

Writing paragraphs and incorporating citations

Paragraphs are groups of sentences that can be used to:

- Give a definition, explain a theory or model
- Give a description of practice or place, e.g. methods used in the study, environment or ecosystem being studied
- Give justification for your position e.g. when you have to develop an argument
- Give your analysis and/or evaluation of a situation in relation to theory and current literature
- Sythesise information from a number of sources to provide evidence to present an argument.

In general, a paragraph could have the following structure:

- An introductory or topic sentence stating the premise of the paragraph
- Sentences to develop this idea further using referenced evidence from the literature e.g. by explaining, elaborating, evaluating, making judgment, and/or sythesising information about the idea to present a well-reasoned point of view
- All ideas/examples/statistics that are not your own are appropriately referenced
- A sentence that either links to the next paragraph or concludes by stating the relevance of the paragraph to the assessment task.

A sentence or two does not constitute a paragraph!
5 - 8 sentences are often needed to present a logical argument.

Remember:

- to acknowledge the source of the ideas
- to use your ideas to make critical comments about the literature
- that it is not appropriate to write only descriptively when required to demonstrate critical analysis, evaluation, synthesis and reflective thinking.

Questions to ask yourself before you write your paragraphs:

- Do I need to describe, e.g. an environment?
- Do I need to present analysis, e.g. of statistical data?
- Do I need to give an analysis and evaluation, e.g. of a past study, data?
- Do I need to reflect on, give an opinion, review, analyse, or evaluate supporting or conflicting information from the literature?

Methods to incorporate citations:

To include another person's ideas:

Brown (2003) claims that... argues that... points out that... reports that... proposes that... suggests that... states that... maintains that... implies that...

To make comments about individual studies:

The study comprised/consisted of... focussed on, has undertaken/attempted...

The findings were reported as... Brown's (2001) study has shown that / found that...

Jones (1999) has indicated that... develops a theoretical perspective that...

...is part of a growing body of work that... redefines the traditional notion/idea of...

...elaborates on the theory that... has undertaken/attempted a...

Brown (2001) raises... proposes... defends... substantiates... justifies the idea notion/proposition

To make comments about a number of studies:

Research (e.g. Brown, 2003; Smith, 2000) has shown that... Studies (e.g. Brown, 2003; Smith, 2000

have indicated that... Studies (e.g. Brown, 2003; Smith, 2000) generally agree/ confirm/disagree/refute...

There is a common view that... The general finding is that... Traditional theories/ ideas are reworked as...

To give your opinion when you are making a suggestion:

Brown's (2003) claim seems to be that... suggests that... could be interpreted as... appears as though... It would seem that further investigations are needed to...

To make comparisons between studies/ideas:

Whereas previous studies ... this study seeks to ... While this study ... other studies ... Unlike previous studies, this study/article ... concludes that ...

Similarly, in comparison, in contrast, likewise, conversely, on the other hand, as was evidenced in previous studies, the findings/idea put forward in this study/article ...

The research has tended to focus on ... rather than on ...

Although considerable research effort has been given to ... less attention has been paid to These studies have emphasised ... as opposed to ...

To make critical comments (strengths, weaknesses, limitations):

The study was well presented and documented... assumes that... is predicated on the assumption that... ...Other differences were noted... however...

Even so, many questions were left unanswered.

The problem with these studies... The study does not... There is some contradictory evidence...

The... were questionable/debatable... It is unclear how...

The limitations of the... There are concerns with the...

Methods to introduce a new idea or topic (e.g. in an essay):

Recently there has been a strong interest in... The development of... is a problem...

The... has become a favoured topic because... The central issue is... The relationship between... and... has been investigated by... Many studies have focussed on...

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