WRITING: PARAGRAPHS
A well-written paragraph is unified, developed, coherent, and complete

A well-written paragraph is unified:
• Is introduced by a topic sentence which clearly expresses the main idea
• Contains supporting details (examples and illustrations) which develop only one idea
• Has a summary sentence that restates the main idea, extends it slightly, and includes a transitional phrase to connect it to the following paragraph

A well-written paragraph is developed:
• Provides reasons for making the assertion
• Defines, divides, and classifies sections of general statement
• Analyzes, compares, contrasts the divisions or classifications by cause and effect, or by steps

A well-written paragraph is coherent:
• Each statement relates to the main idea
• Uses spatial relationships and words like: Between, beyond, over, under
• Uses chronological relationships and words like: Within a [decade], now, still, before
• Uses general to specific relationships and words like: For example, to illustrate, to demonstrate
• Uses specific to general relationships and words like: Conclusively, overall, we can determine, in summary
• Uses transitional words like: Moreover, furthermore, in addition
• Uses parallel structures of clauses, sentences and ideas

A well-written paragraph is complete:
• Is only as long as necessary but is no longer
• Can stand alone by stating a theme, supporting details, and summaries or conclusions
• Fully develops the main idea
• Can move to a new paragraph idea through a smooth transition

Reading your well-written paragraph aloud:
Reading aloud often helps detect punctuation errors; a rise or fall in voice frequently signals a need for punctuation. Exaggerate pronouncing each word to check for obvious spelling errors. Use a dictionary or thesaurus to check spelling and word choice.

As you read aloud, ask:
Does the paragraph have a clear, main idea?
Does the sentence connect with the main idea and other sentences?
Does the sentence refine, explain or add something new?

If you answer no to any of the above questions, the paragraph or sentence needs reworking.

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Different types of paragraphs:

1. **Narrative** — Tells a story.

2. **Descriptive** — Shows qualities that support the main idea or dominant impression.

3. **Example** — Begins with generalization which is supported by specific examples — Uses phrases like for example, for instance.

4. **Definition** — Identifies what something is and what it is not; focuses on specific characteristics of a subject; identifies something in a general category and then distinguishes it from other items in the same category.

5. **Comparison/contrast** — Similarities and differences are compared on a specific basis; paragraph then alternates from one contrast to another, marking similarities or differences — Uses transitional phrases like: On the other hand, likewise, similarly, but.

6. **Process** — A process paragraph is like a “how to do it” manual; moves from project start to finish.

7. **Classification** — Divides something by category and then groups elements under each category. Make sure all major categories are mentioned.

8. **Causal analysis** — Relates two events by asserting the occurrence of one event to be the reason for the occurrence for the other. Cause refers to event in the past; effect usually analyzed as a future event.

9. **Argumentation** — Persuading another to your view — uses most of the other styles.