

Effective paragraphs

Function of a paragraph

- Helps writers organise writing.
- Helps readers see and understand the organisation of the writing.
- Helps writers stay in control of their writing.

Function of a paragraph

- ▶ Are like boxes in which to sort out information.
- ▶ Make writing a manageable task.
- ▶ Helps readers absorb information in manageable bits.
- ▶ Allows readers see significant groupings of ideas.

Function of a paragraph

- ▶ Is more than a matter of logic and organisation. It is also a matter of reader comfort and aesthetics.
- ▶ Long paragraphs lose the reader.
- ▶ Very short paragraphs make writing and the thinking behind it inconsequential.

Function of a paragraph

- ▶ Paragraphs must be of the right size so that reader follows what writer is saying.
- ▶ As a significant grouping of sentences, it is a mini-composition on its own with a beginning, middle and end.

Paragraph patterns

Paragraph patterns

- ▶ Every paragraph needs a focus – there must be a point being made.
- ▶ Every paragraph also needs a shape – a way of moving the sentences to make a shape.
- ▶ There are two paragraph patterns – the hour glass paragraph and the V-shape paragraph

Paragraph patterns

1. The hour glass–paragraph

- ▶ Begins with a general statement about the topic. This may take one or more sentences.
- ▶ Paragraph then narrows to the specific support for that general statement (explanation).
- ▶ Paragraph concludes with a more general sentence or two about the topic

Paragraph patterns



General Statement



Specific Support



General Statement

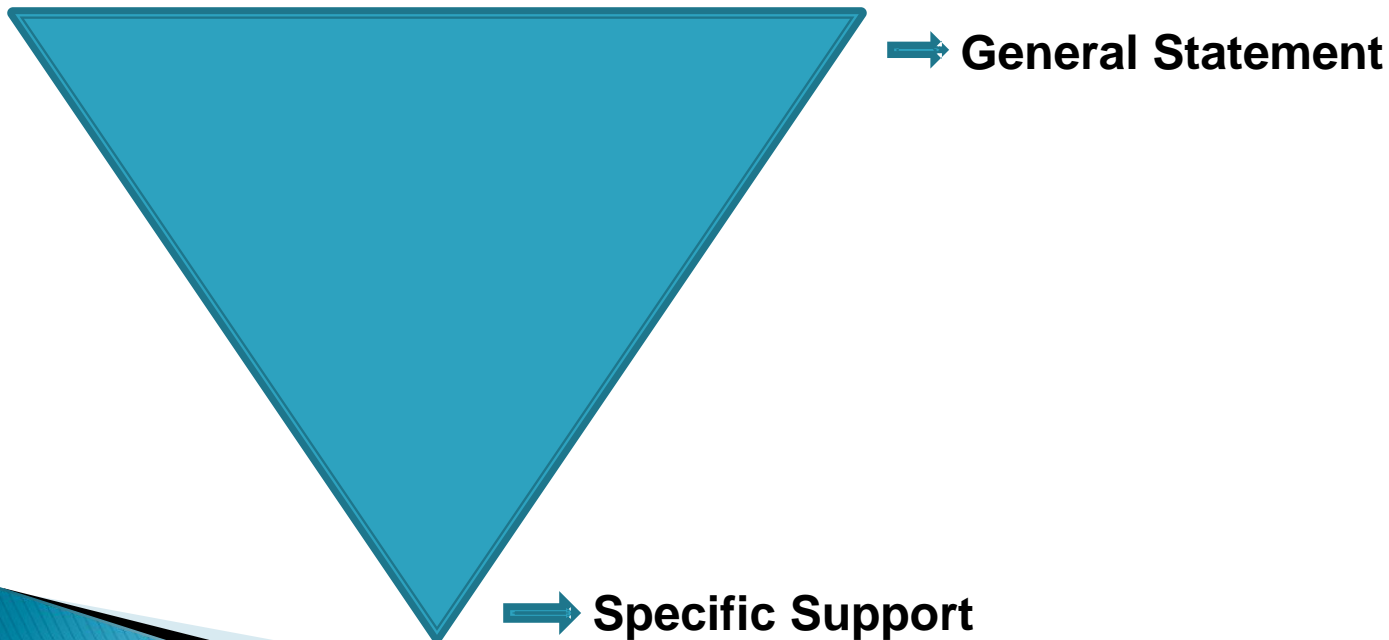
Paragraph patterns

2. The V-shaped paragraph

- ▶ This is the most common type in legal writing.
- ▶ Begins with a general discussion of the topic.
- ▶ Then narrows to specific support.

Paragraph patterns

- ▶ Does not return to a general statement.



Paragraph patterns

- ▶ Both patterns work well in legal writing.
- ▶ What is important is the general opening sentences followed by specific support for the generalisations.

Unity and coherence

Paragraph unity

- ▶ A paragraph must have its own topic – it must make a point.
- ▶ All elements of the paragraph must work together to make that point.
- ▶ When that happens – paragraph unity.

Unity and coherence

- ▶ Topic introduced at beginning of paragraph by topic sentence.
- ▶ It is then developed by supporting sentences
- ▶ The concluding sentence follows.
- ▶ What paragraph must not do is stray from topic.

Paragraph coherence

Paragraph coherence

- ▶ Coherent paragraph – its elements must be connected in such a way that reader easily follows the ideas developed.
- ▶ Paragraph coherence can be achieved thro:
 - ❖ Using familiar organisational patterns.
 - ❖ Establishing and using key terms.
 - ❖ Using sentence structure and coherence devices

Paragraph coherence

Familiar organisational patterns

- ▶ All readers expect certain patterns:
 - Cause/effect.
 - Problem/solution.
 - Chronological order.
- ▶ When these expectations are met – the ideas are easy to follow

Paragraph coherence

- ▶ Legal readers have some additional patterns they expect; e.g.
 - Once a rule has been laid out, readers expect it to be applied.
 - They expect a court's holding to be followed by its rationale.
 - In legal opinions, the IRAC pattern is expected.

Paragraph coherence

Using key terms

- ▶ Repetition of key words is the easiest and most important method of creating coherence.
- ▶ Logical connections between key words to make your point are crucial.

Paragraph coherence

Sentence structure and coherence devices

- ▶ Coherence can be created through sentence structure and a number of coherence devices.
- ▶ The major devices are:
 - Dovetails – beginning a sentence with reference to the preceding sentence.
 - Parallelisms – Used to show which ideas should be considered together

Paragraph coherence

- Parallelisms – Used to show which ideas should be considered together and which should be compared or contrasted.

Paragraph length

- ▶ No hard and fast rules about paragraph length.
- ▶ Writer simply needs to know if they have finished what they set out to say in the paragraph.
- ▶ Sentences should be as many as enable point to be made.

Paragraph length

- ▶ Reader's comfort must be kept in mind.
- ▶ Avoid paragraphs that create a solid page – this has negative effect in mind of reader.
- ▶ Length of each paragraph should be primarily determined by content.
- ▶ Variety in paragraph length is necessary.

Paragraph length

- ▶ Short paragraphs work well after an unusually long one to give reader a break.
- ▶ Short paragraphs also work well when the writer is making a major shift, change or connection between ideas.
- ▶ Short paragraphs usually serve as transitions between sections and as intros or conclusions

Topic and concluding sentences

- ▶ Not all paragraphs have topic and concluding sentences.
- ▶ Many well written paragraphs have neither.
- ▶ However, MOST well written paragraphs have topic sentences and those that don't have an implied one that governs the para.

Topic and concluding sentences

- ▶ Concluding sentences sometimes are useful to the reader and at other times they are not.
- ▶ One has to carefully determine if they need one or not.
- ▶ Readers will find concluding sentences helpful after long complicated points.

Paragraph blocks

- ▶ Many paragraphs may not have topic sentences or concluding sentences yet work out well.
- ▶ Why? Because they are part of a larger organisational element – the paragraph block.
- ▶ A paragraph block is a mini-composition.

Paragraph blocks

- ▶ It begins with a paragraph or two.
- ▶ The middle is usually several paragraphs.
- ▶ The end is a paragraph or two.
- ▶ Beginning paragraphs are general statements that introduce the topic of the paragraph block.

Paragraph blocks

- ▶ The middle paragraphs contain sub-points – the specifics that support the topic paragraphs.
- ▶ The concluding paragraphs bring the discussions back to the broad topic but in a way that advances the line of reasoning.