

Developing Paragraphs

Effective Paragraphs –

Good writers have the ability to write clear and effective paragraphs. A paragraph cannot simply be “slopped together, but rather there is a structure to developing an effective and cohesive paragraph.

Good writers should remember the MEAL Plan:

Main Idea
Evidence
Analysis
Link

Main Idea

The main idea of a paragraph is called the topic sentence.

Everything in your paragraph must connect and support your topic sentence in order to be cohesive.

The topic sentence should appear near the beginning of the paragraph.

The topic sentence for each paragraph should be directly related to the paper’s main idea or thesis.

*Remember: each body paragraph supports the thesis statement as the controlling idea of the paper, so the topic sentence for each paragraph must connect back to the thesis statement presented in the introduction.

For example, if the thesis statement for your essay is:

The University of Toledo should ban smoking on campus because of its negative effects on people and the campus.

Here are some examples of possible topic sentences for body paragraphs:

Smoking is directly connected to dangerous health problems.

Non-smokers should not be subjected to second-hand smoke.

By allowing smoking on campus, The University is supporting unhealthy habits.

When people smoke they irresponsibly discard their cigarettes and ashes all over the campus.

Evidence

After the main idea (the topic sentence) is stated, relevant evidence must be provided to support the debatable claim made in the topic sentence.

These forms of evidence will typically be presented in the form of studies, reports, data, statistics, interviews, examples or illustrations.

Evidence should be relevant and directly support the writer's topic sentence and the thesis statement for the essay.

The writer may choose to present source evidence through summary, paraphrase, or direct quotation, and the writer may also use modes of development such as description, definition, example, analogy, cause and effect, or comparison and contrast.

Topic Sentence:

Smoking is directly connected to dangerous health problems.

Evidence:

According to the Center for Disease and Control, smoking is the cause of almost 500,000 deaths a year in the United States. The CDC also states, "More deaths are caused each year by tobacco use than by all deaths from human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), illegal drug use, alcohol use, motor vehicle injuries, suicides, and murders combined."

Analysis

Following the evidence, the writer must provide an analysis of the evidence that has been provided.

Analysis is the writer's evaluation, interpretation, judgment, or conclusion of how the evidence supports the paragraph's main idea or topic.

As the leading voice in the paper, the writer is required to explain how the audience is meant to interpret the evidence in the context of the writer's argument.

Evidence:

According to the Center for Disease and Control, smoking is the cause of almost 500,000 deaths a year in the United States. The CDC also states, "More deaths are caused each year by tobacco use than by all deaths from human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), illegal drug use, alcohol use, motor vehicle injuries, suicides, and murders combined."

Analysis:

All evidence clearly states that smoking is dangerous to an individual's health and with the negative consequences, it is difficult to believe that any university would support such a death sentence.

Link

The final sentence or sentences of the paragraph link the current paragraph's main idea to the main idea in the next paragraph.

Since most body paragraphs are going to be followed by another body paragraph, the writer should consider using transitional phrases that help to link paragraphs.

Analysis:

All evidence clearly states that smoking is dangerous to an individual's health and with the negative consequences, it is difficult to believe that any university would support such a death sentence.

Link:

Not only does smoking cause serious health problems for the individual, but it also effects others who choose not to smoke.

Topic Sentence of following paragraph:

Non-smokers should not be subjected to second-hand smoke.

MEAL

This is how the paragraph comes together...

Smoking is directly connected to dangerous health problems. According to the Center for Disease and Control, smoking is the cause of almost 500,000 deaths a year in the United States. The CDC also states, "More deaths are caused each year by tobacco use than by all deaths from human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), illegal drug use, alcohol use, motor vehicle, injuries, suicides, and murders combined." All evidence clearly states that smoking is dangerous to an individual's health and with the negative consequences, it is difficult to believe that any university would support such a death sentence. Not only does smoking cause serious health problems for the individual, but it also effects others who choose not to smoke.