Paragraphs and linking words

Paragraphs

A paragraph is a collection of sentences about one idea. A paragraph can be one sentence long (see tabloid newspapers for examples) but your academic writing will be more substantial than this. Each paragraph should begin on a new line either indented slightly from the line above or with an extra line space (as shown on this sheet). This 'tells' the reader you are changing topic or focus.

Sometimes it helps to try and sum up the idea for your paragraph in 3 or 4 words before you write it. This usually means deciding on the topic e.g. 'recycling paper', and then deciding what in particular you want to say about it e.g. 'how paper is recycled at the University?' This phrase then becomes the idea of your paragraph. All the sentences in the paragraph must be relevant to this main idea.

Deciding when to start a new paragraph is often a fine judgement. However, if you were writing about '*how* paper is recycled at the University' and began to discuss 'the *problems* of recycling paper at the University' you would be changing the focus of the topic and it would be appropriate to begin another paragraph.

A paragraph should have a topic sentence near the beginning. The topic sentence gives the reader a strong indication of what the whole paragraph is going to be about. For example:

> *The University has a strong commitment to recycling paper as part of its 'green agenda' and has taken a number of steps to facilitate this across both campuses.*
>
> (this is the topic sentence)

Subsequent sentences should develop the topic by saying something more about it and is where you would use evidence from your reading to develop the idea.

When you have finished writing the paragraph, stop and ask yourself, what is the main idea of this paragraph? Are all the sentences in the paragraph relevant to the main idea? If there is a sentence that doesn't fit, delete it or move it to another part of your essay.

At this point some students find it helps to colour code their paragraphs. This involves allocating a different colour to each idea. This makes it easier to see if any of the ideas have become fragmented or have wandered into other parts of the essay. Remember you are aiming to keep all your main ideas (or colours) together in one paragraph.

Linking words

Here are some example of linking words used for different purposes in your written work

Adding more to a point
- also; moreover; furthermore; again; further; what is more; then; in addition
- besides; above all; too; as well (as)
- either; neither….nor; not only…but also;
- similarly; correspondingly; in the same way; in deed
- in fact; really; in reality, it is found that…
- as for; as to; with respect to; regarding

Writing in sequence
- first(ly); second(ly); third(ly);
- another; yet another; in addition; finally
- to begin with; in the second place;
- moreover; additionally; also
- next; then; and to conclude; lastly; finally

Putting the same idea in a different way
- in other words; rather; or; better; in that case
- to put it (more) simply
- in view of this; with this in mind
- to look at this another way

Introducing examples
- that is to say; in other words
- for example; for instance; namely; an example of this is…
- and; as follows; as in the following examples; such as; including
- especially particularly; in particular; notably; chiefly; mainly; mostly

Introducing an alternative viewpoint
- by contrast; another way of viewing this is; alternatively; again; rather; one alterative is; another possibility is;
- on the one hand…on the other hand
- conversely; in comparison; on the contrary; in fact; though; although

Returning to emphasise your earlier viewpoint
- however; nonetheless; in the final analysis
- despite x; notwithstanding x; in spite of x
- while x may be true, nonetheless
- although; though; after all; at the same time;
- on the other hand; all the same; even if x is true; although x may have a good point

Showing the results of something
- therefore; accordingly; as a result
- so, (then) it can be seen that
- the result is; the consequence is
- resulting from this; consequently; now
- we can see then, that; it is evident that
- because of this; thus; hence; for this reason owing to x; this suggests that; it follows that
- in other words; otherwise; in that case; that implies

Summing up or concluding
- therefore; so, my conclusion is
- in short; in conclusion; to conclude; in all; on the whole
- to summarise; to sum up briefly; in brief; altogether; overall; thus; thus we can see that

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