CHAPTER 5: WRITING EFFECTIVE PARAGRAPHS

This chapter maps important techniques for creating paragraphs:

- Recognizing that paragraphs have a specific purpose
- Understanding how to read paragraphs in terms of unity, coherence, and development
- Identifying different types of paragraphs: introductions, body paragraphs, and conclusions
- Using a simple set of functions to write effective paragraphs
- Constructing paragraphs that serve the paper's thesis

THE PURPOSE OF PARAGRAPHS

Paragraphs are the building blocks of papers. They are blocks of text that can be stacked up to form a single, unified structure. This metaphor makes sense because it focuses on the *purpose* of paragraphs. Their job is to provide development, unity, and coherence. These three purposes are important, and writers need to know *how* to build paragraphs that provide them. If you think about paragraphs as tools that "do" specific tasks, then you can use them effectively. Like a skilled plumber, a talented seamstress, an experienced mason, or a knowledgeable chemist, you will be able to produce useful results.

ESSENTIAL CRITERIA FOR PARAGRAPHS

A good way to begin building an understanding of paragraphs is to think about three key terms: *unity*, *coherence*, and *development*. It is tempting to think that these are separate, but they overlap and work together.

A paragraph presents one aspect of a paper's topic. The paragraph is unified when each of its sentences helps the reader understand one aspect of the topic. In some ways, a paragraph is a miniaturized paper. Both have a clear focus, appropriate evidence, and a controlling thesis. The following paragraph is from a student's paper about Outsider Art. The comments in the right hand column are about its unity.

Examining a Student's Paragraph Through the Lens of Unity

Classification sometimes seems a natural response to the world. For example, the chemists' Periodic Table with its lists of elements and "families," tells us about the real world. The classifications are clear and used everywhere. But not all classifications are as widely accepted. When we look at those kinds of classifications, we learn to think more critically. A good example of a problematic classification is the concept of "Outsider Art." Scholars have developed contradictory ideas about works done by people outside of the traditional art world. While these contradictions tell us about artworks and artists, the contradictions also become a tool for exploring how classifications are created. We can apply the various notions of outsider art and outsider artists to someone such as Ricky Boscarino and his *Luna Parc* to test the limits of the existing classification systems. When we do this sort of case study, the limitations of the concepts quickly appear. The result is a clearer understanding that classification has values and beliefs that need to be named.	The blue text at the beginning announces that the topic will be "classification," and the last two sentences are also in blue to show that the paragraph often begins and ends with a focus on a single issue. The red text about the Periodic Table continues the focus on classification by providing a good example. It focuses the reader on the topic. The green text provides another example of classification. This example contrasts with the earlier one. The gold text explains *how* the paper will help the reader understand classification. We can see that each sentence in this paragraph focuses on a single issue -- classification -- and the single focus provides unity.

The sentences of the paragraph must be related to each other on a logical basis. When they cohere -- a word that means "stick together" -- they reveal that the writer has a plan. The transitions between sentences emphasize connections. By looking at the same paragraph

through this other lens, you can see the paragraph's coherence. The comments in the right hand column are about its coherence.

Examining a Student's Paragraph Through the Lens of Coherence

Classification sometimes seems a natural response to the world. For example, the chemists' Periodic Table with its lists of elements and "families," tells us about the real world. The classifications are clear and used everywhere. But not all classifications are as widely accepted, and when we look at those kinds of classifications, we learn to think more critically. A good example of a problematic classification is the concept of "Outsider Art." Scholars have developed contradictory ideas of works done by people outside of the traditional art world. While these contradictions tell us about artworks and artists, the contradictions also become a tool for exploring how classifications are created. We can apply the various notions of outsider art and outsider artists to someone such as Ricky Boscarino and his *Luna Parc* to test the limits of the existing classification systems. When we do this sort of case study, the limitations of the concepts quickly appear. The result is a clearer understanding of how classification has values and beliefs that need to be named.

Paragraphs achieve coherence through both logical and stylistic links. Phrases such as "for example" link the ideas to evidence. Not only do examples provide evidence, but they connect the paragraph's ideas.

The paragraph achieves *stylistic* coherence. Repeated terms (red text) create coherence because they enable readers to see the thread that ties everything together. The term "classification" is in red to highlight its frequency.

Transitional words such as "while," "when," "we can apply," and "become a tool" reinforce the logical connections between sentences by emphasizing sequence.

The paragraph achieves *logical* coherence. Note that this paragraph's first three sentences name the subject of the paragraph and refine it with both a positive example and with one that makes the topic worth exploring. On the basis of Boscarino's *Luna Parc*, it promises to develop a specific discovery about classification, values, and beliefs.

We can see that the paragraph makes its connections visible to the reader, and thus, it has coherence.

Development

A strong paragraph must *put its meaning in the words on the page* so that the document says what it means. It does this by citing evidence, explaining connections between evidence and ideas,

and it "grows" the thesis. Clear development requires a keen understanding of the readers' expertise, interest, and experience with the topic. The comments in the right hand column are about its development.

Examining a Paragraph Through the Lens of Development

Classification sometimes seems a natural response to the world. For example, the chemists' Periodic Table with its lists of element and"families," tells us about the real world. The classifications are clear and used everywhere. But not all classifications are as widely accepted, and when we look at those kinds of classifications, we learn to think more critically. A good example of a problematic classification is the concept of "Outsider Art." Scholars have developed contradictory ideas of works done by people outside of the traditional art world. While these contradictions tell us about artworks and artists, the contradictions also become a tool for exploring how classifications are created. We can apply the various notions of outsider art and outsider artists to someone such as Ricky Boscarino and his *Luna Parc* to test the limits of the existing classification systems. When we do this sort of case study, the limitations of the concepts quickly appear. The result is a clearer understanding of how classification has values and beliefs that need to be named.	Examples are important tools for creating coherence. Example are a form of evidence. Good examples recognize the readers' familiarity with the topic. The blue text produces development through examples. Note that the examples (red text) contain details that justify the use of the example. Paragraphs develop by "growing" the meaning of key terms. The green text marks places where the idea of classification is made more complex. The paragraph's development depends on the growth of ideas, the integration of ideas, and the use of clear examples and evidence.

To Summarize: Unity, Coherence, and Development are essential features of strong paragraphs. The categories work together to serve the reader's needs. Together, these three features of a strong paragraph reflect the writer's understanding of the audience's expertise, interest, and experience. The three features show that the writer is writing for the audience and knows that the document is not written for her/himself. They appear when a writer understands that the meaning has to be in the words on the page. Good paragraphs say

what they mean. They also mean what they say. Readers will treat each paragraph as if it says exactly what you intended, so it is important to be precise.

Identifying Unity, Development, and Coherence

The paragraph below is a rough draft of an introduction to a paper about America's surveillance of its own citizens. Examine the paragraph three times as in the example above to assess its unity, development, and coherence:

Benedict Arnold was a traitor, and he tried to keep America from becoming independent. If he had succeeded, we would be slaves to England, and we know how bad slavery is because of the Civil War. Spies are a kind of traitor because they don't respect authority, and handing out information that the government says is secret is against freedom and independence. Look at what happened to American spies who got caught in Russia. Bradley Manning and Edward Snowdon put out information for everyone to see. They were like Benedict Arnold and they are traitors because governments are supposed to have secrets.

1. Can you identify the topic sentence?
2. Do all the sentences relate to the topic sentence?
3. Is the sequence of the ideas and evidence helpful to the reader? Why? Why not?
4. What key words connect the ideas of the separate sentences? How do they "carry over" from one sentence to the next?
5. After reading the paragraph, what do you expect the following paragraphs to discuss?

TYPES OF PARAGRAPHS

Introductory Paragraphs

Writers have many choices about how to open their papers. The same content can be presented in many ways, but unless writers know their alternatives, the paper can stall. While producing the next drafts of the paper, it is useful to choose a type of introduction that serves the needs of

the audience. The purpose can not be fulfilled unless the introductory tactics match the audience's needs, value, and expectations. Although any kind of introduction *might* work in any setting, there are some practical guidelines to think about:

Dramatic Introductions:

Introductory paragraphs can begin with a dramatic scene, a quotation, or a story that *illustrates* the document's central concept. These shape the readers' response to the topic. Although such introductions can be too informal in some settings, they are effective for general audiences and for introductory materials. Many writers use them in persuasive writing.

Let's look at an example. In a first-year composition class, students responded to a lecture by James Kuntsler. Kuntsler is a blogger and author. He writes about the values and beliefs that have led to the disappearance of public space in the United States. Public space includes the places where unrelated people can meet, talk, and exchange ideas. He sees the spread of suburban blight as part of the disappearance of public space. One student created two different dramatic introductions to find what would be best for her paper. In the first example, she turns to popular music:

Dramatic Introduction:

"I went back to Ohio, but my pretty countryside, had been paved down the middle by a government that had no pride." These are just a few of the lyrics from the song "My City Was Gone," where songwriter Chrissie Hynde laments the destruction of small town Ohio. The lyrics of this song might also depict how Mr. James Kunstler would describe the growth of modern suburbia. The main focus of Kunstler's lecture is that, "We need better places in this country." He believes that the massive suburban developments created after World War II have nearly destroyed the informal, public gathering places that people "want to hang out in." To support his argument, Kunstler defines three main reasons for redesigning suburbia, which I have categorized as his Mental Health Pillar, his Physical Pillar, and lastly his Logistical Pillar. Although I strongly agree with Kunstler's emotional and mental rationale for creating a new suburban

environment, and agree with the majority of his proposed physical design changes, I think his logistical reasons are the weak link in his argument.

The introduction uses Chrissie Hynde's "My City Was Gone" to establish a tone and a focus for what will become an argument about suburban life and the forces that have created it. The song fits the topic. Because it is a popular song, it gives the opening a casual, relaxed voice. Note that the paper's main idea is in red. This thesis statement comes after the writer has prepared the reader with the introductory remarks. The thesis statement provides a transition into the next paragraph where it will be much more detailed.

Dramatic introductions are common in journalistic writing, in blogs, in advertisements, and in other documents whose purpose is to persuade the reader. The dramatic material must reflect two things. First, it must reflect your own sense of what illustrates the paper's main point. Second, it must also reflect the values, beliefs, interests, and tastes of the audience who will read it.

Inquisitive Introductions

This second example (by the same student) begins with a question. Its purpose is to lead into important facts that make her question what she has read, and then to develop a description of the argument made by Kuntsler.

Inquisitive Introduction

How can living in one of the safest cities in the country be considered a bad thing? The city of Sterling Heights has consistently been ranked within the top 10 of America's Safest Cities.   However, the city's complete lack of viable public spaces or "sense of place" would cause James Kunstler to view this suburban community as a less than desirable place to live. The main focus of Kunstler's lecture is that, "We need better places in this country." He believes that the massive suburban developments created after World War II have nearly destroyed the informal, public gathering places that people "want to hang out in." To support his argument, Kunstler defines three main reasons for redesigning suburbia, which I have categorized as his Mental Health Pillar, his Physical Pillar, and lastly his Logistical Pillar. Although I strongly agree with Kunstler's emotional and mental rationale for creating a new suburban environment, and agree with the majority of his proposed physical design changes, I think his logistical reasons are the weak link in his argument.

Even if we know nothing about the topic, we can understand what terms are going to be important in the paper. The writer maps key features of Kuntsler's ideas. Then, she maps a fact that makes them debatable, and she reaches a conclusion: "his logistical reasons are the weak link in his argument." Inquisitive introductions are slightly less formal because they directly address the reader. The focus becomes divided between the topic and the concern with luring the reader with a challenge.

Here, the thesis (in red) is identical to the thesis of the first example, but it has a much more pointed focus on the connection between safe cities and public spaces. The terms are much more specific and establishes criteria that the reader is asked to challenge. The introduction seems more directly aimed at an audience. Again, it serves as a transition into a paragraph that will expand the thesis.

Review Introductions

Review introductions provide background. They report on the map of existing knowledge that you have discovered. They prepare the reader to follow your interpretations, conclusions, and arguments. Sometimes, a review introduction will present the writer's method for discovering information. For example, a scientific study might name its purpose, the question it will attempt to answer, its methods, and the results. These become a roadmap that describes the full paper.

Review Introduction:

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William Kunstler's concept of "third places" has helped many city
planners, sociologists, and political scientists think about role of
public spaces in America. He identified eight key features of these
places, and then explained how they had three important functions:
strengthen democracy, support economic growth, and build social
networks. Kunstler traces the economic forces that have led to the
decline of such places. The disappearance of local coffee houses,
independent corner bars and restaurants, and other local meeting
places proves to be one measure of how much our social life has
changed . . . and not for the better.
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This third example reports key facts about Kunstler's ideas. It provides key facts, but it also maps out key ideas that will shape the coming paper. Even if we know nothing about the topic, we can understand what terms are going to be important in the paper. It has mapped key features of ideas, named a problem, and reached a conclusion: "The disappearance of local coffee houses, independent corner bars and restaurants, and other local meeting places proves to be one measure of how much our social life has changed . . . and not for the better." An introduction such as this one states the existing map of the topic. It recognizes the corrections, improvements, and additions that are needed for a fully developed paper.

Review introductions assume that the reader is already interested, already has some prior knowledge, and is eager to see how this writer will re-draw the map. There is no need to interest this reader, and thus these more topic-focused introductions are preferable.

Writing several introductions is a good way to develop the thesis into a complex idea.

Exercises

Write the type of introduction that you think is best suited to the topic.

- There is evidence that The National Security Administration has spied on U. S. citizens.
- Antique household items reveal what women's lives were like.
- Scientific fraud requires both a charlatan and a willing audience.
- College education is becoming increasingly expensive.
- Psychologists recognize the role of narrative in mental health.

How to Develop a Thesis Statement

Many writers feel that the thesis statement must appear in the introduction. These writers understand that their readers want to know the idea, discovery, or problem that motivated the paper. A thesis statement -- often a sentence or two -- establishes the focus of the paper. It grows throughout the paper and becomes the conclusion. To repeat: the thesis grows throughout the paper. You can announce your thesis early, but you have to do so in ways that promise further development.

A thesis begins with a set of key words and concepts. Often, they come directly from the TEQ Sheet. This language has to produce further thought. These key terms control the direction of the argument. A thesis statement with complex terms requires clear definition so that readers understand exactly what you mean in the context of your argument. They help focus your thesis.

For example, a thesis that uses the words "bad" or "good" will be simplistic; they are the basis for a rant, not a paper. For example, if you write a paper about gun control, and your thesis is "Guns are bad," or "Gun control is good," you are not being especially insightful. This thesis statement promises a laundry list of advantages or disadvantages and then a return to the same place the essay started.

On the other hand, if you have thought carefully about gun control, you might use key terms such as "masculinity," "control systems," or "nostalgia." These terms signal the complexity of your idea. You might use them to say, "Arguments about gun control are often disguised arguments about larger issues such as the relationship between the individual and the state, about masculinity, and about America's historic anxiety about the nature of control systems." This second thesis promises to make connections between complicated issues. The first thesis can not really grow; the second one has to grow. Below is an example of an introduction that carefully keeps the question open:

Americans have a strong interest in guns. Gun control is frequently a topic of political debate, and most citizens have strong opinions about limiting the right to keep and bear arms. The arguments are never resolved, and they rarely go past the "guns are good" or "guns are bad" claims of each side. There's no real purpose to such debate unless we pay closer attention to the evidence that each side offers. This evidence tells a lot about how Americans think about bigger issues like masculinity, our history as an agricultural community, political freedom, and states' rights. If we look at this evidence, we can see that the gun control debates are really an argument about whether we look to the past for guidance, or if we look to present-day life for guidance about how life will be lived in America. The question cannot be answered, but by seeing the question behind the debate, we get a better idea about what it means to think like an American.

Another tool for developing key terms is the thesaurus. A thesaurus is like a dictionary, but instead of definitions, it lists words with meanings that are similar but not identical. Many good writers will turn to a thesaurus to help develop ideas. The differences

between words are differences in ideas, and some of the words can turn a paper to entirely new aspects of a topic. For example, a student writing about censorship might turn to a thesaurus and find the terms "editing" and "sanitizing." One suggests altering something to improve it; "sanitizing" suggests cleaning up something offensive to protect the reader. The student might begin to ask about the line that separates these two.

The Thesis as a Departure Point

You *do not* create a thesis and then attempt to "prove" it. Instead, you use it as a point of departure for discovering information, evidence, and problems related to your interests. Developing a topic into a thesis is a key skill. A paper's thesis develops in response to what others have already discovered. It is an idea that is worth expanding, changing, and developing.

Exercises

Construct a potential thesis for each of the topics below. Make sure that your thesis has key terms, ideas, and concepts that can be developed.

Topic	Thesis
The limits of surveillance in a democracy	
Repairing the public transit system in Detroit	
Global warming	
The Gardasil vaccine	
Attitudes toward Wikipedia	

Body Paragraphs

Body paragraphs are the workhorses of writing. Their job is to make four things happen. These four functions make a paragraph understandable. Once you know how to use these four functions, you will be able to *develop* your own paragraphs, *unify* their focus, and create a *coherent* document.

> Function #1: A paragraph has to introduce the topic and/or provide transitions to the paragraphs that come before and after.

Function #2: A paragraph has to present important facts, data, descriptions, or other highly specific pieces of evidence.

Function #3: A paragraph has to comment on the evidence in #2 above. Facts can not be assumed to "speak for themselves." It is the job of the paragraph to speak about the importance of the evidence.

Function #4: A paragraph has to return to the central idea of the paper. Using the evidence, it has to expand, enlarge, correct, limit, or nuance the major idea. The thesis grows throughout the paper, and it grows in these sentences.

These are functions. There are four of them. This does *not* mean that a paragraph has four sentences. An effective paragraph meets the reader's expectations by performing all four functions. The following paragraph is a simple example of a Four-Function paragraph. Each sentence is labeled according to its function by a superscript numeral at its beginning.

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¹Macomb Community College has an unusual basketball team. ²Of the
fifteen players on the roster, eleven are taller than 7'6". ²This
is the tallest group of basketball players on any team in the
country. ²Not only are they tall, but each runs a 40 in less than
six seconds. ³This speed means that they are both tall and fast,
an unusual combination. ⁴We can reasonably expect our team to win
a national title.
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Readers expect to have information introduced, supported with evidence, enriched with explanations of the evidence, and then related to a controlling idea.

note: Sometimes, a sentence will have several functions. Consider the following example:

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        Eleven players on this year's basketball team are 7'6"
        or taller, a highly unusual collection that promises
        many victories.
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The sentence presents data (the number of players who are tall) and also explains its importance (it promises many victories). The sentence has combined the #2 Function and the #3 Function. Such combinations are common.

Scientific organizations also know the value of using this structure for paragraphs. CERN, the organization that invented the World Wide Web and now operates the Large Hadron Collider, explains the value of basic research through sentences that serve the four functions. As part of a web site that explains the organization and its research, it offers the paragraph below. Note that each function is identified by a superscript just as each was identified in the paragraph about an imaginary basketball team:

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[1]Fundamental science is where new ideas and methods begin that later
become commonplace [2]from the electric light, which originated in 19-
century curiosity about electricity, to the World Wide Web, invented
at CERN to allow international teams of particle physicists to
communicate more easily. [3]No amount of applied research on the
candle would have brought us the electric light; no amount of R&D on
the telephone would have brought about the Web. [4]Science needs the
space for curiosity and imagination.
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Without all four functions, a writer would leave too much to the reader, who might misunderstand. Putting the meaning in the words on the page controls the risk of a reader substituting her/his ideas for the writer's. Remember: the four functions are the tools to use to achieve unity, coherence, and development.

What problems does the Four Function model solve? First, it helps writers who "never have enough to say." Often they do not put into words on the page what they know in their heads. By using the model, students find that making their paper "long enough" is no longer a problem.

The paper is not just padded and wordy. It meets the expectations of the grading persona who is not going to give credit for what is not in the words on the page.

Writers can clarify their rough drafts by numbering the function(s) of each sentence in each paragraph. When a function has been ignored, it is relatively simple to add the needed material. An even better way to clarify a rough draft is to have someone else -- a reader -- number the function of each sentence. A reader only understands the words on the page, and this will make it easier for her/him to identify what is missing. You will probably find that you tend to ignore some functions. By numbering your sentences according to their function, you identify where documents need to be clarified.

Concluding Paragraphs

Conclusions can take many shapes. Some resemble the conclusion of a scientific experiment. Such conclusions are often preceded by a summary of the results, but the conclusion is about more abstract issues. It answers the "So what?" that readers ask. You are more likely to help your reader if you consciously choose the type of conclusion.

1. *Summary conclusions*: conclusions that consolidate the initial insights and results of the paper. These are often practical reviews of information in the paper. They often emphasize techniques, the relative importance of basic facts, or the history of a question.

   Remember that the solution to a leaking basement begins on the outside. You will need to grade flower beds and others areas so that they slope away from the building. You will also have to make sure that downspouts lead far from the foundation. Once that is done, you may need to dig a French Drain to take away any underground pressure and to provide further drainage. Once these are done, you can begin with the interior and apply the special paints described above. The result should be a dry and usable basement.

2. *Observational conclusions*: these are frequent in the sciences, and often in reports of experimental interventions, for example, the use of a new medical treatment, a new teaching method, or other process-based activity. The concluding paragraph provides a "boost" where the answer to the "So what?" is direct. Thus, it makes the paper more abstract by going beyond a simple summary conclusion. Below is a student's summary paragraph for a paper about the nature of scientific fraud. Note how she summarizes her paper, but then adds a final sentence that makes an even larger claim. The final sentence is her boost.

In 2005, the political and economic needs of South Korea converged to create a crisis; the boundary between politics and economics disappeared as widespread unemployment, a financial crisis, and increased competition from nearby nations threatened to reduce the country to poverty. At the same time, the emerging field of stem cell science faced a need to produce frequent, innovative discoveries. These scientific needs had their own economic drivers – grants, legal permissions, etc. – and these needs also converged with the South Korean need for political/economic stability. This triple convergence generated a willingness to accept a claim that served all three forces: scientific, political, and economic. That Hwang Woo Suk could fill this need with a fraudulent claim should not be surprising; the fraud answered urgent needs. Thus, the case of fraud tells us a great deal about how scientific claims – legitimate or otherwise – participate in a complex web of social forces.

3. *Discovery conclusions*: conclusions that arrive at the background questions that have gone unrecognized by others who have studied the topic. In some papers, the purpose is to identify an issue that has not been recognized. The conclusion clarifies the importance of the issue, and suggests how it might be further studied. For example, in 2011, a group of scientists recorded neutrinos traveling faster than the speed of light -- a theoretical impossibility -- and their paper emphasized the need to re-test the results and to weigh the consequences for all of physics. A student concluded his paper about this anomaly this way:

After months of checking their scientific instruments, the scientists did not find anything to suggest that they affected the odd results of the experiment. While OPERA researchers will continue their studies, they are also looking forward to independent measurements to fully assess the nature of what is an unbelievable result. Anomalous results require close review, but even a close review can fail to explain what happened. At such points, outsiders have to come in and provide additional confirmation. In this case, the results would revolutionize physics and overturn 125 years of scientific work. If the discovery proves true, it will be revolutionary, so we are doing what good scientists do by asking for outside review. Only after such review can the results be accepted.

4. *Problematizing conclusions*: conclusions that name issues that will continue to affect all discussions of an issue. For example, the paragraph from CERN recognizes that the sciences serve a practical purpose, but that the practical outcome of research cannot be predicted. It asks readers to accept that the practical and the theoretical will always have an awkward and unpredictable relationship . . . and that is desirable. You have already seen how this paragraph uses the four functions. Now, note that it is a specific type of concluding paragraph.

Fundamental science is where new ideas and methods begin that later become commonplace - from the electric light, which originated in 19-century curiosity about electricity, to the World Wide Web, invented at CERN to allow international teams of particle physicists to communicate more easily. No amount of applied research on the candle would have brought us the electric light; no amount of R&D on the telephone would have brought about the Web. [4]Science needs the space for curiosity and imagination.

The nature of any conclusion depends on the purpose and the audience to whom it is addressed. Being aware of your purpose and audience enables you to choose the most effective type of conclusion.

Conclusions consolidate the thinking of the paper. They take many forms, but they are always a response to the "So what?" that readers ask as they read a document. Let's look at a complete paper to see how conclusions work. The paper is marked up using what you have learned so far about introductions and about the four functions of body paragraphs, and then examined the conclusion that comes from these other parts of the paper:

Narration: Visible, Invisible, and Always Powerful	
Introduction	Narratives are found everywhere. Some of them are obvious: for example, a story or television show is a narrative. But sometimes information uses a narrative that hides the fact that it is a story. When narratives are not obvious, they can distort whatever it is that they're telling us. We don't often recognize these distortions. It may be that because narratives are so common, it is easy to overlook how they can control the meaning of what they explain. This issue became obvious to me when I read the *Wikipedia* entry for Tyree Guyton, the artist who created Detroit's Heidelberg Project. The entry only talks about three things: his professional art achievements, his education, and his awards. There's almost nothing about his personal life. This struck me as oddly incomplete, so I undertook an experiment to see how much such a narrow focus would distort the story of a real life. I used exactly the same categories (education, professional achievements, and awards) to describe my life. The distortions were obvious to me, and they told me about the power of narrative to distort reality. Here's the entry I created:	Note that all these sentences assume that the reader doesn't know that the writer interested in narrative, doesn't know the assignment, doesn't know the writer. 1. The blue sentence introduces some simple definitions and examples of narration. The blue sentence comes from the TEQ Sheet and from the notes on readings and on discussions in class. 2. The red sentences point out a question or problem about narration. This question comes from the Purpose and Problem Statement, and the Prospectus. 3. The brown sentences explain how the writer has come to understand the problem. 4. The green sentences explain HOW to find out more about the interest in narration.

Body	*Tyler Durden was born in Detroit. After graduating from Cooley High School, he worked in a warehouse. His spare time was spent getting tattoos, tagging freight cars, and doodling on his notebook in his current English class. His work was recognized with a nod and a wink from N. M. who became his fiancee, two arrests by the local police, and an exhibition of his doodles on his mother's refrigerator. More formal recognition came in the home video "Thanksgiving 2011" where the camera zooms in on his arms while a voice announces, "Nice."*	Sometimes, a paragraph doesn't have the four functions because of an unusual requirement. Here, almost every item is a Function #3 sentence because the assignment restricted the students to such sentences in order to explore the limitations of narration. If you read the paragraph apart from the context of the assignment and apart from the entry it imitates, the information seems pointless.
Body	[1]Using the narrative structure for Guyton in *Wikipedia* made it easy to tell a story about myself, but the story that came out was not the story that I would choose tell. [1,2]It left out information about grandparents and my parents. [2]These are the people who taught me to work hard, and who gave me my interest in writing, teaching, and business. [3]More important, their lives showed me that the most important thing is to love your own children. [3]Most of what I do is done with an eye toward that, and I learned this value from my parents. [3]Following Guyton's model also prevented me from recognizing how my fiancee has made my life so much richer. [3,4]I can't really write about her talent as a metalsmith, a singer, and our love for each other. [4]Thus, following a narrative may produce a story, but it's an incomplete one. [4]My experience with following a set of narrative "rules" demonstrates this fact.	Note that all these sentences assume that the reader now knows that you're interested in narrative. Each sentence is color-coded according to function. 1. The blue sentences remind the reader that you're talking about narrative, and it states the writer's discovery that narratives aren't trustworthy. The second sentence adds a fact - that there's no possibility of recognizing parents and grandparents, but it's also an introductory sentence. These sentences are labeled with a "1" and with a "2" to remind us of their functions in the paragraph. 2. The red sentences give examples of what was left out by following the model. They are evidence. Thus, they are labeled with a "2" to show their function. 3. Note that the green sentence explains what the example means. The "3" indicates that it provides an explanation of the evidence. 4. The brown sentences state the insight that the writer's experiment has provided.

Conclusion	My experiment seems to show that narratives are often a necessary part of giving information about a subject. While that is true, it's also true that narratives seem to distort whatever it is that they're presenting to the reader. Because narratives are part of everything from television shows to novels to lab reports, I suspect that many of the stories that *seem* true to me are probably not complete stories. If nothing else, my experiment makes me more skeptical about what I read and what I'm told.	The conclusion builds on the insights of the body paragraphs. It looks at the Function #4 sentences, and generalizes their insights. Here, it names a new and bigger idea by discovering that there's an even bigger question that should explored in the future.

SUMMARY

Successful paragraphs have unity, coherence, and development. The way that a paragraph achieves unity, coherence, and development depends on its role in the paper: does it serve as the introduction, the body, or the conclusion? The basic tactics for each type are as follows:

Introductions: types

- Dramatic introductions
- Inquisitive introductions
- Review introductions

Body Paragraphs: functions

- Function #1: Introduces the topic and/or provides a transition from the previous paragraph

- Function #2: Presents evidence, facts, data,

- Function #3: Discusses the importance of the evidence presented in #2

- Function #4: Returns to the thesis to enlarge it, limit it, nuance it, make it more complex, and to relate it to other unrecognized issues

Conclusions: types

- *Summary conclusions*: conclusions that repeat the initial insights and results of the paper.

- *Observational conclusions*: conclusions that follow upon the statement of a problem, a method for exploring the problem, the application of the method, and a report of results.

- *Discovery conclusions*: conclusions that arrive at the background questions that have gone unrecognized by others who have studied the topic.

- *Problematizing conclusions*: conclusions that name issues that will continue to affect all future discussions of an issue.

Remember that a paragraph has no fixed number of sentences. Its job is to serve the paper's aim, audience, and voice. In many ways, it is a tiny model of the paper, and its unity, coherence, and development create a document with those same characteristics.

Looking Ahead

Paragraphs are the building blocks of papers, but it is also true that paragraphs are built of sentences. The next chapter focuses on creating sentences that effectively say what you mean. Strong sentences uncover important issues, give your paper a unique voice, and respect the needs of your audience.