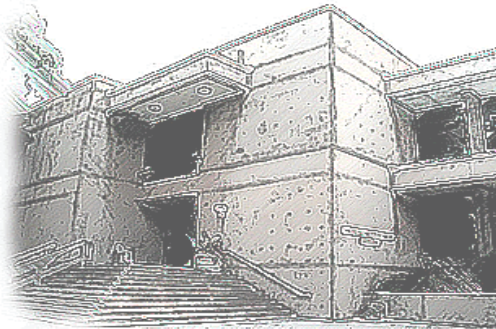


STUDY AID #4

Creating Coherent Paragraphs



EAST LOS ANGELES COLLEGE LIBRARIES

Helen Miller Bailey Library
1301 Avenida Cesar Chavez
Monterey Park, CA 91754
Phone: 323-265-8758

www.elac.edu/departments/library/library

Or

South Gate Educational Center Library
2340 Firestone Blvd.
South Gate, CA 90280
323-357-6214 or 323-357-6219
www.elac.edu/departments/library/sgec

Hours at East L.A. College

Monday – Thursday: 8 a.m. - 9 p.m.
Friday: 8 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Hours at South Gate

Monday – Thursday: 9 a.m. – 8 p.m.
Friday: 9 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

From the Online Writing Lab at Purdue University
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu>

What is a paragraph?

A paragraph is a collection of related sentences dealing with a single topic. To be as effective as possible, a paragraph should contain each of the following: **Unity, Coherence, A Topic Sentence, and Adequate Development.** As you will see, all of these traits overlap. Using and adapting them to your individual purposes will help you construct effective paragraphs.

1. Unity:

The entire paragraph should concern itself with a single focus. If it begins with a one focus or major point of discussion, it should not end with another or wander within different ideas.

2. Coherence:

Coherence is the trait that makes the paragraph easily understandable to a reader. You can help create coherence in your paragraphs by creating logical bridges and verbal bridges.

⇒ Logical bridges:

- The same idea of a topic is carried over from sentence to sentence
- Successive sentences can be constructed in parallel form

⇒ Verbal bridges:

- Key words can be repeated in several sentences
- Synonymous words can be repeated in several sentences
- Pronouns can refer to nouns in previous sentences
- Transition words can be used to link ideas from different sentences

3. A topic sentence:

A topic sentence is a sentence that indicates in a general way what idea or thesis the paragraph is going to deal with. Although not all paragraphs have clear-cut topic sentences, and despite the fact that topic sentences can occur anywhere in the paragraph (as the first sentence, the last sentence, or somewhere in the middle), an easy way to make sure your reader understands the topic of the paragraph is to put your topic sentence near the beginning of the paragraph. (This is a good general rule for less experienced writers, although it is not the only way to do it).

4. Adequate development

The topic (which is introduced by the topic sentence) should be discussed fully and adequately. Again, this varies from paragraph to paragraph, depending on the author's purpose, but writers should beware of paragraphs that only have two or three sentences. It's a pretty good bet that the paragraph is not fully developed if it is that short.

Some methods to make sure your paragraph is well-developed:

- Use examples and illustrations
- Cite data (facts, statistics, evidence, details, and others)
- Examine testimony (what other people say such as quotes and paraphrases)
- Use an anecdote or story
- Define terms in the paragraph
- Compare and contrast
- Evaluate causes and reasons
- Examine effects and consequences
- Analyze the topic
- Describe the topic
- Offer a chronology of an event (time segments)