

How do I write a paragraph?

Structuring paragraphs is often the best way to make a quick improvement to your writing. A good paragraph should have a clear main idea or topic, which is distinct from surrounding paragraphs, links to surrounding paragraphs and includes academic support.

Point	– make your point
Evidence	– present support for your point (include references)
Evaluation	– interpret the evidence, judge the quality or weight of evidence, present alternate view points and limitations to the evidence
Link	– summarise the point and link it back to your main argument or topic

Point	In addition to the incidents in interaction with the public, the police force has been accused of institutional racism with regards to its recruitment and promotion (Yashmin, 2010; Drabble, 2013). For example, minority police officers constitute only 10% of the Metropolitan Police Force (BPA, 2013), whereas over 40% of London's population are from BME backgrounds. Similarly, there are proportionally fewer minority police officers of higher ranks than white officers when compared to those in lower ranks (Yashmin, 2010). Such imbalances were found to occur across the country (Drabble, 2013), although many media reports focussed on London (e.g. the Guardian, 2013). This suggests that the police's recruitment and promotion approaches are racially biased. It may also indicate that it is not an attractive profession for young people of ethnic minorities, and a hostile workplace once they enter. Therefore, there is evidence to indicate some racial bias within the organization in terms of its human resources practices.
Evidence	
Evidence	
Evaluation	
Link	

Your main point may or may not be supported from references, depending on your assignment, point, task and argument (if you have one).

Remember:

- Using **PEEL** is only one approach to writing paragraphs; sometimes you may find that it flows better to reach your point towards the end.
- Use this as a framework, not a cage. The main aim is to communicate clearly, so use this framework to help you do so.
- Start by writing to this pattern strictly, and as you gain in confidence, you can start to move away from it.
- Just make sure that you always have a main point, support and critical discussion.

Also:

Consider paragraph points in relation to the main focus or argument of your assignment, and to the purpose of the particular section. For example, if you were writing a report on an event that you organised, one section might be on the evaluation of participant feedback.

Within this section, you might have several paragraphs, as follows:

- Feedback on organisation
- Feedback on event content (what actually happened)
- Feedback on other issues

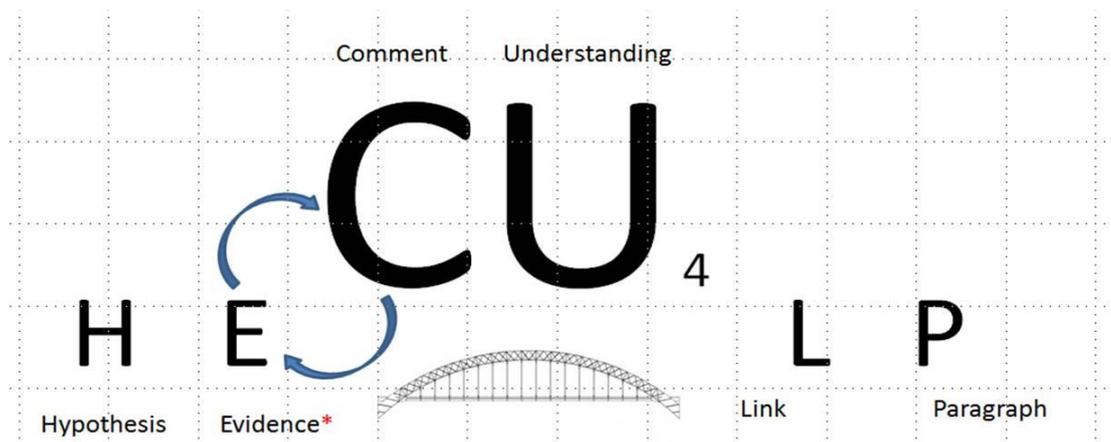
So you would group the feedback from people who attended the event into these 3 categories, and discuss each one in a separate paragraph.

Common issues with paragraph structure:

- One or two sentence paragraphs without sufficient development
- Page-long paragraphs with no breaks
- Paragraphs which cover several different topics
- Paragraphs with evidence but no clear relationship between the evidence (no main point)
- Paragraphs which don't link one to the next

Further Guidance:

If you find the PEEL framework too simple, here's a different way to think about paragraphs...



The overall acronym for the paragraph structure is:

"See (C) Us (Learning Development) for (4) H.E.L.P."

Paragraph structuring can be viewed like building a bridge. It supports the reader's ability to understand your argument and your tutor's ability to mark your skill. The **H.E.L.P** provides the backbone of the paragraph, creating firm foundations and ensuring the fundamentals are in place.

H stands for Hypothesis: the opening sentence provides a clear aim for the paragraph and sets out what you want to do in this paragraph (your purpose). You can do this in a number of ways such as: a statement of the problem the paragraph is addressing; highlighting the strand of the argument which is being put forward; emphasising the core idea being suggested; or a sentence that outlines the topic, purpose, aim or intent of the paragraph.

E stands for Evidence: This is the evidence that underpins your hypothesis. This may come from reading secondary resources, from guidelines and statutory requirements, from models, from theories etc.

L stands for Link: the second to last sentence should bring the paragraph back to the overall argument and aims of the assignment. This is the 'Where are we at?' sentence: what do we know as a result of this paragraph; what answers do we have that have moved us towards the end goal of fully answering the assignment question.

P stands for (next) Paragraph: finally, link the content of the paragraph being completed with the next paragraph. Don't just throw in words like 'next' or 'subsequently': actively introduce the topic that is going to come up and position it in relation to the previous idea. Is it in contrast? Is it building on the same idea? Is it exploring another aspect to the same topic? And so on.

The **H.E.L.P** supports the bridge's arch, the most important section which is your **commentary** and **understanding**.

The **C & U** are the most important because that is where you demonstrate that you have understood and are able to interpret what you have read.

This will include:

- providing detailed explanations that expand your hypothesis
- providing detailed examples that illustrate your hypothesis
- apply your reading to specific examples
- analyse the significance of your reading
- construct your argument

All of which must be rooted in research (the **Evidence**). This is, therefore, the most valuable section and the area for which you receive the most marks. However, these aspects **only** function effectively when founded in the **H.E.L.P** (the supporting framework), particularly the evidence (E). **Without strong foundations the bridge will fall.**

Therefore, the core of the paragraph should be **developing a conversation** between the **evidence** and your **understanding** and **commentary** on that evidence. This is why in the image there are arrows showing you going around and around this loop until you have exhausted the necessary detail that supports your hypothesis.

On the next pages are two examples of this method in practice.

Example One - Assignment: Analyse, with reference to literature and your experiences, how children's needs may be met in school/setting.

Hypothesis: Ensuring, as a teacher, that the needs of all children in the classroom are being met is a core priority and is dependent on an awareness of; special education needs (SEN), English as an additional language (EAL), looked after children and gifted and talented (G&T) children.

Evidence: In fact, The Department for Education and Skills (2001, p.2) makes meeting all these needs a standard by stating that "all children should have access to an appropriate education that affords them the opportunity to achieve their personal potential" (The Department for Education, 2013, p.8) and that therefore, "teachers should set high expectations and suitable challenges for all pupils" (The Department for Education, 2013, p.8).

Understanding: Consequently, all children, irrespective of needs, should receive an education where they are challenged and can make progress.

Commentary (linked to evidence): Children's needs will be met through the flexibility of the teacher, special planning and consideration, allowing all pupils to access the learning in a proactive and positive manner (Rose and Howley, 2007, p10; Department for Education and Skills, 2001, p.3).

Evidence (by example): The 'Every Child Matters' policy sets out five areas in which Ofsted will assess schools to ensure that the needs of every child are met. These form the acronym "SHEEP" which is made up from "stay **S**afe; be **H**ealthy; **E**njoy and achieve; achieve **E**conomic well-being and make a **P**ositive contribution" (Department for Education and Skills, 2003, p.14).

Understanding: An effective learning environment, on this basis, will enable children to feel secure, settled and valued regardless of ability; will encourage the fundamental social interactions and friendships that children require (Guardino and Fullerton, 2010); will be active and foster positivity, high level contributions to the learning activities.

Link: The outlined standards and SHEEP model constitute a framework or set of values that should be implemented consistently when developing an approach to inclusion in the classroom.

Paragraph: To practically implement this, a teacher, might consider a number of strategies such as approaches to classroom layout and atmosphere.

[Note: the expectation now is that the next paragraph will deal with classroom layout & atmosphere]

As a fluid paragraph this would read:

Ensuring, as a teacher, that the needs of all children in the classroom are being met is a core priority and is dependent on an awareness of; special education needs (SEN), English as an additional language (EAL), looked after children and gifted and talented (G&T) children. In fact, The Department for Education and Skills (2001, p.2) makes meeting all these needs a standard by stating that "all children should have access to an appropriate education that affords them the opportunity to achieve their personal potential" (The Department for Education, 2013, p.8) and that therefore, "teachers should set high expectations and suitable challenges for all pupils" (The Department for Education, 2013, p.8). Consequently, all children, irrespective of needs, should receive an education where they are challenged and can make progress. Children's needs will be met through the flexibility of the teacher, special planning and consideration, allowing all pupils to access the learning in a proactive and positive manner (Rose and Howley, 2007, p10; Department for Education and Skills, 2001, p.3). The 'Every Child Matters' policy sets out five areas in which Ofsted will assess schools to ensure that the needs of every child are met. These form the acronym "SHEEP" which is made up from "stay **S**afe; be **H**ealthy; **E**njoy and achieve; achieve **E**conomic well-being and make a **P**ositive contribution" (Department for Education and Skills, 2003, p.14). An effective learning environment, on this basis, will enable children to feel secure, settled and valued regardless of ability; will encourage the fundamental social interactions and friendships that children require (Guardino and Fullerton, 2010); will be active and foster positivity, high level contributions to the learning activities. The outlined standards and SHEEP model constitute a framework or set of values that should be implemented consistently when developing an approach to inclusion in the classroom. To practically implement this, a teacher, might consider a number of strategies such as approaches to classroom layout and atmosphere.

Example Two:

Please note:

- This example uses a photograph as evidence. Note that images need citations as do all ideas, facts or evidence taken from a source.
- **Caution:** the Bible and other religious texts are appropriate for **this particular assignment** because it asks specifically about organised religion. In an assignment which does not take organised religion as its topic, it would not be appropriate to refer to religious texts for support. Note that it remains an objective analysis of a religious viewpoint.
- That this paragraph is over 300 words long, whereas the first example is only just over 100 words. There is, therefore, some flexibility in length of paragraphs, but typically a well developed paragraph will be over 150-200 words. It is more important to divide your ideas clearly than to focus on word count.

**Assignment: What is the relationship between hope and organised religion?
Use at least 3 images from different religions.**



Fig 1: Graham, 2014.

Hypothesis: Within the Christian understanding, hope in death rests on the belief that death is a threshold or liminal space rather than final.

Evidence, Commentary & Understanding: This image, of a Church of England Christian funeral ceremony, contains a number of visual signifiers for grief and mourning: the black of the mourner's garb, the downcast expressions and the finality of returning the body to the ground 'dust to dust'. However, it also contains visual signifiers of hope: the white flowers which are symbolic of salvation and transcendence, the priest and the biblical text being read over the grave. The presence of the priest and the bible point to the belief held that the dead now experience "...everlasting joy will be on their heads. They will obtain gladness and joy, And sorrow and sighing will flee away. "I, even I, am He who comforts you. Who are you that you are afraid of man who dies" (Bible, Isaiah 51:11-12). The importance of the visual signifiers of hope rests in the Christian belief that the dead now experience no pain, sorrow, 'mourning or sighing' according to the biblical text. In this sense, they are believed to be restored to their 'true self', in communion with their maker. One of the criticisms of Christian teaching is its apparent elitism through the language of judgement (e.g. Horsley, 1978, p.204). However, there are other interpretations. For example, one reading of scripture emphasises God's desire that we have 'life in all its fullness'; that while death is a tragedy, God ended its power at the resurrection of Christ (Williams, 2014). Although death is still physically real, the Christian doctrine is that in the spiritual realm it holds no dominion. Equally, the belief is that God is working for the restoration of all creation (Carnell, 1959, pp.19-21).

Link: This image holds in tension the dichotomy of the Christian hope; that the passing of a loved one is mourned for the loss experienced, but their new life is celebrated with hope for the restoration of the created world.

Paragraph (next): By comparison, the Hindu funeral ceremony represents a different interpretation of hope and death.
[The next paragraph would detail Hindu funeral ceremonies with reference to an image.]

Reference List:

- The Bible (2011) *King James Version*. London: Collins.
- Carnell, E. J. (1959) *The Case for Orthodox Theology*. Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers.
- Horsley, R. A. (1978) "How Can Some of You Say That There Is No Resurrection of the Dead?" *Spiritual Elitism in Corinth. Novum Testamentum*, **20**(3) pp. 203-231.
- Williams, R. (2014) *Resurrection: interpreting the Easter gospel*. London: Darton Longman & Todd (DLT).

Fig 1: Graham, J.(2014) HP PIC Funeral. *Healthy Place* [online] Available at:
<http://www.healthyplace.com/blogs/speakingoutaboutselfinjury/2014/07/29/self-harm-and-death-is-suicide-selfish/hp-pic-funeral/> (Accessed on: 23rd January 2015).

Further reading on paragraphs:

Indiana University Writing Tutorial Services (2014). Paragraphs and Topic Sentences. *Indiana University* [online] Available from:
<http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/paragraphs.shtml> [Accessed 10th June 2015]

McDonnell, J. (2007) Paragraph structure. *University of Essex MySkills* [online] Available from:
<http://www.essex.ac.uk/myskills/skills/writing/paragraphStructure.asp>

University of Maryland University College (2015) Paragraph structure. *University of Maryland University College* [online] Available from:
https://www.umuc.edu/writingcenter/writingresources/paragraph_struct.cfm