**What is a Paragraph?**

A paragraph is a collection of related sentences about a single topic. Its first word is indented. There are usually at least three sentences and, for a short essay, not many more than five sentences per paragraph.

* **The Basic Rule: Keep One Idea to One Paragraph**

The basic rule of thumb is to keep one idea to one paragraph.

* **Elements of a Paragraph**

To be as effective as possible, a paragraph should contain each of the following:

Unity,

Coherence,

Topic Sentence,

Adequate Development

**Elements of a Paragraph Explained**

* **Unity**

The entire paragraph has a single focus. If it begins with a one major point of discussion, it should not end with another or wander with off to talk about different ideas.

* **Coherence**

Coherence is what makes the paragraph easily understandable to a reader. A paragraph is coherent when it is logical—when ideas are in the right sequence and relate to each other.

* **A Topic Sentence**

A topic sentence is a sentence that tells, in a general way, what idea a paragraph will talk about. Topic sentences can be anywhere in the paragraph, but an easy way to make sure your reader understands the main point is to put your topic sentence near the beginning.

* **Adequate Development**

The main point should be discussed fully. There are many ways to develop a main point.

**To make sure your paragraph is well-developed include examples and illustrations. To do this you can:**

* Cite data (facts, statistics, evidence, details)
* Tell what other people say--use quotes and paraphrases
* Use an “anecdote” ( story)
* Compare and contrast
* Evaluate causes and reasons
* Examine effects and consequences
* Put things that happen in a logical order—first to last

**How do I know when to start a new paragraph?**

You should start a new paragraph when:

* **When you begin a new idea or point.**
* **When your readers need a pause.**
* **When you are ending your introduction or starting your conclusion.**