The Basics of Paragraphs and Essays



In developing a paragraph the writer usually

(1) begins with a topic sentence,

(2) develops the main idea by a series of related sentences that explain the idea fully,

(3) concludes with a sentence that restates or summarizes the main idea.

The Steps

Topic

- Decide on the topic
- Brain storming

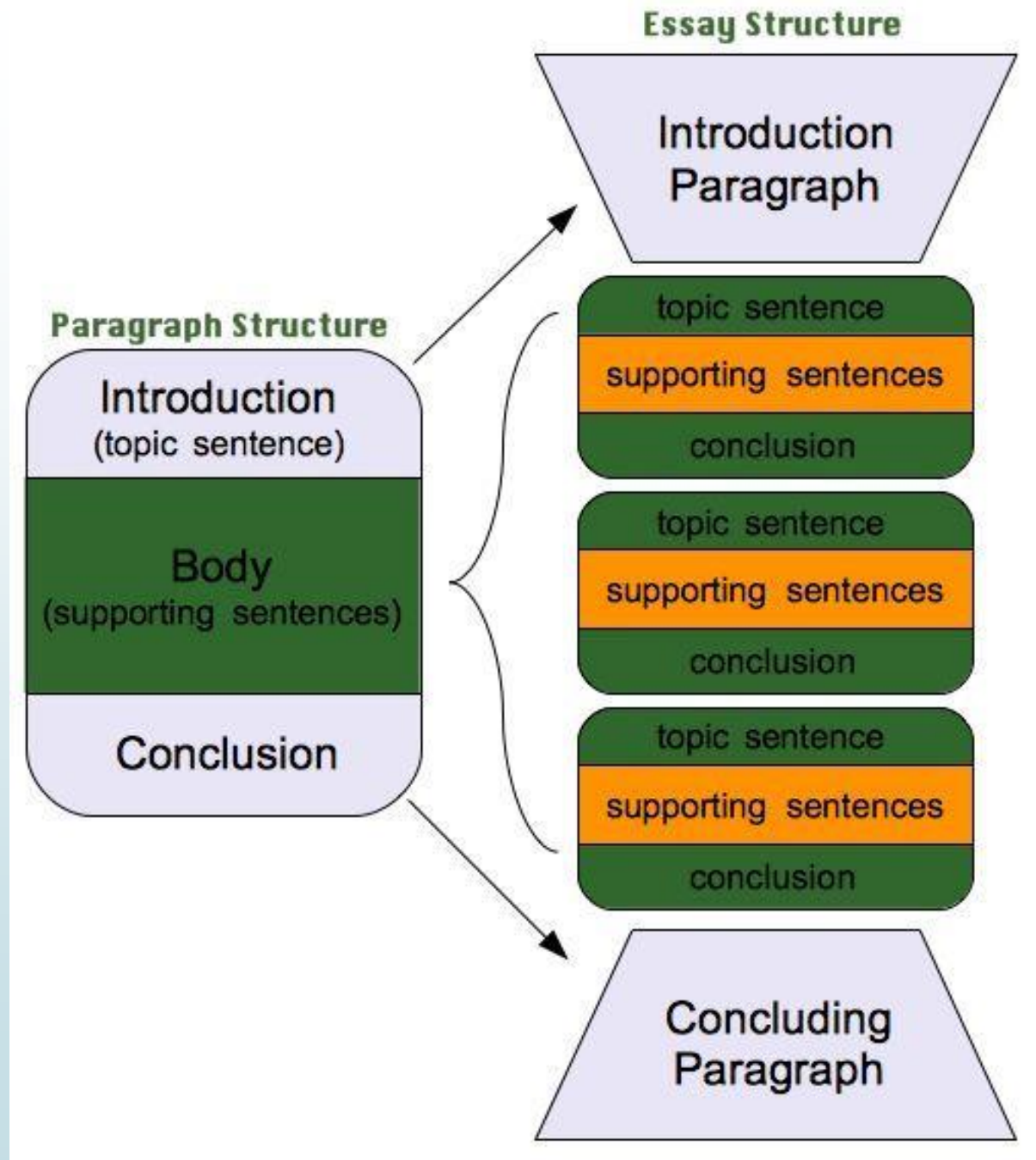
Main idea

- develop the topic sentence
- a topic & the controlling idea

Developing the main idea

- Narration, Description, Examples,
- Classification, Comparison & Contrast, Process,
- Cause & Effect, Definition, Argumentation

Paragraph vs. Essay



Paragraph & Essay

A paragraph and an essay are alike in two important ways:

- First, each one should have a **main idea**.
- Second, the main idea **should be fully explained or developed**.

The main idea of a paragraph is called the **topic**.

This topic is usually stated in a sentence, called a **topic sentence**.

The **topic sentence**, usually a general rather than a specific idea, may be placed anywhere within the paragraph. As a student writer, however, you should try to state your main idea at the beginning of the paragraph.



Development of the Main Idea

Methods of developing the main idea are called **modes of development**.

narration

description

examples

classification and division

comparison and contrast

process

cause and effect

definition

argumentation and persuasion

Paragraph Unity

- A paragraph must be **unified**, meaning that it must deal with one single idea (the main idea) and that each sentence must be related to this idea.
- It must be **coherent**—that is, it must state the main idea clearly—and the sentences that develop the main idea must be **arranged** according to some logical order that will allow the reader to follow your thoughts through the paragraph without stumbling or backtracking.
- Finally, a paragraph must be **complete**. It should develop the main idea fully enough so that the reader will understand and appreciate what you are saying.

Point of View for the Essay

Person

- First person
- Second person
- Third person

Time

- chronological development
- real-time narration
- Flashbacks
- Flashforwards

Tone indicates a particular feeling. It can be :

joyful, serious, humorous, sad, threatening, formal, informal, pessimistic, or optimistic.

Person

Point of view is the perspective from which you're writing, and it dictates what your focus is. Consider the following examples:

- ▶ I love watching the leaves change in the fall. (First person point of view)
- ▶ You will love watching the leaves change color. (Second person)
- ▶ The leaves in fall turn many vibrant colors. (Third person)

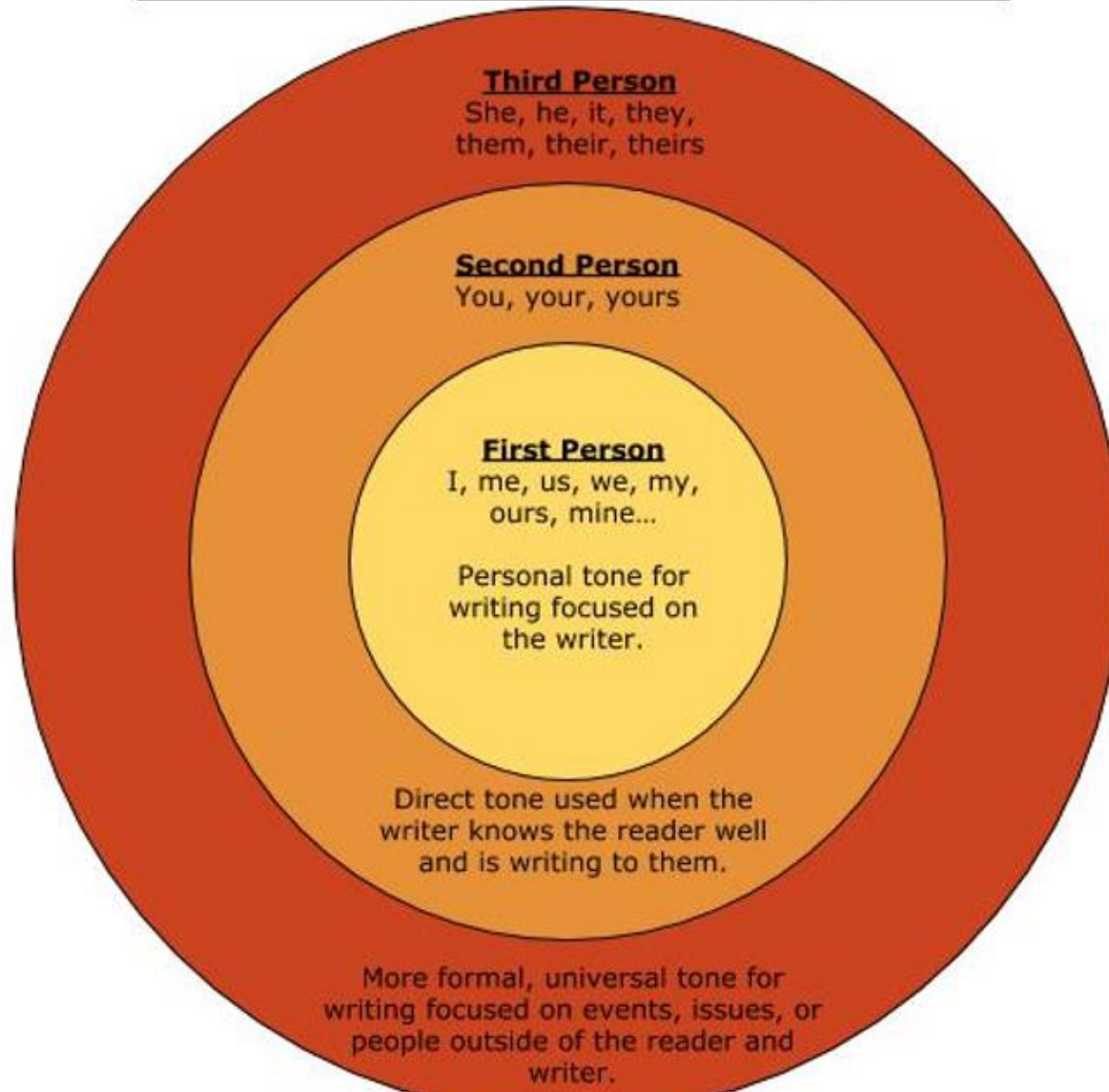
First person uses the following pronouns: I, me, my, us, we, myself, our, ours.

Second person uses any form of the word "you," which has the effect of addressing the reader.

Third person uses pronouns like he, she, it, they, them.

Points of View

When choosing a point of view, ask yourself,
"What is the focus of my writing?"



First Person

First-person point of view is used to write stories/narratives or examples about personal experiences from your own life.

*Several people have made a lasting impression on **me**. I remember one person in particular who was significant to **me**. Dr. Smith, **my** high school English teacher, helped **my** family and **me** through a difficult time during **my** junior year. **We** appreciated her care, kindness, and financial help after the loss of **our** home in a devastating fire.*

Note: Academic writing often requires us to avoid first-person point of view in favor of third-person point of view, which can be more objective and convincing. Often, students will say, “**I think** the author is very convincing.” Taking out I makes a stronger statement or claim: “The author is very convincing.”

Second Person

Second-person point of view, which directly addresses the reader, works well for giving advice or explaining how to do something. A process analysis paper would be a good choice for using the second-person point of view, as shown in this paragraph:

*In order to prepare microwave popcorn, **you** will need a microwave and a box of microwave popcorn which **you've** purchased at a grocery store. First of all, **you** need to remove the popcorn package from the box and take off the plastic wrap. Next, open **your** microwave and place the package in the center with the proper side up. Then set **your** microwave for the suggested number of minutes as stated on the box. Finally, when the popcorn is popped, **you're** ready for a great treat.*

Note: Academic writing generally avoids second-person point of view in favor of third-person point of view. Second person can be too casual for formal writing, and it can also alienate the reader if the reader does not identify with the idea.

Third Person

Third-person point of view identifies people by proper noun (a given name such as Shema Ahemed) or noun (such as *teachers, students, players, or doctors*) and uses the pronouns *they, she, and he*. Third person also includes the use of *one, everyone, and anyone*. Most formal, academic writing uses the third person. Note the use of various third-person nouns and pronouns in the following:

*The **bosses** at the company have decided that **employees** need a day of in-house training. Times have been scheduled for **everyone**. Several senior **employees** will be required to make five-minute presentations. **One** is not eager to speak in front of others since **he's** very shy. **Another one**, however, is anxious to relate their expertise. The variation in routine should provide an interesting day for all **people** concerned.*

Third Person Pronouns: Gender-Fair Use of Language and Singular “They”

In the past, if you wanted to refer to one unnamed person, you used the masculine pronoun: *If a person is strong, **he** will stand up for **himself**.* Today, you should avoid the automatic use of the masculine pronoun because it is considered sexist language.

Also avoid perpetuating gender stereotypes by assigning a particular gendered pronoun: *A doctor should listen to **his** patients. A nurse should listen to **her** patients.* These examples make assumptions that doctors are men and nurses are women, which is a sexist stereotype.

Instead, use the pronouns *they* or *them* to refer to a person whose gender is undisclosed or irrelevant to the context of the usage: *If a person is strong, **they** will stand up for **themselves** when **they** believe in something.*

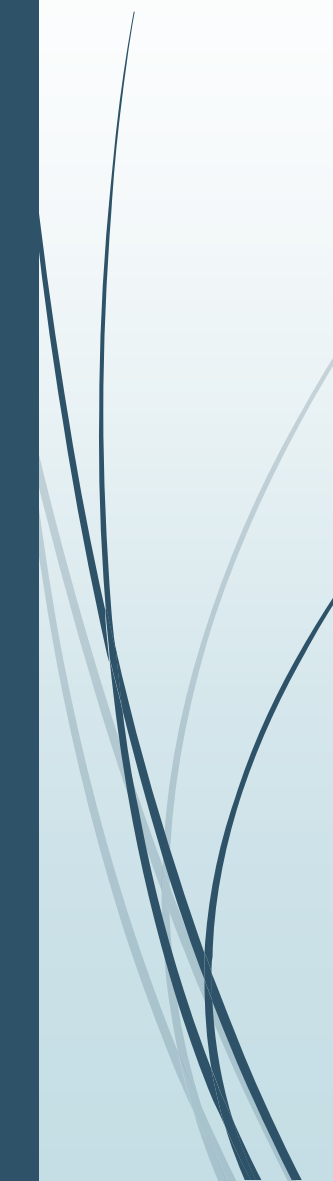
Objective & Subjective

an important factor in point of view is whether the writer is being objective or subjective.

An **objective** essay presents the facts—the basics of what occurred or what is being described—without including the writer's own interpretations or personal opinions of those facts. The writer tries to portray the subject of the essay as truly as possible and does not try to influence how the reader will react.

A **subjective** essay, by contrast, expresses how the writer feels and may try to get the reader to feel a certain way. It may give an opinion or reveal the writer's emotions, or it may present facts in such a way that the reader will draw a conclusion favored by the writer. The Wheaties story above is an example of objective writing; it presents the facts without interpreting them. The other two examples above are written more subjectively, expressing the writers' own feelings about and interpretations of the events described.

Meaning / Function	Transition Phrases	Conjunctive Adverbs	Coordinating Conjunctions	Subordinating Conjunctions	Other Signals
To introduce an additional idea		furthermore moreover	and		another (+ noun)
		besides also too			an additional (+ noun)
To introduce an opposite idea or contrast	on the other hand in contrast	however nevertheless instead still nonetheless	but yet	although though even though whereas while	in spite of (+ noun) despite (+ noun)
To introduce a choice or alternative		otherwise	or	if unless	
To introduce a restatement or explanation	in fact indeed	that is			



To list in order	first, second, third next, last, finally				the first, second, third, etc. (+ noun) the next, last, final (+ noun)
To introduce an example	for example for instance				an example of (+ noun) such as (+ noun)
To introduce a conclusion or summary	clearly in brief in conclusion indeed in short in summary				
To introduce a result	accordingly <i>as a result</i> as a consequence	therefore <i>consequently</i> hence thus	so		