# Literacy Entry Level 3 – Paragraphs

1 of 18 – Welcome

Welcome to this session on paragraphs. In this session we are going to look at what paragraphs are and the different ways they are used across different types of written text.

By the end of this session, you will:

* Know what a paragraph is
* Understand how paragraphs are used in fiction
* Understand how paragraphs are used in non-fiction

2 of 18 – What are paragraphs?

A paragraph is a chunk of written text. On its own a paragraph does not sound like much, but when you know how to use paragraphs properly – meaning, when you know how to chunk your text up properly – paragraphs can be used to make your writing clearer, easier to read and can improve the overall flow of your writing.

Paragraphs are used in fiction – these are pieces of writing that are made up, like stories and poems – and non-fiction – these are pieces of writing that are true and based on facts, like textbooks and newspaper articles.

However, fiction and non-fiction texts use paragraphs in very different ways.

3 of 18 – Paragraphs in fiction

Remember, fiction is any kind of writing that is not real but is instead made up from things in the writer’s imagination.

In short stories and books, paragraphs are used in very important and special ways. They help a writer to organise a text so that it makes more sense to a reader, so the story is as enjoyable and as well-written as it can possibly be.

The five main reasons for using paragraphs in fiction writing are:

1. To introduce new characters
2. To introduce speech
3. To change the mood, or emotion
4. To introduce a new theme
5. To move between time

4 of 18 – To introduce characters and speech

When you are writing fiction it is important to know who everyone is and what it is that each person is saying – which is where paragraphs come in!

If the first two pages of a story have been about the main character, but the pages after this are about the main character’s best friend, then it makes sense to have a new paragraph to introduce this new person.

This means that the new character can be introduced without getting caught up with the original character from the earlier part of the story. This is one way in which paragraphs can help your writing to be more organised.

In a similar way, speech from each character is also given its own paragraph. This helps the reader to see who is saying what, without always using ‘he said’ and ‘she said’ to show who is speaking.

5 of 18 – To change the mood or emotion

In a story your characters might be moving from one place to another, and in each place you will introduce a different mood or emotion. For example:

* A park in the middle of summer is likely to be a happy and light story
* A graveyard on Halloween is likely to be scary and tense

Finishing one paragraph at the end of one setting (the park) and starting another paragraph for your next setting (the graveyard) will help your readers to notice the change in feeling and being able to change your readers’ feelings with your story means that your writing is very effective!

6 of 18 – To introduce a new theme

When we talk about themes in writing what we are really talking about is the subject of a written text. These subjects, or themes, are not always mentioned in an obvious way but are instead something that you pick up on as you are reading.

For example, a young man is leaving his pregnant wife behind at home so that he can go and fight in the war. He is uncertain of when, or if, he will return to her.

From this story description we could say that war is a theme, as the man is leaving for war. Love and family are also themes here, as the man is leaving his romantic partner, who is about to give birth to their child.

Paragraphs can be a useful way of structuring your themes; when the theme of your current paragraph changes, you know it is time to start a new one.

7 of 18 – To move between time

In fiction we might sometimes jump backwards or forwards in time – we can call these jumps flashbacks and flashforwards.

When a flashback or a flashforward is used in a story, the writer will usually use this as an opportunity to start a new paragraph.

It can be confusing to jump around in different time periods, so by starting a new paragraph, the reader will know that a change is happening just by looking at the page. This includes a change in character, theme, or in this case, time.

When paragraphs are used to mark a jump in time, like a flashback, the writer might also use a line break – meaning there is a break between the old paragraph and the new paragraph, as this can highlight a change in time for your readers.

8 of 18 – Paragraphs in non-fiction

Remember, non-fiction writing is based on fact and truth, meaning it does not come from the writer’s imagination.

Non-fiction writing covers a wide range of different texts, including newspaper articles, textbooks, and instruction manuals.

Paragraphs will also be used in essays, like those you might write for a school or college assignment.

There are fewer uses for paragraphs in non-fiction writing. Generally speaking they are used for one of two reasons:

1. To introduce new information
2. To introduce a new idea or viewpoint about something

9 of 18 – To introduce new information

Starting a new paragraph to introduce new information in non-fiction writing is similar to the idea of using a new paragraph to introduce a new character in fiction.

In both of these situations the paragraph is being used to separate old information from new information.

In a non-fiction text, this new information might be a more detailed explanation of the information that came in the previous paragraph, as is the case with newspaper articles. In newspaper articles, the opening paragraph is usually a summary of the entire story, with later paragraphs telling the story in more detail.

Another example of this in non-fiction writing is how textbooks are structured; even though each section will be on the same general topic, the paragraphs are used to break this information up into smaller areas, which makes it more manageable to read and easier to find the specific parts that you might be looking for.

10 of 18 – To introduce a new viewpoint

Introducing a new viewpoint means introducing another side to the story, or argument, and using a new paragraph to do this is another way of making sure your text is clear, ordered, and balanced.

If, for example, you were writing an essay about a book that you loved reading, you might use a new paragraph to introduce the idea that some people have not enjoyed the book:

“However, there are some readers who have commented that the book is too long/slow/boring…”

By using a new paragraph to introduce a different argument you are not only keeping old information separate from new information, but you are also structuring your writing in a way that makes it balanced and keeps it interesting for a reader.

These types of paragraphs come with their own style of language sometimes, too!

11 of 18 – To introduce a new viewpoint – continued

When you are introducing a new viewpoint – complete with a new paragraph to explain it – there are certain phrases that you might use at the beginning of your new paragraph. This language is a clear sign that another idea is coming, so it is worth looking out for these words in practice to see how they are used in real life.

These phrases are:

* On the other hand
* Others think/believe
* However
* It has been said

12 of 18 – Summary

You now know paragraphs can be used for lots of different reasons across lots of different types of texts.

Whether a paragraph is there to introduce a new character or introduce a different viewpoint in an argument, its main job stays the same and that is to provide order and structure to a piece of writing.

Paragraphs help you to develop the flow of your discussion in a way that will make sense to you when you read back over your work and make sense to a reader when you share your work.

They are a good way of structuring your story, discussion, or argument so that your points are ordered and clear as well as being enjoyable and easy to follow for another reader.

13 of 18 – Question 1

In a story, when should you use a new paragraph?

Choose all that apply:

1. To introduce a different argument
2. To introduce a new mood or emotion
3. To introduce new facts
4. To introduce speech
5. To introduce a new viewpoint
6. To introduce a new character

The correct answers are B, D and F, to introduce a new mood or emotion, to introduce speech, and to introduce a new character.

14 of 18 – Question 2

Read the statements below and decide which ones are true and which ones are false.

A new paragraph can be used to highlight a certain theme in a story.

True

False

The correct answer is: True

A theme is a topic that is obviously discussed by the characters of a story.

True

False

The correct answer is: False

If your story contains a flashback, then you do not need to use a new paragraph for this.

True

False

The correct answer is: False

If your story contains a flashforward then you can miss a line as well as starting a new paragraph.

True

False

The correct answer is: True

15 of 18 – Question 3

Using the following choice of words; **new information**, **keeps it interesting**, **new viewpoint**, **balance**, **smaller sections**, **easier to read** and **topic**, fill in the blanks for the paragraph below:

Paragraphs in non-fiction are usually used for one of two reasons: they introduce **blank** or they introduce a **blank**. In a textbook a large **blank** might be covered in one chapter; using paragraphs means that this large area can be broken down into **blank**. This makes the writing **blank** and it makes it easier for someone to find the sections they are looking for. When a paragraph is used to introduce a new viewpoint, this usually gives the writing some **blank** and it also **blank** for a reader.

The correct paragraph should read:

Paragraphs in non-fiction are usually used for one of two reasons: they introduce **new information,** or they introduce a **new viewpoint**. In a textbook a large **topic** might be covered in one chapter; using paragraphs means that this large area can be broken down into **smaller sections**. This makes the writing **easier to read** and it makes it easier for someone to find the sections they are looking for. When a paragraph is used to introduce a new viewpoint, this usually gives the writing some **balance** and it also **keeps it interesting** for a reader.

16 of 18 – Question 4

What phrases could you use to start a new viewpoint paragraph?

Choose all that apply:

1. On the other hand
2. It is my opinion
3. However
4. Others have said
5. I think

The correct answers are A, C and D, on the other hand, however and others have said.

17 of 18 – Question 5

What are some of the benefits to using paragraphs?

Choose all that apply:

1. They make your writing more complicated
2. They make your writing clearer
3. They make your writing easier to follow
4. They make it look like you have written more
5. They give your writing a set structure
6. They make your writing look neater

The correct answers are B, C and E, they make your writing clearer, they make your writing easier to follow, and they give your writing a set structure.

18 of 18 – End

Well done! You have completed this session on paragraphs.

In this session we have covered:

* What a paragraph is
* How paragraphs are used in fiction
* How paragraphs are used in non-fiction

If you have any questions about any of these topics, make a note and speak to your tutor for more help.