

Bracken Business Communications Clinic

STYLE

WRITING AN EFFECTIVE PARAGRAPH

Paragraphs are easiest for readers to follow when they have a predictable structure. In business writing, this predictability is important because readers often have limited time. It may help to think of your paragraph as a house. First, you need to state your claim/thesis. What is the main idea? This topic sentence is the roof of your house—it needs support. The claim/thesis of every paragraph must be supported with specific evidence, just as the roof of a house needs walls for support. Finally, make sure your paragraph has a strong foundation by including a concluding statement that explains why your evidence supports your topic sentence and transitions to the topic of your next paragraph. This house metaphor is useful not just for paragraphs, but for entire papers as well.

Below are the definitions of the three essential building blocks for writing an effective paragraph and an example of how these building blocks should be used:

Building Blocks for Making an Effective Paragraph:

Claim/Thesis/Topic Sentence: States goal or an assertion that supports our goal

Grounds: Specific forms of evidence that support the claim. This evidence may be facts based on research, examples, quotes from experts, etc.

Warrant/Conclusion: Specifies why the grounds support the claim

An Example Paragraph:

The development of communication skills is key for both hirability and future success. All seven competencies for career readiness in college graduates identified by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (2016) relate to communication in some way. Employers prioritize demonstrated proficiency in skills and knowledge that cut across majors, like written communication, oral communication, and teamwork (Hart Research Associates, 2015). However, employers consistently report that communication competencies are “rare skills that companies want most” (Levy & Rodkin, 2015). Thus, a curriculum that develops communication skills meets employer demand.