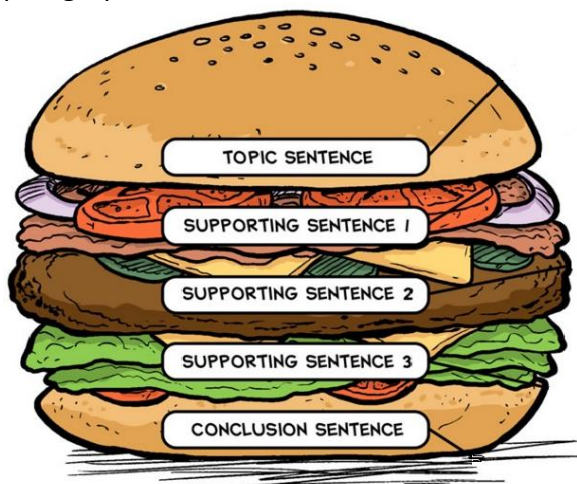


Writing a paragraph

Whether you are writing an essay, report or journal entry your writing will consist of a series of paragraphs. Many people don't consider the structure of their paragraphs when they write, but they should. Writing a good paragraph requires thought and the effort you put into structuring your paragraphs will have a significant impact on your grades. Read the information below to learn more.

Paragraph structure

It can be helpful to think of a paragraph as being like a burger – the beginning and the end of the paragraph are similar, like the bun and the filling is what makes the paragraph interesting.



The **topic sentence** is the first sentence of your paragraph. It should be clear and simple and immediately identify the theme of the paragraph. All the following sentences should be relevant to the topic you introduce in your first sentence.

Supporting sentences are the body of your paragraph. They should explain the topic in more detail and give evidence and examples to support your topic (and citations as necessary). Keep your sentences simple and to the point.

The **conclusion sentence** should summarize what you have said and bring the reader back to the topic sentence.

Example paragraph

Technology is essential to good communication between virtual teams but it must be used effectively and considerably if a team is to achieve its goals. Daft and Pirola-Merlo (2009) provide a few basic rules that leaders should follow to make the most of technology. They recommend that face-to-face communication should be used for complex communication such as problem solving or responding to confusion amongst the team. Regular meetings should also be scheduled to allow team members to chat online. Finally, leaders should give more positive support and feedback online than they would face-to-face. Watkins (2003) also supports the importance of clear communication for virtual teams. He advocates the use of a 'communication charter' that outlines which types of communication to use in different circumstances, i.e. when one should call a colleague or when it is better to email. By following these simple recommendations, leaders will be able to contribute to a positive team dynamic and avoid miscommunication.

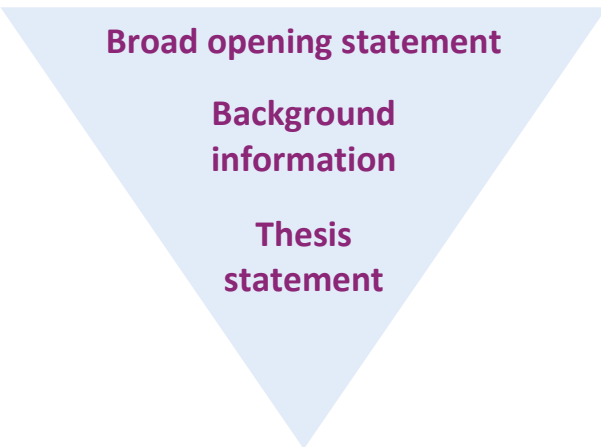
The **topic sentence** (underlined) introduces the topic. In this case, the topic is communicating using technology.

The **supporting sentences** explain the topic, using the ideas of two different authors. These ideas are paraphrased and clearly explained with examples.

The **conclusion sentence** summarizes what the paragraph is about and links the ideas in the paragraph to the overall topic.

Writing introductions

Structure of an introduction paragraph



Begin your introduction with a broad statement that establishes the general topic of your assignment. Follow that with more detailed background information, explaining the scope of your assignment. Briefly talk about why the topic is interesting or important. Finally, finish with a thesis statement. This is a sentence or two that very specifically identifies exactly what the assignment aims to do and briefly touches on the main arguments you will make. A thesis statement often begins with *This essay will discuss/analyse...* or a similar statement. An introduction is often described as being like an inverse triangle because it starts off broadly talking about a topic and then narrows down to determine exactly what will be discussed in the essay.

Example introduction

One of the most interesting and challenging developments that has occurred in business leadership over the past few decades is the rise of virtual teams. Traditionally, work teams would meet in the same place and share similar cultural backgrounds. These days however many work teams are composed of diverse members based in different cities or countries whose primary means of communication is via technologies such as email, phone and video-conferencing. Using virtual teams has many benefits for businesses, not least of all that it allows organizations to respond quickly to competitive pressures by being able to use the best people for a particular project, no matter where they are located. However, managing virtual teams is not easy and can pose a number of challenges for business leaders. This essay will explore both the challenges and benefits that virtual teams offer businesses. It will also summarize the theories of leadership relevant to virtual teams and provide recommendations on how to effectively manage and lead staff virtually.

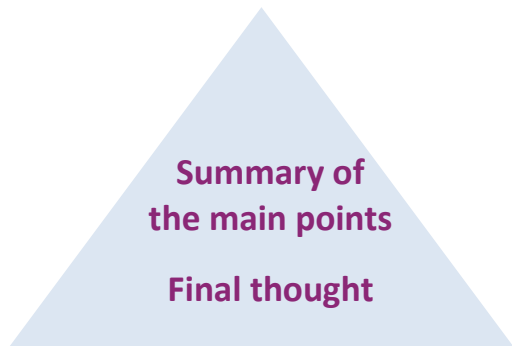
Broad opening statement leading the reader into the topic, which in this case is the leadership of virtual teams.

Background information – in this section the writer defines the topic and briefly explains why it is interesting and challenging.

Thesis statement in which the writer introduces the four parts of the essay – challenges, benefits, theories and recommendations of virtual teams.

Writing conclusions

Structure of a conclusion paragraph



Begin your conclusion with a summary of the main points you have made in your essay. You can do this by paraphrasing your thesis statement and adding in some extra detail. Keep it short - a few sentences will be fine. No new information should be introduced in the conclusion. After that it's common (but not essential) to include a 'final thought'. This is usually a comment about the significance of the topic and its implications for the particular subject you are studying. Your conclusion has the reverse structure to an introduction because it starts off looking only at what you discussed in your essay, but then broadens the scope of the topic by relating it to the wider world.

Example conclusion

Virtual teams can provide a great opportunity for today's business leaders to sharpen their management skills. However, leaders must be very careful not to treat virtual teams in the same way as conventional teams. They must carefully consider how they will build trust between members, how the team will communicate and how it will be supervised and supported. They must also consider the type of leadership and conflict styles they wish to take on, keeping in mind the need for trust within a virtual team. Richard Branson, a well-known entrepreneur believes that, "in 30 years' time, as technology moves forward even further, people are going to look back and wonder why offices ever existed" (2013, para. 6). While this may be an extreme view to some, it nevertheless demonstrates that virtual teams and working remotely are the way of the future and if business leaders want to be successful, they must learn how to effectively manage virtual teams.

Summary of the main points. In this case the writer has chosen to summarize the recommendations for managing teams and allude to the relevant theories and the main point they would have made about trust.

Final thought. The writer has chosen to use a quote to add emphasis and explain the significance of their argument that leaders must learn how to manage virtual teams.