

The Importance of Strong Body Paragraphs



- **Every body paragraph in your essay should include the following qualities:**
 - **1. Relevance**
 - **2. Coherence or Focus**
 - **3. Flow**

#1: Relevance

Ask yourself this: Is this paragraph relevant to the paper's thesis? After reading each paragraph, check it against the thesis statement and ask yourself, "How is this paragraph relevant to what this essay is about?"

Relevance is the first quality you should want for your paragraphs, and the relevance of each paragraph should be crystal clear.

#2: Focus or Coherence

Each paragraph should be organized around a point you want to make. This means that every paragraph should have a point, something you want your readers to understand.

Your paragraph should not be a jumble of different points; each paragraph should have one organizing point, and every sentence in that paragraph should relate to that point. You can help yourself with finding both the relevance and the focus or coherence by insuring that each paragraph has that preliminary **topic sentence** that sets up the issue or aspect that your paragraph will address and makes the purpose of the paragraph clear.

#3: Flow

- The last quality in your paragraph that is important is **flow**. You are not writing the boring old five-paragraph essay in college writing classes.
- You should be writing an essay that is organized with a series of paragraphs that are intelligently ordered, each making a point that builds on the paragraph that came before it. Your essay should build momentum as the paragraphs build on top of each other.

In your paragraphs, include your own interpretations with help from credible sources:

- An example of a weak paragraph:
- Some people think that there was enough coal in Britain to maintain enough power to keep industry at a near-normal level for thirty-five weeks (Davies 231). But, others felt the usable coal supply was more like 15.5 million tons (Davies 233). Prime Minister Heath stated that this number would have fallen if he had not declared a three-day workweek (Davies 237). The Prime Minister also noted his achievements with changing the wages for coal miners so that their families were compensated the same even with the three-day workweek (Davies 238).

Why is this paragraph weak?

- Some people think that there was enough coal in Britain to maintain enough power to keep industry at a near-normal level for thirty-five weeks (Davies 231). But, others felt the usable coal supply was more like 15.5 million tons (Davies 233). Prime Minister Heath stated that this number would have fallen if he had not declared a three-day workweek (Davies 237). The Prime Minister also noted his achievements with changing the wages for coal miners so that their families were compensated the same even with the three-day workweek (Davies 238).
- Reason 1: There is no controlling idea (no topic sentence, no focus, no coherence).
- Reason 2: It relies for development entirely on one source only.
- Reason 3: It lacks any discussion, analysis, or response by the writer.

An example of a strong paragraph:

Of course, the iridium could have come from other extraterrestrial sources besides the asteroid. One theory, put forward by Dale Russell, is that the iridium was produced “outside the solar system by an exploding star” (501). Such an explosion, Russell contends, could have blown the iridium either off the surface of the moon or directly from the star itself (500-01), while also producing a deadly blast of heat and gamma rays (Kristala 19). This theory seems to explain why smaller mammals, crocodiles, and birds survived (Wilford 23). So the supernova theory took a backseat to other extraterrestrial theories: those of asteroids and comets colliding with the Earth. Paleontologist Leonard Kern declares that few paleontologists have accepted the asteroid theory, himself calling it “catastrophic ideas with minimal evidence” (43); however, some scientists see the cosmic catastrophe theory as a solid one (Allaby). What is for certain is that this issue continues to divide scientists into a splintering group where each one believes different sources of where that iridium could have come from, which furthers the profundity of this issue, for it relates to the Earth’s beginning, and the start of human beings.

Why was that paragraph strong?

1. The paragraph has a controlling idea (topic sentence points to the focus of the paragraph)
2. The paragraph combines information from several sources
3. The information is presented in a blend of paraphrase and short quotations
4. The information from the different sources is clearly indicated to readers
5. The student explains and discusses the information on his/her own
6. There is a “point sentence” at the end that points to the paragraph’s significance (there are other theories about the iridium that are worth exploring).

Need more explanation and/or examples of strong paragraphs?

Check out these wonderful websites:

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/606/01/>

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/724/1/>

[http://www.trinitydc.edu/writing/files/2010/09/](http://www.trinitydc.edu/writing/files/2010/09/Elements-of-a-Strong-Paragraph.pdf)

[Elements-of-a-Strong-Paragraph.pdf](http://www.trinitydc.edu/writing/files/2010/09/Elements-of-a-Strong-Paragraph.pdf)

<http://writingcenter.unc.edu/resources/handouts-demos/writing-the-paper/paragraphs>

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oYpa9Z_4KcI