

# BREAKING A PAPER INTO PARAGRAPHS

Paragraphs divide a paper into different ideas and clarify the writer's main points. Paragraphs help the reader track with the writer's ideas by visually representing that a writer is moving to another point.

A paragraph should range between 150-250 words or five to seven sentences. Use this to help you decide when to transition into the next paragraph.

## BUILDING YOUR PARAGRAPH: OUTLINE

A paragraph should contain at least five elements:

1. **Topic sentence:** Introduces the main idea of the paragraph in a single statement and often uses one of the key words (or phrases) from the thesis.
2. **Main Point:** A specific point that supports the paragraph's main topic.
3. **Evidence:** Research that supports and proves the topic sentence.
4. **Commentary:** Provides a summary and analysis of the evidence and how it connects to the topic sentence.
5. **Concluding/Transitional sentence:** Summarizes the main idea and creates a transition to the next paragraph.

## TECHNIQUES FOR DIVIDING YOUR PAPER

1. **Do your research and create your thesis statement first.**
  - a. A thesis statement (i.e., main claim and organizing principle) drives your paper. Every idea in your paper should tie back to your thesis, so start by deciding what points can help you support your thesis.
2. **Create an outline for your paper.**
  - a. Outlining can help highlight and organize the main points you want to cover in your paper. From there, you can ensure that each paragraph addresses your main points and stays on topic.
3. **Break your paper up surrounding your main points.**
  - a. Your thesis serves as the basis for your paper, and the points supporting your thesis make up the body paragraphs of the paper.
  - b. Once you have your supporting points laid out, then you can start building each of your paragraphs with the elements listed above (i.e., topic sentence, evidence, commentary, etc.).

PRACTICE NOW