

PARAGRAPH WRITING

A paragraph consists of a number of sentences all relating to one theme (topic) or part of a theme and connected with one another by unity of purpose. Between one paragraph and another, there is a greater break in the subject than between one sentence and another.

There is no hard and fast rule as to the length of a paragraph. The length depends on what the writer wants to say. However, if a paragraph is allowed to be very long, it is likely to strain the attention of the reader and make a heavy reading. On the other hand, a succession of very short sentences-say, of one, two, or three sentences produces a disjointed style and largely nullifies (exclusion) the purpose of the paragraph-division, by reducing it nearly to the level of a sentence. Therefore, it is advisable to make a paragraph of moderate, but varied length.

PRINCIPLES OF PARAGRAPH-CONSTRUCTION:

(a) Unity:

The first and the most important principle to be observed in constructing a paragraph is that of unity. Just as a sentence deals with one thought, so a paragraph must deal with one topic or idea and not more than one. Again, every sentence in the paragraph must be closely connected with the topic dealt with.

[**Note:** The topic or idea of a paragraph is often indicated in one sentence of the paragraph, often the first. The sentence which thus expresses the topic is generally called the topical sentence (because it indicates the topic) or the key-sentence (because it opens the theme of the paragraph)]

(b) Coherence:

The second principle that governs the construction of a paragraph is the principle of coherence. This principle requires that the sentences in a paragraph should be arranged logically. The logical arrangement of the sentences varies with the theme or topic treated. The sentences describing events must be arranged in the order of their occurrence. The sentences following the key-sentence by way of proofs or illustrations should be arranged in the order of their importance.

(c) Explicit Reference:

A paragraph is not a series of random or detached utterance, but a connected whole, and consequently the bearing of each sentence of a paragraph upon the sentence preceding should be explicitly stated as far as possible. This is generally done by the use of suitable conjunctions such as and, but, still, therefore, again, further, however, also and of such conjunctive phrases as on the other hand, on the contrary, in other words, in a word, in conclusion, in short, etc. Sometimes, however, sentences are, placed side by side in simple succession without any conjunctions or conjunctive phrases. The omission of connectives does not necessarily impair the unity of the paragraph. "By the rule of proximity the mere fact of juxtaposition shows that the sentences are to be thought of together; and if the mind can readily perceive their connection, there is no need to signify this by the use of connectives." (Nesfield).

(d) Variety:

Another principle of paragraph construction is variety. By this principle is meant that "to avoid monotony, the paragraphs of a composition should be of different lengths, but not always of the same sentence construction." (Wren and Martin).

(e) The concluding sentence:

The last sentence of a paragraph deserves as much care as the first sentence. We should remember that it is the first sentence that arouses the reader's interest, while the last satisfies the interest so aroused. If the first is the topical sentence, it will express the topic of the whole paragraph—a fact, a statement or a proposition; and the last sentence should bring the whole paragraph to a satisfying conclusion or summing up.

To sum up, the essentials of a good paragraph are (1) unity, (2) a good key-sentence, (3) coherence for logical arrangement of sentences), (4) variety, (5) a full and rounded final sentence in conclusion. Paragraphs may broadly be divided into three classes:

(i) Descriptive: A descriptive paragraph contains the description of some place or scene or season or object.

(ii) Narrative: A narrative paragraph deals with some event or incident (prize-giving ceremony, a football match, a religious festival, etc.) or some accident or some journey or the life of some great man.

(iii) Reflective: A reflective paragraph is one which contains the writer's reflection on some subject which is generally of an abstract nature, e.g. superstitions, leisure, discipline, etc.