

Paragraph Structure

Aim to include:

1. **A strong topic sentence at the beginning of the paragraph.** This will be your main argument that answers the question asked. It can sometimes help to use language from the prompt to make sure you're focused.
2. **Strong example(s) that prove your argument.** Remember Ms. Garcia's rule: *More isn't better; better is better.* Don't feel like you need to include every possible detail. Just include relevant evidence that supports the main argument.
3. **Analysis of your evidence** - focusing on how and why your examples support your main argument.
4. **A concluding sentence to wrap things up.** It often helps to restate the topic sentence.

Also consider:

- **Do you need transitions** between your sentences to show how your ideas are connected?
- **Generally you're supposed to discuss one idea per paragraph. *Should you separate your ideas into distinct paragraphs?***
- **Being concise is a good thing** (especially if you're avoiding repetition).

Some areas of focus:

Passive Voice

In a sentence written in passive voice, the subject of the sentence is acted upon (or passive) rather than active. Teachers generally ask you to avoid these constructions because they can sound awkward or forced. Here are some examples:

active voice: I kicked the ball.

passive voice: The ball was kicked by me.

active voice: Amy jumped down the stairs.

passive voice: A jump was taken by Amy down the stairs.

Look in your paragraphs for passive voice and try to rephrase to make the subject of the sentence active. Generally, you can do this by putting the subject of the sentence *in front of* the verb.

Run-on Sentences

A run-on sentence occurs when two or more sentences are incorrectly combined as one sentence. You can fix a run-on sentence in a few ways:

1. Split the sentence up by using a period.
2. Use a semicolon to connect two ***closely related*** complete thoughts.
3. Add words to clarify the connection between the thoughts.

Incorrect: I like to eat cookies you like to eat ice cream.

Incorrect: I like to eat cookies; you like to eat ice cream.

Correct: I like to eat cookies. You like to eat ice cream.

Correct: I like to eat cookies; you like to eat ice cream.