**I want help structuring paragraphs**

It may be helpful to think of each paragraph as a mini-essay. Just as there are three stages in an essay, there are often **three stages in a paragraph**:

* Topic sentence (also known as introductory sentence)
* Body of the paragraph
* Concluding sentence (optional - only necessary for a long paragraph)

The first (introduction) sentence in the great majority of paragraphs is the **topic sentence**. This sentence introduces a general overview of the topic and the purpose of the paragraph. The topic sentence answer the question 'What's the paragraph about?'. It should be more general than the body of the paragraph.

Once the topic of the paragraph has been set up in the first sentence (or sentences), the writer then develops this topic in the **body of the paragraph**. Some body sentences may elaborate directly on the topic sentence - for example, by giving definitions, classifications, explanations, contrasts, examples, evidence, etc. Other body sentences are linked only to previous body sentences.

The final sentence in many, but not all, paragraphs is a **concluding sentence**. This sentence does not present specific new information, but often either summarizes the content of the body, or comments on it. It can also **link to the topic of the next paragraph**, by showing how the paragraph content links to the topic sentence of the next paragraph.

You don’t have to write all your paragraphs using this structure (for example, there are paragraphs with no topic sentence, or it comes near the end of the paragraph). However, the structure above is a very common and **clear structure**, which makes it easy for the reader to follow, and gives the reader the feeling that your thinking is also clear.