

Methods of Development for Paragraphs

Many writers struggle with developing their ideas, of using details and explanation to demonstrate to a reader how each of the writer's points connects and supports the writer's argument. A lot of times, a writer may try to say too much in a single paragraph or write many short paragraphs that each present an idea but that do not take time to explain the point they are making or the quote they are using and to connect it to her overall argument.

To avoid saying too much or too little in your body paragraphs, think carefully about how you are organizing each of your paragraphs. Remember you want each paragraph to have a main point or purpose, and oftentimes it helps you stay organized if you state this main point or purpose in the first sentence of your paragraph (a topic sentence).

Also, work to write paragraphs with 5-7 sentences in them. This will help you to push yourself to develop your ideas. If you get stuck after you have written four sentences, tell yourself to write one or two sentences that explains how your point relates to your main argument and/or why you think your point is important to your argument (even if it sounds obvious).

Lastly, try to choose ONE (maybe two) of the following patterns of organization for each paragraph. Choosing one of these methods will help you stay focused. I have made a list of such patterns below and tried to include examples of this method that are related to our unit on language and identity. Imagine my examples as the first few sentences of a paragraph.

1. Example

- Children who do not speak English as their first language face many obstacles when they enter English-speaking schools. For example, in her essay "How to Tame a Wild Tongue," Gloria Anzaldua talks about being humiliated when her teacher points out her accent in school. Her teacher tells her, "If you want to be American, learn to speak American" (**). This made her feel _____ and motivated her to _____.

2. Narration

- Oftentimes people who come to the United States as adults may struggle to learn Standard English and end up speaking their own kind of English. This is what happened to my grandmother, who was born in Italy and moved to the United States as a young woman. She picked up English at work and by watching television and meeting people, but she never took classes where she learned Standard English. Instead, she spoke her own form of English which everyone in my family understood. She would say things like...

3. Description

- As Malcolm X describes in his essay, "Coming to an Awareness of Language," learning to read and write in a language gives a person power and opens their horizons. He describes how he taught himself Standard English: "... " (121). He explains how this made him feel when he states, "... " (122). This shows us that knowing how to read and write in English has many benefits for people living in the United States.

4. Comparison and Contrast

- Both Gloria Anzaldua and Leticia Salais grew up in Texas speaking Spanish at home and English at school, but they reacted to their situations very differently. While Anzaldua found pride and

power in being bilingual, as a child Salais felt ashamed to speak Spanish and wanted to be like her English-speaking classmates.

- Like Amy Tan, I have also been in situations where I translated for my parents. In her essay, "Mother Tongue," Tan describes a time when_____. She says this made her feel "...". Her mother, on the other hand, was described as feeling "...". when Tan translated for her. This is similar to one experience I had when I translated for my father... Both situations demonstrate the ways in which language _____.

5. Cause and Effect

- If a person who lives in the United States does not learn English, he might face additional struggles that someone who knows English would not have to face. Someone who does not know English may not be able to read important government forms and documents or communicate with people in the community. This could be a real problem if the person who does not speak English is sick or involved in an emergency. While people living in the United States may not learn English because they don't have the money or the time to take classes, we should really think of the effects not knowing English can have on people living in the United States and encourage them to learn English.

6. Definition

- As my previous paragraphs have shown, there are many different types of English spoken in the United States; however, Standard English is the type of English taught in schools and considered to be "formal" or "official." Some examples of this type of English are words and phrases such as "****" and "****." This type of English is often different than the language that we speak with friends, family, or neighbors.

For definitions and more examples of these patterns of organization, see section C4-c in Hacker's *A Writer's Reference*.