

PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE

- I. **Paragraphs** are self-contained units of writing that argue a specific aspect of a paper’s overall thesis. They are building blocks to help you prove that thesis.
 - **Length:** Paragraphs can be of varying lengths, but they should tackle only one main idea. In shorter papers, paragraphs typically don’t surpass one page double-spaced, about 250-300 words. A longer paragraph may indicate that you’re discussing more than one idea, meaning that you can split it into two or more paragraphs.

- II. **Paragraph Breakdown:** A typical paragraph structure includes a topic sentence that supports your main claim + evidence + analysis of your evidence + a transition sentence. One helpful way to organize your paragraphs is with the **TEAL paragraph** tool:
 - **(T) Topic Sentences** clearly explain the paragraph’s argument, which should connect to the previous ideas to build toward your thesis’ claim. To help you write a strong topic sentence, ask yourself: “In about one sentence, what am I arguing in this paragraph?”
 - **(E) Evidence** considers the facts: the who/what/when/where. Evidence always comes from a source. It often takes the form of direct quotes, summary or paraphrase of the facts, or data. Situate evidence in context. You can include multiple sets of evidence and analysis relating to the same topic within a single paragraph (Example Two below illustrates this).
 - **(A) Analysis** is your interpretation of the evidence and your chance to argue for how and why it supports your claim; evidence never speaks for itself. The majority of your paragraph should be analysis. Every time you make a claim, ask yourself why it is true; repeat this process until you reach conclusions about your main argument. Then ask yourself, ‘So what if I accept these conclusions as true?’ It may be helpful to consider the greater conversation to which your paper contributes by thinking about other papers you wrote for your class and/or the class topic in general.
 - **(L) Links** are transition sentences that connect your current paragraph to the topic of the next one. They create a greater flow in your paper because they reflect how your ideas have a clear progression and relationship.

III. Annotated Examples

Example One: Geoscience

Topic Sentence	The new technologies of the Industrial Revolution allowed scientists to study the 1883 Krakatau eruption in new ways, which led to unprecedented advancements in the field of geology.
Evidence	The Dutch mining engineer Rogier D. M. Verbeek spearheaded this effort in his attempt to create a comprehensive report on the eruption (Winchester, 2003). Verbeek

observed that the eruption had sliced Rakata peak in half like a cross-section, helping him understand the movement of magma through the volcano. He also measured the water depth where the main part of Krakatau had been at 1,000 feet deep, leading to the observation that most of the volcano's mass collapsed downward. He therefore hypothesized that there was an underwater caldera where a magma chamber had once been (Fiske and Simkin, 1983).

Analysis Although Verbeek's work predated the understanding of plate tectonics that would have allowed him to explain these phenomena, his data provided a wealth of new information about volcanoes that helped form the foundation of modern volcanology. A global fad for barometers also provided invaluable information on the air pressure shocks that the eruption sent around the world, and the new technology of the telegraph allowed scientists to collect data from measurement stations on different continents (Winchester, 2003; Fiske and Simkin, 1983).

Link These technological advances opened a wealth of data for scientists to begin to understand the connections between volcanic eruptions and climate.

Example Two: Anthropology

Topic Sentence In urban areas of China, the one-child policy served as a source of women's empowerment to an even greater extent than in rural areas.

Evidence Unlike residents of rural villages who initially resisted the one-child policy, urban residents complied with the policy relatively easily because they were less dependent on their sons for farm labor or assistance in old age (Fong 2002: 1100).

Analysis Consequently, only-daughter households were much more common in urban areas, and urban mothers with one child could gain access to paid employment opportunities from which they had previously been excluded.

Evidence Because low-fertility mothers were able to provide financial support for their parents, they demonstrated to their families that "daughters can be as filial as sons" (Fong 2002: 1102).

Analysis This proof of women's potential for filial piety, along with a lack of competition from brothers, allowed urban singleton daughters to combat oppressive gender norms while taking advantage of other stereotypes to seek new opportunities in work, education, and marriage (Fong 2002: 1103-1105). Specifically, urban daughters could use their educational experience to secure mid-level jobs, giving them an advantage over sons for whom it was more difficult to find employment (Fong 2002: 1103-1104). Similar to in Xiajia, the empowerment of women in urban areas has led "[b]oys and girls alike [to] recognize that greater gender equality in the distribution of housework is expected for their generation than for previous generations" (Fong 2002: 1105).

Link Thus, even more so than in rural villages, the one-child policy improved urban parents' perception of their daughters and created new opportunities for women, thereby subverting patriarchal norms.