

SUPPORTING PARAGRAPHS

WHAT ARE SUPPORTING PARAGRAPHS?

Supporting paragraphs make up the main body of your essay; they are there to help prove your thesis by providing specific, detailed examples that show the reader how you came up with your thesis. Each supporting paragraph should have its own topic sentence.

HOW DO I WRITE THEM?

1. Write down three or four "good reasons" for believing the main idea of your essay (your thesis). They should prove or illustrate your thesis. Be specific.
2. Take each reason (supporting point) and make it the beginning of its own paragraph. This reason will be the topic sentence of each paragraph.
3. Develop each paragraph with specific facts, details, and examples.

ASK YOURSELF THESE QUESTIONS:

Does each supporting paragraph have a topic sentence?

Do I give specific, concrete, examples based on facts, not just my feelings?

Does every sentence and example relate to my topic and thesis?

Am I saying the same thing over and over, repeating what I've already said?

Do I explain how my supporting paragraphs are related to my thesis?

Are my paragraphs in a logical order?

What examples can I provide to convince a reader?

HOW DO I GET FROM ONE PARAGRAPH TO THE NEXT?

- To connect supporting paragraphs use special transition words.
- Transition words link paragraphs together and make your thoughts easier to understand.
- Use them at the beginning and end of your paragraphs.

TRANSITION WORDS TO LINK PARAGRAPHS

To list different points, use: "first," "second," and "third"

To bring up the opposite viewpoint, use: "however," "even though," or "on the other hand"

For additional ideas, use: "another," or "in addition to"

To show cause and effect, use: "therefore"

WHAT DOES "BE SPECIFIC" MEAN?

In order to support your thesis and topic sentences, you must provide specific, concrete examples for your reader. This is what makes you believable. Below are two sample paragraphs. One provides vague support and one provides specific support. One is interesting to read and one is pretty dull. Which one makes you "see" the scene? That's the winning paragraph. "Show" your readers, don't just "tell" them.

SAMPLE ONE

Many people in the theater are thoughtless and selfish. They make noise and create disturbances. Many are messy and inconsiderate of others. Some of them move around all the time and interrupt the movie.

SAMPLE TWO

Kids race up and down the aisles, usually in giggling packs. Teens talk back to the screen, whistling and making what they believe are hilarious noises. Lots of people crinkle candy wrappers, stick gum on their seats and drop popcorn tubs or cups of soda on the floor. They also cough and burp, squirm around and elbow you out of the armrests of your seat.