

As you know, writers will develop their ideas by making a main point (stated or unstated), then developing the point by moving from the general to the specific, by providing examples, testimony, facts/data, personal observations, reasons. As text-based writers, you, too, will develop your own ideas in this way.

While there are no easy templates for effective writing, the following model can serve as a useful guide as you continue to develop your text-based academic writing skills. Use the acronyms PIE or TEA to remind you of how you can stay focused and develop your ideas clearly and thoughtfully at the paragraph level.

The P.I.E. /T.E.A Paragraph			
P/T	=	POINT/TOPIC SENTENCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The main point of the paragraph ▪ A claim or assertion that can be explained, proven, illustrated, supported, <i>developed</i> ▪ Often stated in the Topic Sentence ▪ TOPIC SENTENCE: is like the thesis of the paragraph. It ties in to the thesis, and it also presents the reader with a “contract” of what idea the paragraph will focus on.
I/E	=	INFORMATION/EVIDENCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The information that explains, proves, illustrates, supports, and develops the point. ▪ INFORMATION, or EVIDENCE is necessary because it provides your readers with concrete support from your readings and research. EVIDENCE can be any of the following: specific data, experiences, quotes, definitions, facts, supporting details and/or other factual material.
E/A		EXPLANATION/ANALYSIS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The writer’s analysis of the information ▪ An explanation and elaboration of <i>how/why</i> the information/evidence is relevant to the point. ▪ The analysis is YOUR explanation, elaboration or evaluation of the information/evidence provided to support the main idea (topic sentence). ▪ Every piece of information/evidence MUST have analysis. Remember, information/evidence cannot stand alone because different people can interpret the significance of that information differently.

If your paragraphs lack any of the above elements, you may encounter the following problems in your writing:

- 1) No POINT/TOPIC SENTENCE: This can lead to a lack of CLARITY. Your reader may not quite understand what idea you're trying to prove or how the information/evidence you provide relates to the overall thesis. Without a POINT to prove, you will also have a hard time developing meaningful, original ANALYSIS, which makes your writing unique.
- 2) No INFORMATION/EVIDENCE: This can lead to a lack of CREDIBILITY. If you're trying to prove an idea, but you don't have any concrete examples or textual support, then your reader will wonder why you're making the claims you're making. Your reader will likely distrust your perspective because your writing does not appear to have substantial PROOF that supports the overall statement.
- 3) No EXPLANATION/ANALYSIS: A paragraph without analysis or explanation of HOW the evidence connects to your point will seem somewhat incomplete. It will leave the reader asking, "so what?" The reader might read your INFORMATION/ANALYSIS and question the relevance of this support and he/she may not understand how exactly this connects with your main idea. A paragraph with now analysis runs the risk of being a random collection of facts and examples, leaving the reader to make his/her own interpretation and therefore taking the focus away from YOUR point.

Take a look at the following examples. The first paragraph DOES NOT include all aspects of PIE/TEA. Think about how you feel reading it and answer the questions that follow to help you consider the impact of missing these elements. The second example DOES include all necessary elements of the paragraph. What difference does this make in your understanding of the paragraph?

Body Paragraph- Example #1: What is missing and why does it matter?

In “What are TV Ads Selling to Children” John J. O’Connor claims that in these ads girls are portrayed as inferior to boys. According to O’Connor, “They live in a society in which they can never be considered the best.” Some of these commercials include those for Giggle Wiggle, Shark Attack, and Frog Soccer. For instance, in the Giggle Wiggle commercial, four people play the game – two boys and two girls. During the game, only the boys move the game pieces, shouting enthusiastically when they’ve made the right moves, while the girls, basically motionless, smile vacantly and watch the boys. At the end of the game, one of the boys wins and gleefully shouts, “I win! I win!” while clapping his hands. Only then does a girl jump up and speak her one line, “Oh wow!”

- **What point is the writer trying to make? How do you know? Is this point explicitly?**
- **What is the significance of the examples provided? Why did the writer choose this information/evidence? What are we to make of this evidence?**
- **What is the importance or significance of the examples provided? Why does it matter to the writer?**

Body Paragraph- Example 2:

Now read through this revised version of the paragraph. What does the writer add and what difference does it make in your understanding of the text?

Many sexist children’s television commercials lead me to believe that girls rarely see images of themselves in active or winning situations. Often, the boy wins the game being advertised while the girls, pretty little objects, serve as his mindless cheerleaders. In “What are TV Ads Selling to Children” John J. O’Connor claims that in these ads girls are portrayed as inferior to boys. According to O’Connor, “They live in a society in which they can never be considered the best.” Some of these commercials include those for Giggle Wiggle, Shark Attack, and Frog Soccer. For instance, in the Giggle Wiggle commercial, four people play the game – two boys and two girls. During the game, only the boys move the game pieces, shouting enthusiastically when they’ve made the right moves, while the girls, basically motionless, smile vacantly and watch the boys. At the end of the game, one of the boys wins and gleefully shouts, “I win! I win!” while clapping his hands. Only then does a girl jump up and speak her one line, “Oh wow!” **My mouth fell open when I saw this commercial. The winning kid was not only rude, but annoying. In this commercial, as in others, the girls were not the central characters but part of the support network for the winners, the boys. In fact, I never saw a girl win a game in any of the children’s commercials I viewed. These subtle statements in commercials can make a person think that it is okay to be sexist when in fact it is absolutely not.**

**POINT/TOPIC
SENTENCE**

**INFORMATION/
EVIDENCE
(support/proof)**

**EXPLANATION
(relevance
portion)**

APPLYING THE CONCEPT

What is a POINT/TOPIC sentence?

Topic sentences usually begin the paragraph, and they express the main point of the paragraph. Because the topic sentences must encompass all of the sentences of the paragraph and unify them around one, central idea, this sentence will usually be the most general and inclusive sentence. It will usually be an idea that can be further developed, so it must go beyond simply stating an obvious idea or piece of INFORMATION/ANALYSIS.

What should a TOPIC SENTENCE do?

A topic sentence must predict or promise what follows so it cannot be a question. If you write a question, answer your own question in a complete statement and the answer you write can be your topic sentence.

A topic sentence must clearly state what the subject, or topic, of that paragraph will be about. Then it will state something significant ABOUT that particular topic.

A topic sentence should make a strong statement, or point, that can be further developed. It should not just state INFORMATION.

Example of a weak topic sentence:

Topic: Lack of parental support

Topic Sentence: *Many young people do not have parental support in their lives.*

This sentence does not make a strong point because it is an idea that cannot be further developed. Why is this important? What is the significance of this information? This statement states an obvious, general and broad fact that cannot go deeper and therefore it isn't something worth developing.

Example of a strong topic sentence:

Topic: Lack of parental support

Topic Sentence: *Many young people do not have parental support and this lack of support can often lead them to make uninformed or dangerous decisions because they lack the guidance of a caring adult.*

Notice how the above sentence is an idea that you can actually prove. This sentence makes it necessary for the writer to SHOW how a lack of support leads to poor decision-making. It is a statement that makes a strong assertion, or states an opinion. Opinions can be developed because they must be proven.

Tips for developing strong topic sentences:

- Decide what you want to say to support your thesis based upon your pre-writing and critical reading notes on the given topic of the writing assignment
- Try categorizing your ideas and make a comment on a recurring theme you found
- Tell your opinion about the topic
- Ask a question that connects the topic of the paragraph to the overall topic of the essay- then answer that question in 1-2 sentences.
- Consider the reason why certain pieces of INFORMATION/EVIDENCE stand out to you. Why do certain examples, quotes, statistical findings matter to you? How do they matter in terms of your thesis? Consider these questions and capture the answer to those questions in a statement.

What is INFORMATION/EVIDENCE?

Information may include a variety of different types of support (see the Handout "Paragraph Development and Support"). These types include reasons, examples, facts/data, testimony (direct/indirect quotes), and personal observations. A rich, well-developed paragraph may include a combination of different types of support. For example, a writer may begin with a personal observation/experience as an example of the main point, then provide a quote from one of the texts to show how this experience fits with the ideas represented by the author(s). Remember to use signal words to introduce any quotes!

What is EXPLANATION/ANALYSIS?

Because your main point(s) is informed by your critical reading and thinking about text, your job as a writer is to then explain this analysis to your reader(s). In other words, you must make your interpretation of the information explicit to the reader by show how the information relates to your main idea. As you can image, your Dialectical Journals, Free-writing, and Looping exercises can help with this important step!
