

CLEARWRITER'S FOUR STEPS TO POWERFUL PARAGRAPHS

Changing the way you look at paragraphs can change the way you write. As atoms are to matter and ships to a navy, so too are paragraphs the building blocks of an argument.

Many writers think of paragraphs as a collection of sentences framed by an indent and a carriage return, running perhaps 10 or 12 lines. Few have the language to describe what's good—or bad—about a paragraph. Our techniques show you what it means for a paragraph to be unified, coherent, and well developed.

A paragraph is unified if each sentence is clearly related to the point. It is coherent if you make it obvious to your reader how each sentence is linked to the point. And it is well developed if its sentences unfold in a way that makes your argument perfectly clear to the reader.

First things first

- Identify the point of the paragraph (make only one point per paragraph).
- Eliminate extraneous material to ensure that each sentence relates clearly to the point.

New kinds of paragraphs

- Begin with the point—then support it with examples, details, and comments.
- Build suspense. Open with examples, details, and comments, then conclude with the point.
- Count the details that support the point. Start sentences with words like *first*, *second*, and *third*.
- Open with a premise, then contradict it to make a point.
- Make a point, then set off supporting details with bullets.

Within the paragraph

- Repeat key terms (different terms for the same idea will confuse the reader).
- Repeat a sentence structure to add balance.
- Link sentences by using words that signal what's coming next: *further*, *and*, *but*, *so*, and the like.
- Turn two related sentences into one by subordinating one idea to the other.

Effective transitions between paragraphs

- Repeat a key word from one paragraph in the first sentence of the next.
- Order paragraphs chronologically.
- Use one paragraph as an example to illustrate the point of the previous paragraph.
- End one paragraph with a question and begin the next with the answer.
- Begin a paragraph by asking a question about the paragraph before.

The difficulty is putting these ideas into action. For dozens of concrete strategies for writing powerful paragraphs, explore ClearWriter [online training](#) and instructor-led [workshops](#).