

## The Paragraph

A paragraph is a unified piece of prose. It may be independent and complete in itself or form a part of a bigger composition. In either case it is a group of several sentences dealing with one main idea. In other words, all the sentences in a paragraph should be about the same subject to form unity.

There is no hard and fast rule as to the length of a paragraph. It may consist of only one or two sentences or it may sometimes be long enough to contain fifteen to twenty sentences. However, an ideal paragraph should have as many sentences in the minimum as are necessary to mark a beginning, a middle and an end. Length does not matter.

The structure of a paragraph is like that of an essay. That means, it also contains an introduction, a body and a conclusion. The difference is that the role of a paragraph in an essay is played by a sentence in a paragraph. Instead of having an introductory paragraph, a paragraph has an introductory sentence to introduce the main idea. Where the body of an essay is formed by a number of paragraphs, the body of a paragraph is formed by a number of supporting sentences. Similarly, like the concluding paragraph of an essay a paragraph has a concluding sentence. It may be said that a paragraph is an essay in microcosm.

At the time of writing, you have to remember that the first line of your paragraph should be indented. That is, you should start your first line farther from the margin than the others. When you write an essay, each of your paragraphs should be started on a new line. Remember, indentation is compulsory.

It is important to note that the paragraph you write should express your ideas logically and consistently. Therefore, the sentences in it should not just be unrelated parts. They should all be connected with one another to make your writing logical and coherent.

You should also be aware of the fact that all the sentences in the paragraph do not have the same function. Some introduce the main idea, some develop or support that idea and some of them bring that idea to a close. The sentence which contains the main idea is called the **topic sentence**. Then the sentences which support the main idea stated in the topic sentence are generally known as **developers** and the one concluding the idea is called the **terminator**. Besides these three main categories of sentences, you will find a context modulator in some paragraphs where the main idea is developed by two sets of associate ideas. To pass from one set to another you need a context modulator to come between them. There are in all four types of sentences in a paragraph to serve four different purposes.

To understand the basic characteristics of the paragraph, look at the following groups of sentences:

**(a) Mr. Rahman is a renowned professor. Last year he was seriously ill. He has a nice garden in front of his house. His son has married a beautiful girl. Her father is a great scholar. Mrs. Rahman is a very pious woman. She lost her parents a few years ago.**

**(b) Mr. Habib is a happy person now for several reasons. Firstly, this year he has made a lot of money from his business. Secondly, he has completed the construction of his new house at Banani. Thirdly, his wife has now recovered from her long illness. Fourthly, he has given all his daughters in marriage. And then, his son also has got his expected job. Not to mention anything else, these are the causes of his present happiness.**

A careful reading of the groups of sentences above will certainly show that the sentences in the first group are all unrelated and hence they also fail to express any single idea. In this group several ideas have just been put together without

binding them up logically. As result, it has not become a consistent piece of composition. In other words, this group of sentences does not make what we mean by a paragraph.

On the other hand, all the seven sentences in the second group have been arranged logically and consistently. They are all bound together to deal with a single idea, namely Mr. Habib's happiness. None of the sentences expresses any different idea. As a complete piece of composition, this group of sentences has a beginning, a middle and an end. The first sentence of the group marks the beginning by introducing the idea of Mr. Habib's happiness. The following five sentences then support that idea and thus constitute the body of the group. Finally, the seventh and last sentence of the group concludes the same idea and obviously marks the end of the composition. From this analysis, it becomes clear that the second group of sentences above is a unified piece of writing, a paragraph.

### POINTS TO REMEMBER

- A paragraph is a group of sentences.
- It must have unity.
- It must deal with only one main idea.
- It must have a beginning, a middle and an end.
- The first line of it should be indented.

### VOCABULARY ENRICHMENT

**coherent** – clear and consistent

**composition** – a piece of writing or music

**consistent** – conforming to a regular pattern.

**context modulator** – something adjusting the change of ideas

**indentation** – space left at the beginning of a line of writing.

**(to) mark** – denote; signal

**microcosm** – miniature representation

**(to) recover (from)** – become well

**renowned** – famous

**structure** – the way in which something is arranged

**terminator** – which brings something to an end

**unified** – which deals with one and the same subject