



A paragraph is the way we divide our ideas in formal writing. To ensure your paragraphs are coherent and unified, follow these steps:

1. Begin Each Paragraph with a Topic Sentence

The topic sentence expresses the main idea of the paragraph. It's like a thesis statement, but only for that one paragraph.

Use your topic sentence as a guide for the content of your paragraph.

Ask: Do the other sentences in this paragraph relate to my topic sentence? Or is it a new idea?

2. Direct Quotes Should be Correctly Integrated and Explained

When using direct quotes in your writing, they need to have an explanation of why they are significant.

e.g. As MacDonald argues, "students who use the Writing Centre regularly tend to perform better in class and receive higher marks" (12). **This again shows that many faculty and staff at St. Thomas believe the Writing Centre to be a valuable resource.**

Coherent paragraphs do not just talk about sources, they **integrate** them. They provide an explanation as to why the source is used and how it relates to the topic sentence and thesis statement of the essay. ALL sources should help to further understand your topic sentence.

3. Ideas should have a logical flow.

A core element of having a coherent paragraph – and subsequently a coherent paper – is making sure the argument you are making has a logical flow. Ask yourself: Does my content make sense chronologically? If someone who knew nothing about my topic read my paper, would they understand what I am arguing?

Remember to end your paragraph with a summary sentence.

Try this: read only your topic sentences from your paragraphs. If they still seem to have a logical flow, your paper will, too.

4. When to start a new paragraph

Each paragraph represents a new idea. While all your paragraphs will be related to the main argument

### Coherent Paragraphs Check List

I have a clear topic sentence.

My paragraph focuses on one main idea.

Each of my sentences helps to further explain my topic sentence.

I have provided an explanation or highlighted the significance of each direct quote I have used.

I have integrated ALL my sources (both direct quotes and paraphrased information) and they help to further explain or support my topic sentence.

### Sample Paragraph<sup>1</sup>

In addition to suffering from several illnesses (**transitional phrase**) marine mammals kept in captivity can be a threat to the people who interact with them (**main idea**). According to a 2006 report by the Humane Society of the