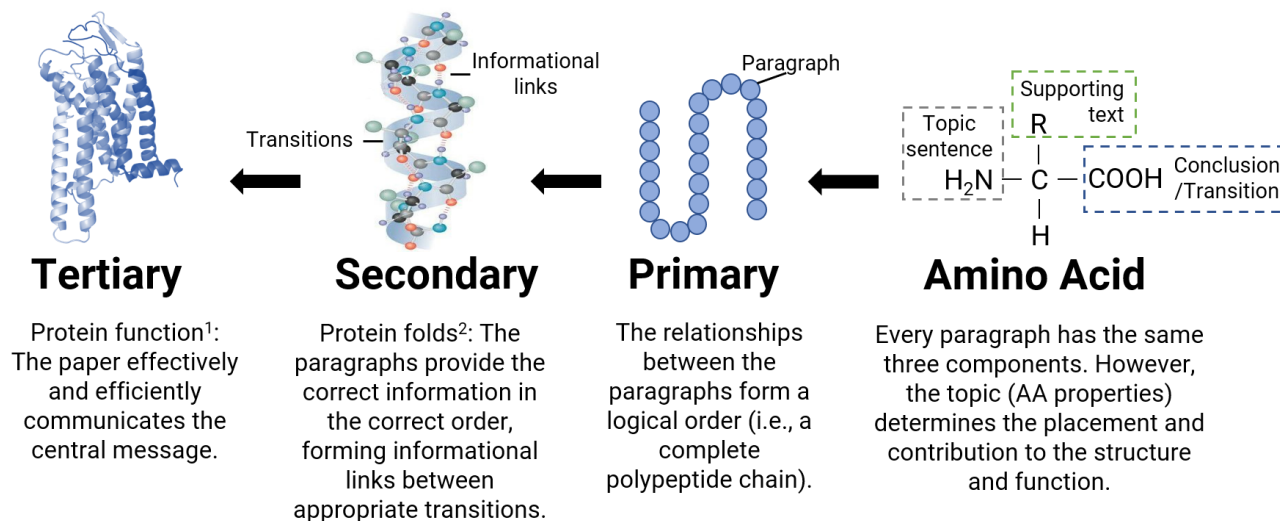


Paragraph Structure

Paragraphs are the Building Blocks of Proteins



¹Image: By Pleiotrope - Own work, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=15989620>

²Image: Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=533202>

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Paragraph Types, Functions, and Structures

- **Argue** – Develop a single main point of an argument. Introduce the argument and position, develop with evidence, restate position at conclusion.
- **Classify** – Use to organize items into categories. Introduce the items and/or the categories for classification, describe how each item fits into the categories, repeat the classification system.
- **Compare/Contrast** – Examine similarities and differences of an idea. Introduce the items noting a similarity or difference; identify, describe, and discuss similarities and differences; summarize and interpret.
- **Define** – Define a concept and describe how it relates in the given context. Introduce with a simple, broad definition then provide more information with explanations and examples, ensuring to link the concept to the broader context/field.
- **Describe** – Useful for describing figures. Introduce the item to be described then provide detailed information about characteristics and functions.
- **Explain** – Useful to explain or describe the steps in a process. Introduce what will be explained; explain each of the steps involved in the order they are performed, describe how things happen and why; conclude with a summary of the process.
- **Illustrate** – Clarify an idea with specific examples. State the general idea, introduce examples to support the idea, conclude by linking the examples to the broad idea.

Paragraph Structure

Properties of the Paragraph

The three primary components of a paragraph are:

1. **The topic sentence** – States what the subject of the paragraph is and how it will be discussed.
2. **Supporting text** – facts, evidence, examples, and/or logic that develops the topic.
3. **Conclusion and/or transition sentence** – Brief summary of the paragraph and its relationship to the topic in the next paragraph, may also reference the paper's topic.

The four attributes of a paragraph are:

1. **Unity** – Relevance of each sentence in the paragraph to the paragraph's topic.
2. **Relevance** – Importance of the topic to the central message/hypothesis of the paper.
3. **Coherence** – The logical order of the supporting text and transitions between points that creates the flow of the paragraph and highlights relationships between old and new information to make the message clear to the reader.
4. **Development** – The supporting text has sufficient context and evidence for the reader to easily understand the message and relevance of the topic to the paper.

Common Problems

The paragraph does not have a consistent message, it lacks unity.

- The paragraph may lack a topic sentence.
- The paragraph may discuss more than one topic. Typically, the case when a paragraph is too long. Possibilities include either eliminating the extra topic(s) altogether or splitting them into more paragraphs as needed.

The paragraph is choppy and does not flow, it lacks coherence.

- The paragraph may need transitions, single words or short phrases to convey the relationships between statements.
- The paragraph may lack a topic sentence.

The paragraph is too long, it is over developed.

- The paragraph may discuss more than one topic. Either eliminating the extra topic(s) altogether or splitting them into more paragraphs as needed.
- The paragraph may be discussing an extended idea that should be split into multiple paragraphs with each subpoint having its own paragraph.
- The paragraph is comparing/contrasting two detailed ideas. Consider using a new paragraph to introduce the second contrasting or different position.

Relevant sources:

- [Detailed guide to paragraph types](#)
- [Paragraph Development - Organizing Your Social Sciences Research Paper - Research Guides at University of Southern California \(usc.edu\)](#)
- [Paragraph Structure - Writing strong paragraphs - LibGuides at University of Newcastle Library](#)
- [Paragraphs & Topic Sentences: Writing Guides: Writing Tutorial Services: Indiana University Bloomington](#)