

GET TO GRIPS WITH GRAMMAR

Help sheet two: paragraphs

RULES

1. A paragraph is a group of sentences which relate to each other because they are all to do with one main idea. (Occasionally a paragraph can be a single sentence, for example in tabloid newspapers.)

2. Most pieces of writing can be divided into paragraphs: examiners are certainly looking for them in your English Language and English Literature GCSEs.

3. Each new idea needs a new paragraph. This helps your readers: when one paragraph ends and another begins, they know you are moving onto another area of your subject.

4. It should be possible to sum up the main point of each paragraph in a few words. Therefore, everything in a paragraph should be relevant to the point you are making. This helps to give your writing structure.

5. State the main point of your paragraph in an opening “topic sentence”. For example: Lady Macbeth is the dominant character in the relationship. We can see this when she...

6. Pay attention to the way you “sequence” (or organise) your paragraphs. When writing fiction, you will want to organise your paragraphs so that they grip and hold your reader’s attention. In essays and non-narrative writing, you will need to make sure your paragraphs follow on from each other logically so that your reader can easily follow your argument.

Help sheet two: paragraphs

A. Below are five paragraphs from a journalist's column on being a collector. As you can see, he does not take his subject very seriously. Try to arrange them into their correct order. Hint: think about the words the journalist uses to show the direction his thoughts are taking. Words such as "so", "then", "therefore", "thus", "next".

1. Stamp albums are usually the next stage in the collector's education. There is powerful snobbery about childhood stamp collecting.

2. So it all begins. I was urged to set up a "museum". This consisted of a box, which contained a lot of cotton wool, a flint axe head and an old light bulb (probably 15th century).

3. "Thank you very much, but I already have a hobby," you reply. "I like to pick stuffing out of cushions. I also spend many happy hours peeling off little bits of wall paper."

4. "You must collect something," your parents argue. Their idea is that once you have collected something, you will spend many happy hours gloating over your collection, leaving them in peace to get on with their lives.

5. From an early age we are pushed into the habit of collecting. You are engaged in some satisfying pursuit, like picking the stuffing out of a cushion, when your parents make that dreaded pronouncement: "What you need is a hobby."

Help sheet two: paragraphs

B. Write out this extract, putting it into three paragraphs:

I was worried about Karen. I did not think she was eating enough. At lunchtime, when I, along with the rest of Year Nine, was stuffing myself with chips, she would sit with a plate of salad, pick at some lettuce leaves then say they were too soggy and scrape them into the bin. I brought up the subject with Jen when she was baby sitting for my little brother, Joe, and I. I did not feel I could tell my mother because she would say something the minute Karen called around, like the time she told her to keep in her brace for youth club otherwise it would not work properly. Jen's advice was to talk to Karen first and to tell her I had noticed she wasn't eating and that did she realise how thin she was looking. I could not see it working. From what I had read about anorexia in magazines it wasn't as easy as that. Telling Karen she was thin was probably exactly what she wanted to hear.

C. Write a side of A4 (between 300 to 400 words) on the benefits of shopping in local shops rather than at superstores. Remember: in this piece of writing your aim is to persuade your reader to think like you do. Therefore, you need to make sure each paragraph develops your argument and follows on logically from the last so your reader understands exactly what it is you are saying.