

Parts of a Paragraph

A paragraph is a group of sentences about one topic. It contains a topic sentence, supporting details and sometimes a concluding sentence. The sentences follow one another from the beginning to the end of the paragraph. A paragraph is usually part of a longer piece of writing, such as a letter or essay.

The topic sentence

The topic sentence is usually the first sentence of the paragraph. It states the main idea of the paragraph. A good topic sentence tells the reader exactly what the rest of the paragraph will be about.

The supporting sentences

The supporting sentences are the middle sentences of the paragraph. They provide details such as explanations or examples that expand on or support the topic sentence. Supporting sentences are sometimes connected by transition words or phrases.

The concluding sentence

A concluding sentence is sometimes used in longer paragraphs to sum up the ideas presented. It expresses the same idea as the topic sentence but in different words. It can start with a transition such as *clearly* or *in conclusion*.

Terry Fox was a Canadian who suffered from bone cancer and raised awareness for cancer research by trying to run across Canada. He attracted a lot of attention by running the distance of a marathon daily on one prosthetic leg. He also challenged each Canadian citizen to contribute one dollar for cancer research. Unfortunately, Fox was forced to end his run near Thunder Bay because of health complications. The CTV network organized a nation-wide run to continue Fox's fundraising efforts. Clearly, Terry Fox had an impact on both cancer research and the millions of Canadians who participate in the Terry Fox Run every year.

- 1  Search the Internet for a more detailed explanation and examples of each part of a paragraph. Write three tips for writing a paragraph. Share your tips in small groups.

Possible search terms: *writing paragraphs; parts of paragraph*

2 | Read the paragraph and discuss the questions that follow.

Glenn Gould is widely regarded as Canada’s most famous and eccentric pianist. He is renowned for his recordings of the music of Johann Sebastian Bach. For example, Bach’s *Goldberg Variations*, Gould’s first recording, was among the best-selling classical music albums of its time. Gould is also famous for his unusual behaviour. He would only play concerts while sitting on an old chair his father had made, and he usually hummed while he played. Contrary to most pianists, he disliked playing in concert halls, and devoted most of his career to the recording studio until his death in 1982. In brief, Glenn Gould was an unconventional pianist who made a significant impact on the world of music.

1. What is this paragraph about?
2. What is the topic sentence? How is it different from your answer to question 1?
3. What are the details that support the topic sentence?
4. What transitions are used? What is the purpose of each transition?
5. What is the purpose of the concluding sentence?

3 | Number the sentences below (from 1 to 5) to form a paragraph. On each line, write *topic sentence*, *supporting detail* or *concluding sentence* to indicate the sentence’s purpose. Then write the paragraph in order, adding appropriate transitions.

- Hydroelectric power is a valuable source of renewable energy. _____
- Nickel is another natural resource used in the making of stainless steel as well as coins. _____
- These are just a few of the resources Canada offers. _____
- Canada offers a variety of natural resources that are used for different purposes. _____
- Timber is used for building materials and furniture. _____

4 | Find two or three examples of a paragraph (from a textbook or from the Internet). Identify the parts of each paragraph. Work in a group and discuss the structure of each paragraph.