Paragraphing and Transitions

When to begin a new paragraph:

- Mark off introduction and conclusion
- Signal a shift to a new idea
- Indicate an important shift in time or place
- Emphasize a point: put the sentence with the point at the beginning or end of the paragraph, not in the middle
- To highlight a contrast

Indenting is interpretation, a way of signaling changes in the flow of the writing, mark shifts in direction, emphasis and rhythm.

Paragraphing is rhetorical, a communication tool to help you indicate what you want to emphasize.

One-sentence paragraphs usually feel choppy, BUT can work occasionally in the middle of two longer paragraphs as a transition or to emphasize a key point.

Summary sentences at the end of paragraphs: these can work, especially if you use them to help you check for coherence, or if you use it not just to summarize but to lead into your transition. Don’t use one at the end of every paragraph; they become formulaic and can look very contrived.

TRIAC:

Topic Sentence, Restatement, Illustration, Analysis and Conclusion

TRIAC is a writing pattern you can use at both the essay and paragraph level for strong organization and argument. You can also use it for revision, particularly as a method for bringing focus and coherence to your work.

T: Topic Sentence. The first sentence introduces the subject of the paragraph. Answers the question, What are you writing about?

R: Restatement or Restriction. Narrows the focus. The second sentence can restate or restrict what was written in the first sentence, making the subject more specific.

I: Illustration. Give examples/evidence. This portion of the paragraph consists of the illustrations (evidence, data, facts, quotes, reasoning, etc.) that support your topic sentence. You can have more than one I in a paragraph.

A: Analysis. Comment, explain, interpret, or contextualize the illustrations that have been made. Never leave illustrations by themselves; their effectiveness lies in your analysis. Show value, significance, problems, or impact. You should have one A for each I in the paragraph. The more As and Is, the more fully developed your essay will be.
C: Conclusion. Repeat or reflect topic. The final sentence might review what the paragraph has discussed, or it can re-emphasize what the illustration and analysis suggest. The portion might also identify or evaluation connections. Keep in mind that you are also setting yourself up to smoothly move into the next paragraph.

Model TRIAC paragraph:

[T] Although vegetarianism has often been associated with issues or ethics and animals rights, for many people it is no more than means to a healthier lifestyle. [R] A vegetarian diet can reduce the risk of health problems such as high cholesterol, arterial clogging, and even cancer. [I] Recent evidence indicates that people with a diet rich in dark green vegetables had a 40% less chance of developing colon cancer. In addition, cutting meat out can dramatically reduce saturated fat intake. Alice, a university student and a seven-year vegetarian, says, “I recognized my potential for cancer because of my genetic history; when my father’s doctor put him on a strict no-meat diet, I decided it was time to give up burgers and pepperoni.” [A] Choosing to cut down beef and poultry can help many people to become more aware of what they are consuming, and it turn leads to overall more healthful style of cooking and eating. In addition, it is not necessary to become a vegetarian in the strictest sense of the word; for some people, it simply means cutting down on meat intake and increasing the amount of fruits and vegetables included in each meal. [C] These adjustments alone can be beneficial without completely altering the individual’s eating habits, and these changes may prevent a myriad of health problems later in life.

Model TRIAC paragraph, slotted to show internal movement and topic development:

[T: Introduces the topic, vegetarianism, and the angle the paragraph will take, that many people’s motivation is health, not conscience] Although vegetarianism has often been associated with issues or ethics and animals rights, for many people it is no more than a means to a healthier lifestyle. [R: restricts the subject of the paragraph not just to vegetarianism being healthy, but specifically to its role in preventing cancer] A vegetarian diet can reduce the risk of health problems such as high cholesterol, arterial clogging, and even cancer. [I: illustration, gives a specific example of how lots of certain vegetables may reduce cancer and illustrates that with a specific story] Recent evidence indicates that people with a diet rich in dark green vegetables had a 40% less chance of developing colon cancer. In addition, cutting meat out can dramatically reduce saturated fat intake. Alice, a university student and a seven-year vegetarian, says, “I recognized my potential for cancer because of my genetic history; when my father’s doctor put him on a strict no-meat diet, I decided it was time to give up burgers and pepperoni.” [A: analysis, goes into more detail on the implications of the point of the story above] Choosing to cut down beef and poultry can help many people to become more aware of what they are consuming, and it turn leads to overall more healthful style of cooking and eating. In addition, it is not necessary to become a vegetarian in the strictest sense of the word; for some people, it simply means cutting down on meat intake and increasing the amount of fruits and vegetables included in each meal.
[C: conclusion, ties into the rest of the paragraph by saying “these,” meaning the ones just discussed and sums up the impact of what was discussed, bringing it back out to the general point again] These adjustments alone can be beneficial without completely altering the individual’s eating habits, and these changes may prevent a myriad of health problems later in life.


**Transitions**

Between paragraphs:

1. Link the first sentence of the new paragraph with the idea of the previous paragraph.
2. Mention the topic of the previous paragraph in the first sentence of the new paragraph. “This” or these” are good signals to the reader that you’re still talking about something related to the previous paragraph.

Example of #2 from an article I’m working on:

Both men had lived in the countryside and both professed knowledge of and interest in rural people and living conditions. Notably, they differ in where they locate blame for the rural people’s poverty, poor conditions, and questionable behavior. Cobbett emphasizes the role of power and politics in creating or exacerbating the situation in the countryside, while Jefferies places more responsibility for the problems on the shoulders of the rural people themselves. The texts yield an interesting, sometimes *contradictory picture* of two periods of nineteenth-century rural life as seen through the lens of the traveling middle-class journalist.

Comparing the two writers’ texts illuminates this *contradiction* [which contradiction? The one mentioned in the last sentence of the previous paragraph.]. While both writers describe poor people living in the country, Cobbett usually seems very sympathetic, as in this passage about workers who cannot afford to purchase fuel to heat their homes: “It is miserable work where this [fuel] is to be bought, and where, as at Salisbury, the poor take by turns the making of fires at their houses to boil four or five tea-kettles. What a winter-life must those lead, whose turn it is not to make the fire!”

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**Transition words**

**To signal this:**  
**Use this:**

- **Addition**: and, also, besides, furthermore, in addition, moreover, next  
- **Examples**: for example, for instance, to illustrate, in fact, specifically  
- **Comparison**: in the same manner, similarly  
- **Summary or Conclusion**: in other words, in conclusion, therefore  
- **Time**: after, before, as next, meanwhile, during, later  
- **Place or Direction**: above, below, beyond, farther on, nearby, opposite  
- **Logical relationship**: if, so, therefore, consequently, thus, since

**Transitions Between Blocks of Text**

In long essays, you may connect two large blocks of text with a short paragraph which segues between the first part, which has just come to a close, and the second part – it alerts readers that the second part is about to begin.

Example: Although [repeat idea from previous section], one central question remains: can___? Did___? Or mention a new take on the question and introduce a new set of ideas about it.