

Josefson's Guide to Writing a Reflective Paragraph

1. **Opening Sentence (1)** : Introductory or topic sentence

- Introduces the topic of the paragraph. Don't try to put everything into one sentence. Don't try too hard to capture reader interest. Don't cite the dictionary. Ignore your high school teacher.
- Provides a transition from the preceding paragraph by building on or referring to some idea in that paragraph. This transition is more important than providing an in-depth explanation. Transitions provide logical **flow**.

2. **Explanatory Sentences (1-3)** : Explains the topic of the paragraph in more depth.

- Always put your maximum effort into the second sentence of a paragraph. It's the REAL topic sentence.
- Each sentence builds on and transitions to ideas in the preceding sentence. The best way to do this is to use pronouns that have clear antecedents in the previous sentence. (For example: *Some students will complain my paragraph guidelines are stupid. However, they are obviously wrong. They in the second sentence is a pronoun with the antecedent some students in the previous sentence.*

3. **Exploratory Sentences (1-3)** : Explores the author's views on the topic by comparing and/ or contrasting them with the material being explained. Exploration clarifies the author's preconceptions so that they can be critically evaluated. Exploration also helps to clarify the explanation of the topic.

- Reflect on views you the author have held on the subject. Say, for instance, *Before I read this author, I thought that...*
- If you do not have clear preconceptions on the topic, explore what you might have thought about the issue before you encountered the new material you explained.
- Exploratory sentences identify some conflict, confusion, or agreement between the new material and the author's preconceptions that can serve as the basis for further analysis.

4. **Evidence Sentences (1-4)** : Provides evidence for the point being made in the paragraph. There are several kinds of evidence, and you may use them in combination or more an one of each. Never begin a paragraph with evidence, as it obstructs flow.

- Examples or illustrations. Use *For example*, *For instance*, or tell a story based on your experience or common knowledge.
- Quote from a text. Always introduce a quote. Never start a sentence with a quote. Cite.

- Paraphrase from a text. Provide data or evidence from a text without quoting by explaining the views of an author in your own words. Cite even when you are not quoting.
- Logical analysis. Explain why an idea or view is either logical or illogical by exploring fallacies or logic.

5. **Analysis Sentences (1-3)** : Just providing the evidence is not enough, especially when your evidence is a quote. You need to **analyze** the evidence in order to explain why it supports the idea of the paragraph.

- For example: *Dr. King says segregation “substitutes an ‘I-it’ relationship for an ‘I-thou’ relationship and ends up relegating persons to the status of things” (King 1963, 13). When he uses the word “thou”, he means it to invoke some of the sense of respect the word connotes from its frequent use in the Bible to refer to God.*
- Ideally your analysis should go beyond the evidence you provide from other sources to offer new insights into the topic. Do this by drawing novel connections between sources, by examining singular similarities between contrasting views, by identifying distinct differences between largely similar views, or by exploring your own unique ideas on the topic.

6. **Synthesis Sentences (1-2)**: Do not just restate the central idea of the paragraph. Rather, explore the implications or consequences of what you have said in the paragraph in a way that could point towards the next paragraph. Synthesis explores the “now what?” question. What actions are required because of the reflection presented in the paragraph.

- For example, the **implication** of the analysis of the King quote above could be: *King’s lesson here points beyond the issue of segregation to direct us to identify all prejudices and institutions that keep us from treating others with the respect of a Thou. There are still such institutions today.*
- If this is the last paragraph you should still suggest or imply certain **actions** on the part of the reader, further explorations, or unresolved issues that could be addressed as a **consequence** of the ideas presented in the paragraph.

Source: <http://people.bridgewater.edu/~josefso/writing%20a%20reflective%20paragraph%20guidelines.htm>