

Year 7 English

TEEL Paragraph

Writing Guide



Check the STL Link Year 7 English Essay Writing Guide for more information:
<http://learn.stleonards.vic.edu.au/yr7eng/writing/essay-guidelines/>

CONSTRUCTING A PARAGRAPH

When you are starting out in essay writing, **TEEL** is a very useful acronym to use. It gives you a nice, easy way to order your paragraphs and ensure you have a well-developed argument that is backed up by evidence. For those of you who need a refresher, **TEEL** stands for:

Topic sentence

Explain

Evidence

Link

'T.E.E.L. paragraphs' are the real guts of an essay. This is where you explore your ideas and provide your arguments and evidence. An essay will have between 3 and 5 body paragraphs. Each paragraph will need to be AT LEAST four sentences long, and will normally need to be longer. A typed paragraph should not be more than half a page in length (with single line spacing).

Each body paragraph will need to follow the T.E.E.L. formula. It will need: (1) a TOPIC SENTENCE; (2) an EXPLANATION; (3) EVIDENCE; and (4) a LINK. This is where the name 'TEEL paragraph' comes from. This is explained in detail on the following pages.

You must make sure that each body paragraph has its own argument, which then links back/answers the overarching Essay Topic. You need to be exploring an argument – if you are just retelling the story, they you are not showing a capacity to think or analyse, which is the purpose of the task.

Below you can find two examples of body paragraphs:

First Example of a Body Paragraph discussing *WONDER*:

Charlotte remains politely neutral in the 'Boy's War' that occurs in *Wonder*, which in the end represents a failure of her courage and kindness. Although Charlotte is polite to Auggie, showing him around the school and introducing him to Beecher Prep, she never goes out of her way to be kind to him or demonstrate friendship. Although Charlotte might wave hello, and acknowledge his presence, she does not shake Auggie's hand or sit with him in class or willingly engage him in conversation. This is demonstrated in the first day of Mr. Browne's class, when Charlotte gives Auggie "her little wave [before sitting] down at a desk in the front of the class". Later in the novel, after she tells Jack Will about the 'Boys War' between Jack and Julian, Charlotte "look[s] left and right outside the door to make sure no one saw her", which Auggie concludes is because "she didn't want to be seen with [him]". If Charlotte truly wanted to help Auggie, she could have demonstrated her bravery by being seen in public with with him, or assisting him in other ways that showed her kinndess to the rest of Beecher Prep. Thus, no matter what information Charlotte may pass information along to Auggie, behaviour towards him is ultimately lacking in courage and kindness.

Topic Sentence:

The topic sentence is always the first sentence in a body paragraph. It should tell us what the paragraph will be about or what it will be arguing. By the time the reader has finished reading the topic sentence, they should know EXACTLY what the paragraph will be discussing.



A topic sentence needs to provide an **argument**, and it **must relate to the essay topic**.

Here are some examples of topic sentences:

Example One: *Charlotte remains politely neutral in the 'Boy's War' that occurs in Wonder, which in the end represents a failure of her courage and kindness.*

Example Two: *Via's perspective show us how there is often more going on in a person's head than is visible in their interactions with others.*

Example Three: *The bullying of Auggie and the "official sides" that people take shows that people don't have to follow the crowd in order to make a positive difference.*

Stating an Argument:

The first sentence in a paragraph should not simply be a statement of fact. A statement of fact is a closed piece of information. An argumentative statement will require further evidence and examples to support it, whereas a factual statement is much more simplistic and can be very easily proven, usually with a single quote from the book.

Look at the following examples of argumentative statements and factual statements:

Argumentative Statement: Summer demonstrates the truest forms of integrity and courage through her unconditional friendship with Auggie.

Factual Statement: Summer is a brave person.

Each of your body paragraphs will need to begin with an argumentative topic sentence. Look at the following pairs of sentences and identify which one is the ARGUMENTATIVE statement and which one is the FACTUAL statement:

QUESTION 1

Auggie demonstrates that personality is the most important thing when forming meaningful friendships.

Auggie has many friends in the novel who enjoy his company.

QUESTION 2

Auggie's always support him, taking him to school every day and providing him with encouragement.

Auggie's parents are the unrecognised heroes of *Wonder*.

Explain:

In the next sentence or two, you will need to expand on your topic sentence. Explain what you mean in greater detail, and give it a more SPECIFIC FOCUS. This is where you can use some of those factual statements and supporting details that you can't use in your topic sentence.

Ask yourself: *What is it that you are trying to say or argue? What exactly do you MEAN?*



Pretend that you are talking to an alien. The alien doesn't have much of an idea about what goes on here on Earth. When you tell him your topic sentence, it's still a bit unsure what you mean. So now you need to spend a sentence or two explaining, in more detail, what you think is important, and what you are trying to argue.

Returning to the earlier examples of topic sentences, here are two examples of basic expansions:

Example One: *Although Charlotte is polite to Auggie, showing him around the school and introducing him to Beecher Prep, she never goes out of her way to be kind to him or demonstrate friendship. Although Charlotte might wave hello, and acknowledge his presence, she does not shake Auggie's hand or sit with him in class or willingly engage him in conversation.*

Example Two: *If Charlotte truly wanted to help Auggie, she could have demonstrated her bravery by being seen in public with with him, or assisting him in other ways that showed her kindness to the rest of Beecher Prep.*

Evidence:

Now that you have put forward an opinion or an argument, you will need to provide some evidence to support these claims and show that you are right. This will usually be done through finding a relevant quote from the book you are studying.

Ask yourself: *What proof do you have that shows that your claim is correct? What in the text supports your argument? What in the book made you think this was true?*



You can do this directly, for example by writing: *This is demonstrated when Charlotte sees "...". OR An example of this can be seen when Dr Barnes says "...".*

Continuing on with the above paragraphs, here is an example of how you can incorporate evidence:

Example One: *This is demonstrated in the first day of Mr. Browne's class, when Charlotte gives Auggie "her little wave [before sitting] down at a desk in the front of the class".*

Example Two: *Later in the novel, after she tells Jack Will about the 'Boys War' between Jack and Julian, Charlotte "look[s] left and right outside the door to make sure no one saw her", which Auggie concludes is because "she didn't want to be seen with [him]".*

Hints for writing quotes:

- *If you leave out some words, use ellipses:* The mayor wanted to hear something "official...under the health act" before taking action.
- *If you need to change a word (e.g. from 'talk' to 'talking', or 'I' to 'Charlotte'), use square brackets:* the characters "were talk[ing] about..."; it is clear "that [Charlotte] will never..."

Link:



Finally, you will provide a linking sentence, which summarises your paragraph in a sentence, linking it back to the key terms from your topic sentence (or the essay topic, if one is provided). This will happen after you have explained your argument and provided evidence.

For example, you could begin your linking sentence by writing: *“This shows that”*

A linking sentence is very similar to a topic sentence: it needs to link everything back to the essay topic and offer a mini-conclusion of the evidence you provided in that paragraph.

To round out the first examples Topic, Explaining and Evidence sentences above, here is an example of linking sentences:

Example One: Thus, no matter what information Charlotte may pass information along to Auggie, behaviour towards him is ultimately lacking in courage and kindness.

Putting it together:

By putting all four of these elements together and in the correct order, we now have a fully formed body paragraph. Using each ‘Example One’ from above, we now have a final paragraph that reads like this:

Charlotte remains politely neutral in the ‘Boy’s War’ that occurs in *Wonder*, which in the end represents a failure of her courage and kindness. Although Charlotte is polite to Auggie, showing him around the school and introducing him to Beecher Prep, she never goes out of her way to be kind to him or demonstrate friendship. Although Charlotte might wave hello, and acknowledge his presence, she does not shake Auggie’s hand or sit with him in class or willingly engage him in conversation. This is demonstrated in the first day of Mr. Browne’s class, when Charlotte gives Auggie “her little wave [before sitting] down at a desk in the front of the class”. Later in the novel, after she tells Auggie about the ‘Boys War’ between Jack and Julian, Charlotte “look[s] left and right outside the door to make sure no one saw her”, which Auggie concludes is because “she didn’t want to be seen with [him]”. If Charlotte truly wanted to help Auggie, she could have demonstrated her bravery by being seen in public with with him, or assisting him in other ways that showed her kindness to the rest of Beecher Prep. Thus, no matter what information Charlotte may pass information along to Auggie, behaviour towards him is ultimately lacking in courage and kindness.

USE THIS CHECKLIST WITH EACH OF YOUR BODY PARAGRAPHS:

- Is there a **TOPIC SENTENCE**? (*Does it tell us what the paragraph will discuss?*)
- Is the topic sentence **EXPANDED** upon and explained in greater detail? (*What does it all mean?*)
- Is **EVIDENCE** provided to support this opinion? (*Has it been incorporated/put into proper English?*)
- Is there a final summarising sentence that **LINKS** back to the essay topic?

HOW TO WRITE IN A 'FORMAL' WAY

An essay is a very formal piece of writing, and as a result you need to write in a very formal way. Think about how Mr Davis speaks in assemble, or how a rule-book for sport is written, or an encyclopaedia entry: this is the type of voice that you need to use!

The two examples below each convey similar information, but one **reads** much better than the other because it has been written in a formal tone:



I think Charlotte is a good character and it's like she can do a lot of things that make us think she is really smart, even though people will put her down for being a girl and she doesn't come from a rich background and other stuff like that. ← This is informal writing. You must NOT use it in an essay!



Charlotte is a complex character, who must overcome the challenges presented by her age, gender and social circumstances. ← This is written with a more formal structure and use of language.

There are some easy rules that will help you to write in a formal way. Follow these when writing your essay:

Rule 1: Write in the Third Person

In an essay you can never write in the first (I, me, my, we, etc) or second (you, etc) person. Everything you write must be in the **third person** (he, she, they, it, names/nouns, etc).

THESE ARE BAD:

I think that...

In my opinion...

You see this when...

Let us look at...

When we read about...



THESE ARE GOOD:

It could be argued that...

The character's actions show that...

This can be seen when...

An example of this is...

An important change occurs when...



Rule 2: Do Not Use Contractions

As a rule, you do not want to use contractions in an essay: write the words out in full instead. This is another quick and easy way to make your writing read more formally.

A contraction is where two words are joined together and one or more letters are removed, replaced instead by an apostrophe.

THESE ARE BAD:	THESE ARE GOOD:
didn't	did not
can't	cannot
they've	they have
ain't	are not
it's	it is
that's	that is
	

Remember that you still need to use apostrophes to show possession! You cannot simply stop using them entirely!

Rule 3: Do Not Simply Write How You Speak !

As was mentioned above, you should not simply write you essay as if you are talking about it to a friend. An essay is not a conversation: it is a piece of very formal writing.

Many things are written in a formal way: newspaper reports, rule books, encyclopaedias, (most) textbooks, and so on. You can probably think of several people who speak in a very formal way, such as your principal or a police officer.

Avoid really casual sayings, like “the icing on the cake”, “she was dead meat” or “they bit off more than they can chew”: we may say things like this to our friends, but you would want to steer clear of them in a more formal setting.

It can be a good idea to think of a very formal person and pretend that they are writing this essay. What type of language would they use? What types of expressions would they avoid?

This type of formal, academic writing is used when a person needs to write in a very precise and informative manner. Have a look at the following extracts from the AFL's *Laws of Australian Football 2012*, and pay attention to how they are written:

15.7 FREE KICKS – DELIBERATELY RUSHED BEHIND

A free kick shall be awarded against a player from the defending team who intentionally kicks, handballs or forces the football over the attacking team's goal line or behind line or onto one of the attacking team's goal Posts. In assessing whether a free kick should be awarded under this law, the field umpire shall give the benefit of the doubt to the defender.

16.2 PLAYING FROM BEHIND THE MARK

A player who has been awarded a mark or free kick shall dispose of the football from directly behind the mark. If a player disposes or attempts to dispose of the football other than in a direct line over the mark, the field umpire shall call "play on" and the football shall immediately be in play.

QUESTION 1: *What makes the language in the above extracts 'formal'?*

QUESTION 2: *How is it different from how you would explain the game of AFL to a friend?*

QUESTION 3: *Why do you think it has been written this way?*

QUESTION 4: *Have a go at describing ONE of the rules of another sport you play, using this style of formal writing.*

The above extracts may not be particularly interesting, but they are very formal and precise. The language they use is very specific so that they can communicate information in a very efficient manner. Your writing doesn't have to be quite this bland, but it still needs to be formal.

Pay close attention to the **vocabulary** that you use, and don't be afraid to use interesting and precise verbs, adverbs, adjectives and nouns. In particular, don't forget to use some interesting **bridging words** to connect your ideas. Bridging words are good for connecting examples with analysis, and include words such as:

highlights, symbolises, signifies, illustrates, reflects, represents, proves, exaggerates, reinforces, acknowledges, conjures, illuminates, embodies, demonstrates, suggests.

For example: *Matty spilling the soup on the stove and putting out its flame **illustrates** how ill-prepared and ill-equipped she is for the responsibility of caring for her entire family.*

T.E.E.L. PARAGRAPH

WRITING FINAL

CHECK LIST

Does EACH paragraph:

- Address each element of TEEL (Topic sentence, Explain, Evidence, Link)?
- Have a TOPIC SENTENCE that identifies that paragraph's ARGUMENT?
- Have AT LEAST ONE QUOTE as evidence?
- Has the quote been BLENDED/INCORPORATED, so that it reads properly if you take out the quotation marks?
- Have you provided some ANALYSIS/INTERPRETATION/DISCUSSION of your evidence?



Have you proofread and ensured that:

- There are no SPELLING or GRAMMATICAL ERRORS?
- The LANGUAGE is FORMAL, and not conversational?
- CAPITALS ARE USED CORRECTLY, including in character names?
- The title of the book is *ITALICISED* whenever it is typed?
- You have NOT used CONTRACTIONS (e.g. make sure you write "is not", not "isn't")
- You have NOT used the first person ("I think that...") or the second person ("you see this when...")
- Quotation marks are used appropriately and appear EITHER SIDE of EVERY quote.

TOPIC SENTENCE: What is the argument...

[1 Sentence]

EXPAND: What does this mean...

[1-2 Sentences]

EVIDENCE: These quotes support this claim...

[1-2 Sentences]

LINK: This is how they prove this argument...

[1 Sentence]

TOPIC SENTENCE: What is the argument...

[1 Sentence]

EXPAND: What does this mean...

[1-2 Sentences]

EVIDENCE: These quotes (minimum 2) support this claim...

[1-2 Sentences]

LINK: This is how they prove this argument...

[1 Sentence]

