



WRITER'S STUDIO

RESOURCES:

PARAGRAPH TYPES



There are many different ways to develop a paragraph. Knowing what they are and how to use them can help you better convey what you need to in certain parts of your essay.

Here are a few of the most common paragraph types:

Description

Most effective when used to engage your reader and get them interested in your topic.

- Using specific details or examples to describe something in depth. Descriptions typically include references to physical appearance, sound, smell, and/or touch. These paragraphs are most common when you need to describe some specific *thing*.

Ex: Sphynx cats are best known for being hairless; however, this isn't completely true, and it isn't the only unique feature the Sphynx possesses. Although they don't have hair, Sphynxes are covered in a soft, down-like fur which feels similar to a peach, and they can come in many colors and patterns. They have slender faces and defined cheekbones, and their rounded bellies appear as though they have just eaten a large meal. With their lemon-shaped eyes, large ears, and slightly wrinkled body, they resemble everyone's favorite house elf.

Narration

Most effective when used to tell a story in which the writer talks about their feelings, thoughts, or actions.

- Using a chronological order (giving a time sequence with a beginning, middle, and end) to describe an event or topic. Usually, these types of paragraphs are used to tell some kind of story, most commonly from personal experience

Ex: Pantsuit Nation's origin was actually that of a secret Facebook group for a couple million of Hilary Clinton's most avid supporters. Once the secret got out, and the page's reputation grew, a public page was created for the purpose of allowing all of Clinton's supporters to be a part of the same online community. The public page started off as a Pro-Hilary Clinton group on October 20th, just a couple of weeks before the presidential election. Even after Clinton lost the election, the group's moderators didn't hesitate to keep the page going, just shifting the focus slightly from a purely electoral-support group to that of a group celebrating the diversity of America.

Compare / Contrast

Most effective when used to clearly state how the topics/points within a topic are similar, different, or both similar and different.

- Discussing the *similarities, differences, or a combination of both* between two or more topics or points within a topic.

Ex: As broad as their sounds are, there are distinct similarities and differences between blues and country music. For example, both have lyrical similarities that have interchangeable lyrics because, thematically, they share a common ground of winning and losing in life and love. In contrast, the main distinction between country and blues has to do with the music itself. The majority of blues music follows traditional musical rhythms and pattern. To boot, blues songs have certain instrumentation that can include a harmonica, an upright or electric bass, an electric guitar, and drums. Conversely, country music is less driven by rhythm and is often played with heavier dependence on strings, such as guitars, fiddles, banjos, and other string instruments.

Classification

Most effective when used to separate the different parts of your topic to make them more manageable and easier to analyze.

- Expanding on a topic by sorting it into different groups or going into detail about various parts of the topic(s).

Ex: While the Sphynx is the most common breed, there are actually several different breeds of hairless cat. There are Elves, which are nearly identical to the Sphynx in appearance; their ears, which curve backwards slightly similar to that of an American Curl's, are the only notable difference. There are Bambinos, which resemble the short-legged stature of the popular munchkin cat. There is also a fairly new breed called the Bambob, which takes the short legs of the Bambino, and mixes it with the short tail of the bobcat.

Process Analysis

Most effective when used to walk the reader through the steps and how to do something.

- Explaining specifically how something works, going through every step and paying attention to detail.

Ex: *Writing a research paper can seem like a daunting task, but if you know the steps to get started, it can be easier than it seems. You don't want to go into research having no idea what you want to do—knowing at least a topic and having a few keywords prepared will help you be more successful in your research. First, you will need to pick a theme for your research paper. This can come from a prompt, the class's theme, or even from a list of topic examples provided by your professor. Once your topic is chosen, you'll want to narrow it down by choosing keywords to begin your search. These will change as you further your research, so don't be worried if they aren't the most specific at first.*

Definition

Most effective when used to clarify specific words or topics within your essay, making them clear to the reader.

- Defining what specific parts of the topic are or what you mean by certain words or phrases you will use throughout the paper. Usually towards the beginning of a paper or when a new topic/idea is introduced.

Ex: *For this essay, I will be defining oral storytelling as simply the act of telling a story out-loud. These stories could be family history, your own personal history, or something that happened to you recently. It is the act of sharing this information aloud that I focused on during my research, and less the actual content that was being shared. People tell stories for all sorts of different reasons. We use them to transfer our knowledge to younger generations, to tell others about ourselves in a meaningful—or not so meaningful—way, to make connections with others who may share similar histories or interests, and to form a sense of identity within a community and as an individual.*

Cause & Effect

Most effective when used to discuss why something transpired and the results of an event, feeling, or action.

- Describing why something happened (*cause*) and the results because of that something happening (*effect*). This can include multiple causes all leading to one effect, one cause with multiple effects, or multiple causes with multiple effects.

Ex: *The new social world developing around these technologies has had its effect on the ways in which we now converse with one another. Increasingly people use short, quick bursts of information in the forms of texts, tweets, and status updates, rather than face to face or even over the phone conversation. While convenient, these snippets do not entail the same skills or result in the same sort of deep, personal reflections and insights that face-to-face conversation gives us (Turkle 2).*

Analogy

Most effective when used to help readers understand or relate to a complex or misunderstood topic.

- Comparing two different things to add meaning, clarity, or significance to one of them.

Ex: *Writing an academic paper is like running a marathon: it takes stamina, planning, and most of all, practice. You can't expect to run a 5k without training to build up your stamina and refine your running technique, and a five-page essay is no different. Writing is learned, and a well-written essay comes out of careful planning through prewriting, giving yourself ample time to complete the assignment before it's due, and with practice by writing, revising, and rewriting. So, don't be discouraged if your first draft isn't perfect: just think of it as your first training session. With time and practice (and some rewriting), you'll get that essay in shape by race time.*