Paragraph Development

A paragraph is a series of sentences that are grouped together to develop or express one topic or main idea. Effective paragraphs in academic writing typically:

- Focus on a single point or idea
- Contain a topic sentence and conclusion (It should introduce and complete an idea. Any evidence or arguments to support your idea should be between these first and last sentences.)
- Are logically consistent (Do not deviate from the idea introduced in the topic sentence.)
- Contain more than one sentence
- Take up less than a page (This is not always the case, but typically is.)
- Connect logically with the paragraphs before and after it via transitions
- Relate to your thesis statement by either to supporting it or refuting it

There are several reasons why you would want to start a new paragraph:

- **Varying length:** New paragraphs can be started to maintain the reader's interest. Short paragraphs can set main ideas apart from minor ideas, and related paragraphs can potentially be joined to make a longer paragraph.
- **Using a long example or set of facts:** Start a new paragraph when you want to emphasize a long example or set of facts. It may be helpful to first write down the main ideas of your paper or to create an outline that maps out the main points you will be writing about. A new paragraph should begin each time a main idea or point you listed in the outline is introduced in your paper.
- **Emphasis:** Begin a new paragraph to emphasize an important idea or statement.
- **Introducing a new idea or change in topic:** A new paragraph should start whenever you introduce a new idea into the paper or whenever the topic of the paper changes.
- **Transitions:** Sometimes it may be helpful to use a short paragraph as a transition between two sections of a paper that contain different but related topics. (Refer to the "Transitions" handout for examples.)

Need more information or assistance?

Schedule an appointment with the Excel Multiliteracy Center. We are here to provide one-on-one and group assistance to any and all UCCS students!