

The correct development of sentence and paragraph structure is crucial. Concepts discussed in legal writing are usually complex enough without adding incoherent sentence structure, lack of transition between paragraphs, lack of topic sentences in paragraphs, jumbled use of introductory and summary paragraphs, etc. The reader's inability to follow the development of the author's idea—even within the paragraph—will prevent the understanding of the article, and the reader may stop reading if it takes too much effort. Thus, this short essay will discuss a few important building blocks of writing: paragraph structure, outlining, and transition.

Paragraphs

- T= Topic Sentence
- S=Supporting Sentences
- C=Concluding Sentence

There are many different types of paragraphs (descriptive, definitive, narrative, expository, classification, analytical, persuasive, etc.). Regardless of the type, a well-written paragraph discusses one topic and has three elements or sections (topic, supporting, concluding/transition). Using the three sections of a paragraph, you state, support, and summarize the topic or enable the smooth transition to the next paragraph.

While the topic sentence is usually at the beginning of the paragraph, it does not have to be. The topic sentence lays the groundwork for the paragraph and expresses the concept to be discussed. The supporting sentence(s) develops the topic further. For example, in an explanatory paragraph the supporting sentence will provide an explanation of the topic sentence. The concluding sentence summarizes the concepts discussed in the paragraph and provides transition to the next paragraph.

Be aware of single sentence paragraphs. It is difficult to successfully write a paragraph with the topic, support, and conclusion rolled into one sentence. Similarly, you should be aware of very long paragraphs that are difficult to understand and include too much information.

If while writing, or even in the editing stage, you discover that the paragraph is unclear, try to identify the three parts of the paragraph. Make sure that the topic sentence is understood, evident and close to the beginning of the paragraph; identify and enhance the supporting sentences; and finally determine if the concluding sentence adequately summarizes the topic. Rewriting the paragraph according to this structure should aid you in recognizing and fixing the problem.

Transition is an important ingredient in writing; it helps the reader understand the relationship between ideas and allows the smooth flow from one sentence, paragraph, or section to the next. Transition enforces the organization within the article and builds the understandability of the article. If you find that after reading your article, you become lost and cannot remember the subject of the article or the relationship between the subject being discussed and the one prior to it is unclear—check the outline of the article and rework transitional phrases and sentences in the article.