

The rooster is crowing.

subject → verb

• My friend loves dogs.

subject verb object

# Paragraphs

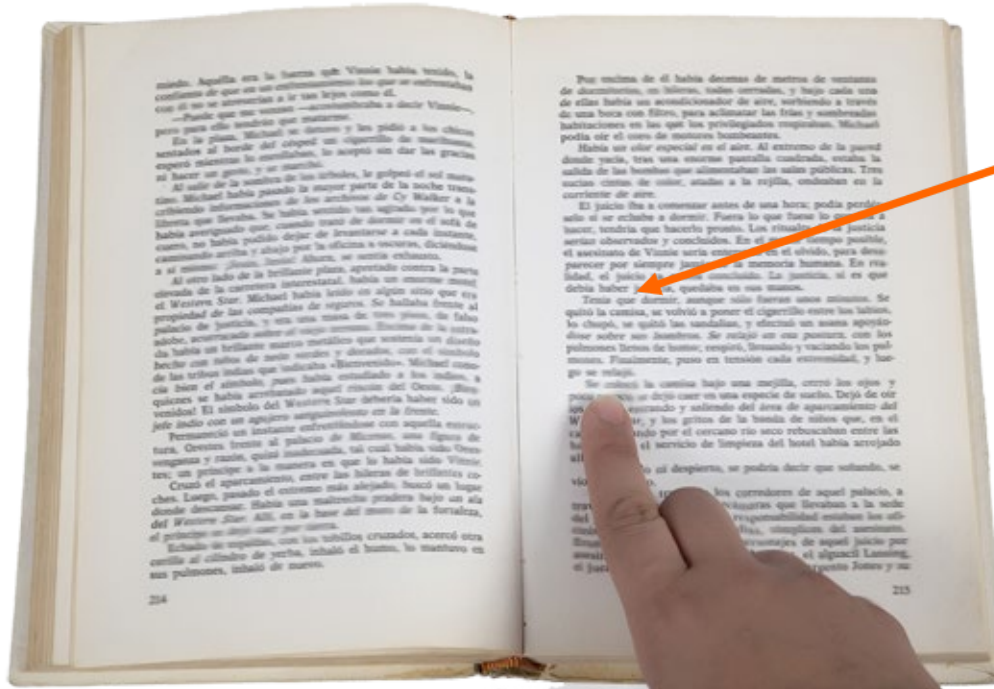
## Unit One



# What is the point of paragraphs?

All texts are usually divided into **paragraphs**. Without them a piece of writing would be pretty hard to follow!

A paragraph is a group of sentences about a single idea or topic that begins on a new line. Paragraphs are a useful way of helping the reader through a text.



**A new paragraph is shown by indenting the first line, or leaving an entire empty line before it.**



When you are writing something, paragraphing can help you to organize your ideas and make your writing a lot clearer.

## Do you know when to begin a new paragraph?

The rules for beginning new paragraphs are different depending on whether you are writing fiction or nonfiction.

However, as a general rule, you should remember to start a new paragraph every time there is a change. This could be a change of topic, a change of viewpoint, a change in time or place, or a change in the character speaking.



# Starting new paragraphs in fiction

In fiction writing, we usually start a new paragraph:

- when the story moves forward in time
- when the story moves backward in time (e.g. a flashback)
- when there is a change in the place where the action is happening
- when a different character gives their point of view
- when a new character joins the story
- every time a different character speaks.



# Beginning paragraphs in fiction

Can you identify why the author has chosen to start each new paragraph in this extract from *Pride and Prejudice*? Read the extract and then drag the reasons to the correct places.

Paragraph 1: \_\_\_\_\_

The first week of their return was soon gone. The second began. It was the last of the regiment's stay in Meryton, and all the young ladies in the neighbourhood were drooping apace. The dejection was almost universal. The elder Miss Bennets alone were still able to eat



new character speaking (Kitty/Lydia)

new character's point of view

new character speaking (Mrs Bennet)

story moves forward in time



hide words

solve



In nonfiction writing, we usually start a new paragraph when:

- we start writing about a new topic
- we make a new point within a topic
- we give a different viewpoint
- we describe the next stage in a process or sequence
- we give a detailed example of what we are writing about
- we compare things (for example, the qualities of two makes of mp3 players).



# Beginning paragraphs in nonfiction



Now you know *when* to begin new paragraphs in nonfiction, but do you know *how* to begin them?

It is useful to begin a paragraph with a **topic sentence**. This is a sentence which sums up what the paragraph is going to be about.



A topic sentence introduces the topic that will follow like a signpost, making your purpose clear to the reader.

**Topic sentences can also help readers to find a particular section again in a piece of writing, since they can skim over the topic sentences to look for keywords.**



Look at the start of this student's essay on the Roman Empire.

**What do the topic sentences tell us each paragraph will be about?**

**This paragraph discusses the size of the empire.**

The Roman Empire was the largest Classical empire in the world. It spanned from 31 BC, after Julius Caesar won the civil war against Pompey, to AD 453. The Roman Empire controlled most of Western Europe, parts of Northern Africa and some of the Middle East - 2.3 million square miles in total! The population governed by Roman rule is estimated to have been between 55 and over 120 million people.

Historians argue over who was the first emperor: Julius Caesar or Octavian (later known as Augustus). Julius Caesar was known as *Dicatator Perpetuus*...

**This paragraph focuses on the different emperors of the Roman Empire.**

# Topic sentences



Another way of starting paragraphs in nonfiction writing is by using **rhetorical questions**.

**Do you know what a rhetorical question is?**



A rhetorical question is a question that is asked to make a statement, not to receive an answer.

*Was 'Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire' as good as the previous three films? It was better because...*

Using a rhetorical question is a clever way to open a paragraph because it allows you to finish the paragraph by answering your own question!

# Write your own paragraphs

