



## Chapter 5

# Paragraph Structure

- a) A Five-paragraph Essay**
- b) Paragraph Purposes**
- c) Topic Sentences**
- d) Supporting Details**
- e) Concluding Sentences**
- f) Paragraph Cohesion**

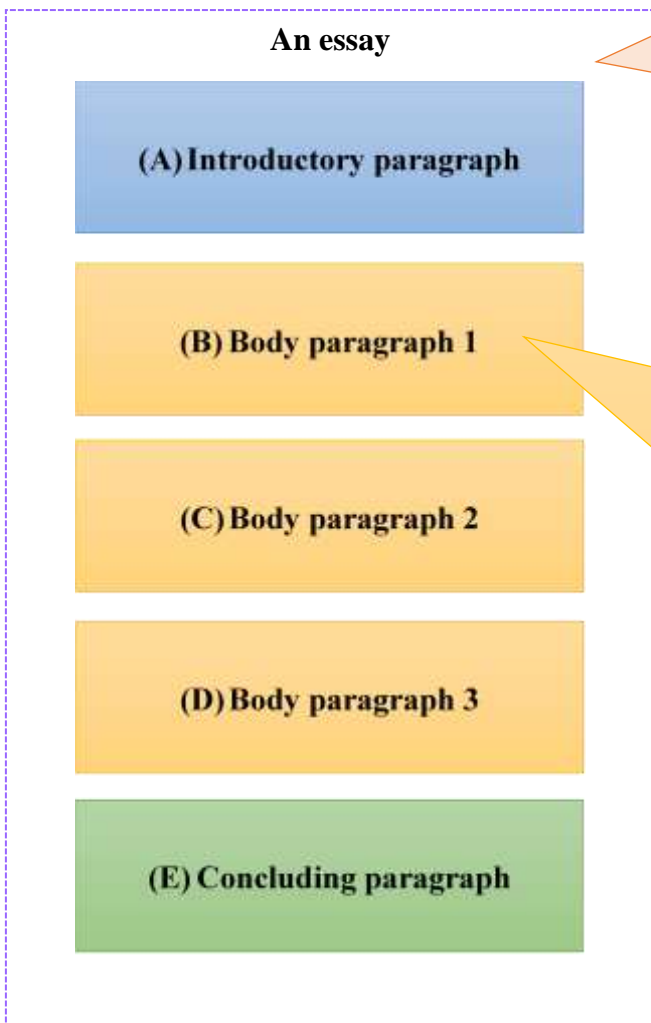
**(Activity Sheets)**

## 5a: A Five-paragraph Essay

**Paragraphs** are the building blocks of an essay. When paragraphs (introduction, body and conclusion) are put together, an essay is formed. Effective paragraphing enhances cohesion of the text and helps readers follow the logical flow of ideas.

The number of paragraphs may vary in each essay, depending on the amount of information or ideas to be presented. However, a **five-paragraph essay** is a format commonly adopted for essay writing. To ensure that an essay is well-structured, its paragraphs should be closely knitted.

### The five-paragraph essay



A **five-paragraph essay** has three basic parts: **one introductory paragraph**, **three body paragraphs** with development and relevant points, and **one concluding paragraph**.

### What makes up a body paragraph?

Each paragraph typically focuses on one key idea and consists of three elements:

- a topic sentence
  - (a) supporting sentence(s)
  - a concluding sentence
- } with logical linkage between ideas (paragraph coherence)

**Practice****Activity 1**

Read the following five jumbled paragraphs about the pros and cons of video games. Arrange them in the correct order by putting the correct paragraph numbers (1-5) in the boxes. The **highlighted topic sentences** help to show the linkage between the paragraphs.

**Pros and Cons of Video Games**

1	It is true that playing video games may lead to health risks and other negative effects. <b>However, there are also arguments for playing video games.</b>
2	It is believed that <b>playing video games may cause various health problems.</b> In extreme cases, video game addiction may result in an unhealthy lifestyle. According to a study from St Patrick's University in 2017, 10% of primary school students surveyed spent an average of 21 hours a week gaming, and heavy gamers tended to skip meals and sleep less. Dr Anderson Craig, a psychologist studying the effects of violent video games, also found out that high exposure to violent video games could increase aggression. Players tend to be more aggressive even when they are not playing video games.
3	There are good arguments both for and against playing video games. Playing video games is good for us, provided that we can keep the negative impact to the minimum. To reap benefits from playing video games, it might be wise to choose games carefully and limit the amount of time spent on it. As with other things, <b>moderation is the key.</b>
4	<b>One of the advantages</b> is that playing video games may improve one's social skills and body co-ordination. Some video games promote teamwork and social interaction while others enhance memory and eye-hand co-ordination. An example of this is <i>Overcooked</i> . Players have to communicate and co-operate to complete each cooking task in the game. Hence, gamers will develop better social and collaboration skills.
5	<b>Video games have been gaining popularity worldwide.</b> With a wide variety of choices, there must be something for people of different ages. However, they are not without controversy. On the one hand, <b>video games do have positive impacts on players;</b> on the other hand, <b>the health problems they bring should not be underestimated.</b>

**Re-ordering jumbled paragraphs**

	Paragraph
<b><u>Introductory paragraph</u></b> (Giving background information and setting the focus for discussion – the pros and cons of video games)	
<b><u>Body paragraph 1</u></b> (Building on the introductory paragraph and discussing the negative impacts)	
<b><u>Body paragraph 2</u></b> (Moving from the negative effects to the positive ones)	
<b><u>Body paragraph 3</u></b> (Providing supporting ideas and examples for the positive effects)	
<b><u>Concluding paragraph</u></b> (Giving advice to video game players)	

## 5b: Paragraph Purposes

An essay is made up of paragraphs, and each paragraph usually focuses on one key idea. Paragraphs can serve different purposes, for example, to introduce, to compare and contrast, to define, to show cause(s) and effect(s), to inform, to evaluate and to persuade. Very often, a paragraph may serve more than one of these purposes at the same time.

### Practice

#### Activity 2

Read the following three paragraphs and decide on the main purpose of each.

1. Poverty generally refers to the condition when a person does not have the money to sustain their basic human needs like food, shelter, clothing and safe drinking water. Poverty is also characterised by the lack of access to education, information and health care. Unlike what many think, the issue of poverty is not confined to developing countries. Even in developed parts of the world, a fraction of the population lives in poverty.

- To compare and contrast the causes of poverty in developed and developing countries
- To explain why poverty is a global problem
- To define poverty

2. Cordless upright vacuum cleaners are usually smaller in size. The upright design also renders them more space-saving. They are easier to use as there is no need to wire them up when cleaning. However, batteries of cordless upright vacuum cleaners generally take a long time to recharge but drain out fast. For some models, fully recharging the battery takes a few hours, yet they can only operate at their strongest suction power non-stop for less than 10 minutes. Despite the relatively weaker cleaning power, the retail price of cordless upright vacuum cleaners is often higher than that of traditional wired vacuum cleaners.

- To argue against the claim that cordless upright vacuum cleaners are not practical
- To analyse the strengths and weaknesses of cordless upright vacuum cleaners
- To describe the different functions of cordless upright vacuum cleaners

3. Bullying is a pressing issue. Unfortunately, many students interviewed preferred to ‘stay out of the problem’. The good news is that most students did not approve of the bullying behaviour and they preferred a bully-free campus. To effectively stop campus bullying, while schools should maintain strict confidentiality of the reporters’ identity, the bullying cases should be brought to the attention of both students and their parents. If bullying is taken seriously, it is foreseeable that the number of reports will increase. Together with appropriate punishment and education, this will certainly help to reduce tragedies at school.

- To conclude the reasons for campus bullying
- To urge for action to stop bullying
- To analyse the cause and effect of campus bullying

## 5c: Topic Sentences

One paragraph typically focuses on one key idea and consists of three elements: **a topic sentence**, (a) **supporting sentence(s)**, and sometimes **a concluding sentence**.

A **topic sentence** tells the reader the focus and key idea of a paragraph and usually appears at the beginning of a paragraph to signal to the reader what the paragraph is about, but it is also possible for a topic sentence to appear anywhere in a paragraph. For some text types (e.g. stories, interviews, feature articles), topic sentences may not be a salient feature.

### Practice

#### Activity 3

Read the following paragraph and decide which sentence is the topic sentence.

(A) Body mass index (BMI) is a simple index of weight-for-height commonly used to define weight groups and screen for overweight and obese individuals. (B) In the metric system, BMI is calculated by dividing the body weight in kilograms by the square of height in metres, i.e.  $\text{kg/m}^2$ . (C) The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines an adult in Asia with BMI from 23.0 to 24.9 as overweight. An adult with BMI above 25.0 is classified as obese.

- A       B       C

**Activity 4**

Match the paragraphs to the appropriate topic sentences by filling in the appropriate letters (A, B and C) in the spaces provided.

Topic Sentences	
<b>A</b>	Only with concerted efforts and prompt action can the problem of obesity be resolved.
<b>B</b>	Obesity has damaging effects on our physical and mental health.
<b>C</b>	Unhealthy diets and lack of physical activity are the fundamental causes of obesity.

### Obesity – a Ticking Time Bomb in Hong Kong

(1) \_\_\_\_\_ In an affluent city like Hong Kong, obesity is believed to be caused by the popularity of fast food, which is mainly high in saturated fat, trans fat, sugar and carbohydrates. While genetic factors may have a role to play, the more sedentary lifestyle is another major factor leading to rising obesity rates. According to official statistics, approximately 60% of Hong Kong people did not meet the level of physical activity suggested by WHO, i.e. 150 minutes of aerobic exercise per week.

(2) \_\_\_\_\_ Obesity causes a lot of chronic illnesses, which include strokes, diabetes and cardiovascular diseases. Obese people are also said to be at a higher risk of suffering from some cancers, for example, breast, bowel and pancreatic cancers. They tend to have lower self-esteem and are more likely to develop emotional problems such as anxiety and depression.

Who should be responsible for preventing obesity in the future? The government should step up efforts to educate the public about healthy lifestyle. Schools should revamp their existing curriculum to enhance nutrition and physical education. For restaurants and food producers, they should be monitored to ensure the reduced use of unhealthy ingredients and cooking methods in food production. (3) \_\_\_\_\_

## 5d: Supporting Details

While the topic sentence states the main point of each paragraph, **supporting details** help to elaborate on the main idea stated in the topic sentence. There are different kinds of supporting details:

- A. **Examples/Cases:** experience of other people or places
- B. **Evidence:** figures from studies, reports, surveys
- C. **Expert opinions:** views of authoritative figures

### Practice

#### Activity 5

Read the following sample paragraph and identify which kind of supporting details is used (**A: Examples/Cases, B: Evidence, C: Expert opinions**). Put the letters (**A, B** and **C**) in the appropriate boxes.

<b>Central argument:</b> Consumption voucher scheme is not effective in boosting the local economy.	
<b>Topic sentence:</b> Consumption vouchers or cash handout to citizens do not help tackle the root of the economic decline.	
<b>Supporting details:</b>	
	According to Dr. Y Cashback of <i>The Everyday Economist</i> , consumption voucher scheme does little to tackle root problems, such as the uncertain economic climate and widespread unemployment and underemployment caused by the ongoing pandemic situation.
	When similar schemes were adopted in Macao and other places, people in general spent more money but the inflation rate went up afterwards, creating an economic bubble.
	An opinion poll conducted by Livelihood Improvement Association in 2020 revealed that 55% of the respondents considered the voucher scheme a short-term fix, while 35% expressed that they would just spend the sum on daily expenses like grocery shopping or transportation, with no intention to buy luxury items.



## 5e: Concluding Sentences

A paragraph may sometimes include a **concluding sentence**. A concluding sentence serves different purposes, for example,

**Purpose A: to reiterate or recap the argument of the paragraph**

**Purpose B: to suggest solutions, appeal for action or express a wish**

**Purpose C: to create a transition to the next paragraph**

### Practice

#### Activity 6

Read the following three paragraphs about hunger. Match the concluding sentences (1, 2 and 3) below to the appropriate paragraphs by writing the numbers on the lines provided. Then, with reference to the three purposes of concluding sentences above, identify the main purpose of each concluding sentence and put the letters (A, B and C) in the spaces provided.

Concluding Sentences	
1	In other words, hunger arises from uneven food distribution among different income groups.
2	It is often the consequence of a combination of many other issues in our society.
3	But more importantly, increased international efforts in providing financial aid and technological assistance are needed to put an end to hunger.

Paragraphs about 'Hunger'	Purposes
With today's high technology in food production, it is a surprise to know that ending hunger is still one of the major tasks for the United Nations. To fight hunger, it is necessary to understand its causes. Hunger is not an isolated problem. _____	
The root of hunger is not that we do not have enough food in today's world, but that we do not distribute it evenly enough. According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) (2000), while the richest 20% of the world population consume as much as half of the meat and seafood in the world, the poorest 20% consume only 5% of such protein-rich food. _____	
As seen from the above, hunger is seriously damaging to the affected people and countries. As individuals, we can of course reduce food wastage by ordering only what we can eat. _____	

## 5f: Paragraph Cohesion

Creating **cohesion within a paragraph** means linking up ideas logically to make the text clear and readable to the reader. We can use different **cohesive devices** to give the text a smooth ‘flow’, for example:

Functions	Examples of Cohesive Devices
words showing <b>addition</b>	also, in addition, as well as, not only ... but also
words showing <b>contrast</b>	despite, however, even though, on the one hand/on the other hand
words showing <b>cause and effect</b>	because, accordingly, as a result
words showing <b>examples</b>	for example, for instance, such as

### Practice

#### Activity 7

Choose the most appropriate cohesive device to complete each blank and tick the correct boxes.

Upcycling, which is also known as creative reuse, refers to the act of taking something that is no longer in use and giving it a second life and new functions. The new item produced is often more practical and beautiful than what it previously was. \_\_\_(1)\_\_\_, old, worn out or damaged clothing can be transformed and refashioned into a new product. \_\_\_(2)\_\_\_ both upcycling and recycling are converting old things into new objects, the two processes produce different results. \_\_\_(3)\_\_\_ recycling involves the destruction of waste to create something new, upcycling takes waste and creates something new from it in its current state. When upcycling, \_\_\_(4)\_\_\_ can the original form be retained, but the story behind it can also be read – we can see what it has been and also what it has become.

- |                                       |  |   |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| (1) <input type="checkbox"/> Such as  | (2) <input type="checkbox"/> However           | (3) <input type="checkbox"/> While      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> For example  | <input type="checkbox"/> On the one hand       | <input type="checkbox"/> In other words |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accordingly  | <input type="checkbox"/> Despite the fact that | <input type="checkbox"/> For instance   |
|                                       |  |   |
| (4) <input type="checkbox"/> not only |  |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> even though  |  |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> in addition  |  |   |