



*“Make sure each sentence within a paragraph relates to the point of the paragraph. And make sure the supporting information you use is detailed and specific.”*

## Writing Paragraphs

### Supporting the Topic Sentence

After the topic sentence in a paragraph comes the nitty-gritty. The sentences that follow the topic sentence help explain it. Because they support the point in the topic sentence, they are called supporting details or **supporting sentences**.

Read Marcia’s paragraph about her moving day. See how each sentence adds a new detail to support the idea in the topic sentence:

When Howard showed up with the truck at 8 A.M., we were not ready! I was still packing dishes. Max was trying to catch the cat in the back yard. Laura refused to put her stuffed animals in a box because then they wouldn’t be able to breathe.

Each supporting sentence shows one way that the family was not ready to move. The topic sentence makes you expect these details. The supporting sentences provide the kinds of details a reader expects.

Should Marcia add a sentence to this paragraph describing her new home? Check one:

- Yes, it *would* support the topic sentence.
- No, it would *not* support the topic sentence.

The answer is no. The topic sentence is about not being ready to move. The family’s new home has nothing to do with that idea.

### Ideas That Flow

Sentences in a paragraph should flow. **Flow** means that the ideas lead logically from one sentence to the next. The reader can follow the ideas.

Here is another paragraph from Marcia’s moving day story. See how Marcia’s writing helps move you, the reader, from one idea to the next:

Finally, we began to pack the truck. First, we made a wall of boxes up to the roof of the truck. Then we loaded the big furniture—the mattresses, couch, and dining room table. Next was smaller furniture. We fit bicycles, lamps, and other awkward things in last. As we went along, we padded all the corners and edges.

Did you notice the transition words, like *First* and *Then*? These words help you follow Marcia's story. Circle all the words and phrases that help the flow.

Did you circle *next*, *last*, and *as we went along*?

Now you know what makes an organized paragraph:

- a topic sentence
- supporting sentences
- a flow of ideas



### ORGANIZED WRITING ■ PRACTICE 3

**A. Courtney wrote to a friend about his chef training program. Here are two paragraphs from his letter.**

1. Underline the topic sentence in each paragraph.
2. Circle any word or phrase that helps the sentences flow.
3. Cross out a sentence that does not support the topic sentence of its paragraph.

Every cooking class follows the same pattern. The teacher starts with a demonstration of a cooking skill, like making pastry. Light pastry is very hard to make. Then we study a recipe together, and we talk about planning the steps in the recipe. Next, we prepare by getting out the ingredients and tools we need. Finally, we work in teams to make the dish. The teacher checks each team's work at the end.

Last week, I learned a big lesson about cakes. At first, I didn't understand why we were supposed to beat the batter for so long. Then I saw the difference in the cakes. The team next to us had this perfect, light cake. But ours was kind of flat and tough. When the teacher came around, she said we didn't beat enough air into the batter.



**B. Now it's your turn to write an organized paragraph. Here is your topic: Write about a time you learned something. It could be a specific skill, or it could be a lesson in life.**

**To write your paragraph, use what you have learned. On a separate sheet of paper, follow these steps:**

- With your reader in mind, make a list or cluster of ideas.
- Write a topic sentence. Your topic sentence should tell the reader what to expect in your paragraph.
- Write 3 to 5 supporting sentences, based on your list or cluster. Try to use transitions to signal the flow of ideas to your reader.
- Wait for a few hours or overnight.
- Review your paragraph. If you can add details, do so. If you can add transitions, do so. If any sentences don't support your topic sentence, cross them out.

Answers and feedback start on page 180.

