

Outline of an Academic Paragraph

THE TOPIC SENTENCE:

The first sentence of the paragraph is the topic sentence. It introduces the main points to be discussed in the paragraph. An academic paragraph usually has 3 main points . . . although some may have 1 or 2 and some may have more.

*Staff at the Writing Center is available to help students with **topic selection, organization, and mechanics**.*

Often, 1 or 2 sentences defining unfamiliar terms in the paragraph may be inserted prior to the first point.

1

THE FIRST MAIN POINT:

The next sentence (after any definitions) presents the first point introduced in the topic sentence—**topic selection**.

*Prior to beginning research, students come to the Writing Center to receive help in deciding what **topic** they will write about.*

Preferably, the wording is similar to the topic sentence so that the reader recognizes the outline of the paragraph.

2

SUPPORT FOR THE FIRST POINT:

The following 1 or 2 sentences support this point, usually with quotations, examples, logic, explanations, or ideas:

As one student said after a short brainstorming session, “It was great! Now I know what to do!”

The support sentences directly apply to the previous point, but they do not necessarily use the same wording.

THE SECOND MAIN POINT:

The next sentence refers to the second point mentioned in the topic sentence—**organization**.

*Students may also come in seeking assistance with the **organization** of their papers.*

3

SUPPORT FOR THE SECOND POINT:

The following 1 or 2 sentences support the second point. The type of support used does not have to be identical:

An objective person can often give a better perspective on the structure or outline of a paper.

THE THIRD MAIN POINT:

The next sentence refers to the third point mentioned in the topic sentence—**mechanics**.

*Most of the students who come to the Writing Center ask for help with grammar and **mechanics**.*

4

SUPPORT FOR THE THIRD POINT:

The corresponding 1 or 2 sentences support the third point:

Although grammar and punctuation are not the most vital issues, they may be the most visible.

THE CONCLUDING SENTENCE:

The concluding sentence summarizes the points that were introduced in the topic sentence and were discussed or proven in the paragraph. Similar words are often used to show a direct relationship with the topic sentence.

*The Writing Center helps students with all stages of the writing process, including **topic selection, organization, and a review of proper grammar and punctuation**.*

5

The concluding sentence does not introduce new information, but it may make an appeal for more research or study.