



Is your paragraph a complete M.E.A.L.?

Effective paragraphing is an essential skill in academic writing, but what does a good paragraph look like? How many sentences should it have? How do you know when your paragraph is finished?

Paragraphs come in many shapes and sizes, but there are some basic components that your paragraph must have in order for your reader to be able to follow your ideas and be persuaded by your argument.

Think of your paragraph as a *complete MEAL*: it must contain the **M**ain Idea, **E**vidence, **A**nalysis, and a **L**ink.

M = Main Idea

Usually your topic sentence, or the first sentence of the paragraph. It tells your reader:

1. What is this paragraph about?
2. What should your reader expect to learn from this paragraph?
3. What claim are you making?
4. What do you want to prove to your reader?

E = Evidence

Examples, quotes, statistics, and research that support your main idea.

Remember to cite any evidence that did not come from your own brain.

A = Analysis

Don't expect your evidence to "speak for itself." Instead, explain how your evidence is relevant to what you are trying to prove. Your analysis should tell your reader:

- A. Why is the evidence important?
- B. What can we learn from the evidence?
- C. How does the evidence support your main idea?

Your evidence and your analysis cannot exist without each other!

Sometimes you may have multiple points of evidence, each with their own analysis, or you may have one block of analysis that covers all points of evidence.

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L = Link

Your link can vary depending on your purpose. It can:

- Link the current paragraph's main idea to the main idea of the next paragraph,
- Link back to your thesis, or
- Link back to the main idea of your paragraph.

Remember to save often!

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