

# How to Make a Paragraph *Sing*:



## Four Components of an Effective Body Paragraph

What is a *body paragraph*? Nestled between the introduction and the conclusion, each body paragraph is, in essence, a mini-essay and so should contain all the hallmarks of an effective essay: *unity*, *order*, *coherency*, and *completeness*.

**1. Unity:** Just as a paper has its controlling idea — the thesis statement — a paragraph has its controlling idea — the topic sentence. Each sentence within the paragraph must be support for or explanation of the topic sentence or idea. If this is the case, then the paragraph possesses *unity*.

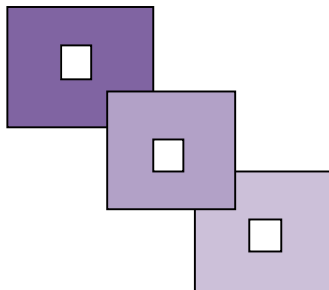
**2. Order:** If the paragraph possesses a “plan,” if the topic idea is developed logically, sequentially, spatially, in order of importance, or in another pattern, then the paragraph possesses *order* or organization.

**3. Coherency:** Coherency is the “glue” of writing. Sentences within a paragraph need to be connected (or glued) to each other. One of the important ways to “link” your sentences together is through the use of transitions; these transitions are signposts for the reader, illustrating logical or other relationships. Other ways to achieve *coherency* include repetition of key words, phrases, or images and consistent use of point of view.

**4. Completeness:** If a paragraph offers sufficient supporting evidence or reasons to support its topic sentence, then it exhibits completeness. For example, if a topic sentence proclaims that there are three reasons why students procrastinate and then provides three reasons along with supporting details for each reason, then the paragraph is *complete*. However, if the paragraph provides only two reasons or if it provides insufficient support for its reasons, then the paragraph is not complete.

A body paragraph will *sing* if it offers one topic (*unity*), provides an organizational plan (*order*), “glues” its sentences to each other through transitions and other means (*coherency*), and supplies sufficient and specific supporting details (*completeness*).

Can you hear its melody, now?  Is your paragraph *singing*?



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Writing Specialist, 2008*