

UNIT

1

Writing a Paragraph

Part 1 Getting ready to write

Part 2 Writing a paragraph

Part 3 Writing a coherent paragraph

Part 4 Editing a paragraph

Getting ready to write

The goals of this lesson:

- Identifying the structure of a paragraph
- Generating ideas for writing
- Writing a topic sentence
- Choosing supporting points
- Making an outline

Section 1

What is a paragraph?

A **paragraph** is a group of sentences about a topic. Every paragraph should have one **topic**, which is usually presented in the first sentence called the **topic sentence**. All the other sentences in the paragraph must develop and support the topic.

When you write a paragraph, keep the topic in mind and try not to include sentences that are irrelevant (not directly related), which could confuse the reader.

Exercise 1

Read the model paragraph on the next page and answer the questions.

1. What is the topic of the paragraph?
2. The paragraph has two irrelevant sentences. Find them and cross them out.

Reasons for Going to University

After graduating from high school, many students go on to university, but their reasons for entering higher education vary. First, many students attend university to study a particular subject in depth. Unlike high schools, which require students to take a wide range of classes, university curriculums allow students to choose a major. In each major, a number of specialized courses are offered, and they are taught by experts in the fields. Moreover, universities have various research facilities that help students learn. Another common reason for going to university is that a college education often leads to a better career in the future. In many countries, people with university degrees tend to find better-paying jobs than those without them. In addition, some universities provide their students with opportunities to acquire practical skills that can be useful in the real world, such as accounting, using computers, and speaking foreign languages. However, in spite of these opportunities, some students cannot find a rewarding job after graduation because of unfavorable economic conditions. Finally, for some students, making friends and enjoying an active social life can be a sufficient reason to stay in school for another four years. In universities, students have chances to meet people who come from different places with diverse backgrounds. Furthermore, universities have a variety of student organizations where students can meet others with similar interests and spend time with them. Sometimes students make friends through part-time jobs too. To sum up, students go to university for a variety of reasons: to study a particular field, to find a good job, or to make friends.

A paragraph is made up of three components: the **topic sentence**, the **supporting sentences** (body), and the **concluding sentence**.

Topic sentence

- The first sentence in a paragraph
- Presents the **topic** and the **controlling idea** (an important idea about the topic) of the paragraph

Supporting sentences

- The main part of the paragraph
- Provide several **supporting points** that explain the controlling idea of the paragraph
- Provide details that explain each supporting point

Concluding sentence

- The last sentence in a paragraph
- Restates the controlling idea and summarizes the supporting points

Exercise 2

Look at the model paragraph on page 3.

1. Identify the three components: the topic sentence, the supporting sentences, and the concluding sentence.
2. Answer the following questions.
 - a. What is the controlling idea of the paragraph?
 - b. How many supporting points are there in the paragraph? What are they?

Section 3**Generating ideas for writing – brainstorming**

When you are given a writing task, the first thing you should do is to think about the topic and find ideas for your task. This activity is called **brainstorming**. Brainstorming can take many forms. You can brainstorm:

- on your own by writing down ideas on paper.
- with other people by discussing the topic.

Brainstorming is useful for timed essays, such as in tests, or for a writing task which does not require research. Below are some popular techniques for brainstorming.

1. Listing

Listing is an activity where you think about the topic and make a list of your ideas. When listing, remember:

- You can put all the ideas into a list like the one below, or you can classify them in groups.
- Do not reject any idea at this point because it might turn out to be useful later.

Reasons for going to university

- to study a particular subject
- to get a good job in the future
- to make friends
- to join a club
- to have fun
- to have free time before starting to work
- to think about the future
- to meet people from different places

2. Mind mapping

Mind mapping is another brainstorming activity. To draw a mind map:

1. Write the topic in the center of a blank sheet of paper.
2. Think of any word or phrase that is related to the topic and write it next to the topic.
3. Draw a line between the word and the topic.
4. Think of a new word related to either one of the two words on the sheet and write it down.
5. Continue until you have enough ideas.

One advantage of mind mapping is that relationships between ideas are visually displayed. This makes it easy for you to find clusters of ideas that are related to each other.



3. Free writing

Free writing is a brainstorming activity in which you:

1. think about the topic and write down your thoughts on a piece of paper.
2. keep writing whatever comes to mind for about ten minutes.

Remember, for free writing:

- do not go back to rewrite your ideas.
- do not worry about organization, grammar or style.
- when you finish, read what you have written, and identify the ideas that will be useful for your task.

Why do people go to university? Many people in my country go to university to enjoy themselves. Before university, students are busy studying for entrance exam. Some are busy with part-time jobs or school activities. After university, they are busy with work. There is no time to relax or think. So they go to university to relax and have fun with friends. Also to think about many things, for example future. We think about what we want to do, what kind of job we want to do in future and so on. But some people have more serious reason. To study something. If they have a subject they are interested. For example, I'm interested in cultures of other countries. I chose this university because there are famous professors and many interesting courses about Asian cultures, Islamic cultures, and so on. There is study abroad program too, so I can live in foreign country and experience culture of that country.

Exercise 3

Imagine you are asked to write a paragraph about one of these topics. Choose a topic and brainstorm ideas using one of the techniques described in this section.

1. Reasons for studying abroad
2. Advantages of joining a university student organization
3. Causes of stress among university students
4. Factors in choosing a university
5. Ways technology helps university students

Section 4

Writing a topic sentence

After you decide which ideas to include in your paragraph, the next step in the writing process is to write a **topic sentence**. As you learned in Section 2, the topic sentence of a paragraph has two functions:

- to introduce the **topic** of the paragraph.
- to state the **controlling idea** of the paragraph.

The **controlling idea** is an important idea about the topic that the writer wants to convey in the paragraph. It is called the controlling idea because it limits or “controls” which information can be included in the paragraph. In other words, all the information in a paragraph must be relevant only to the controlling idea.

The topic sentence of the model paragraph on page 3 is:

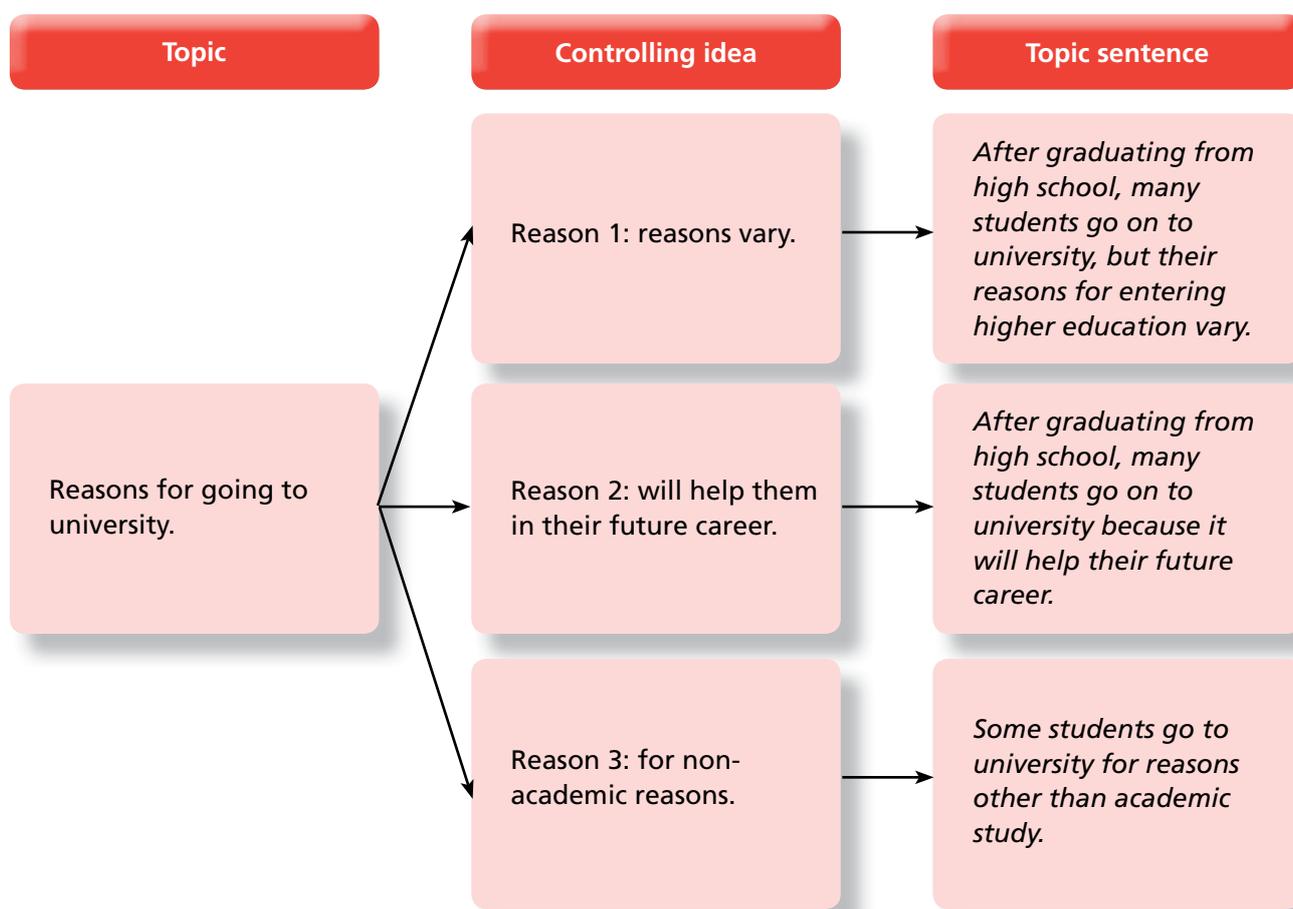
After graduating from high school, many students go on to university, but their reasons for entering higher education vary.

This sentence gives the reader the following information about the paragraph:

Topic: Reasons for going to university

Controlling idea: Reasons for going to university vary

Note that there are many different ways to look at a topic, so the same topic can lead to different controlling ideas. See the following examples:



Therefore, when you write a paragraph, the first thing you should do is decide the controlling idea. Then, begin the paragraph with a sentence that presents both the topic and the controlling idea.