



COMMUNITY COLLEGE

OF RHODE ISLAND

Paragraphs

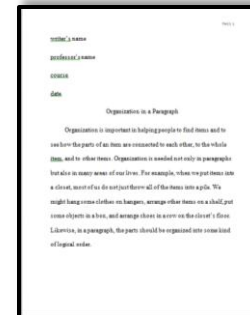
Dr. Karen Petit



COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF RHODE ISLAND

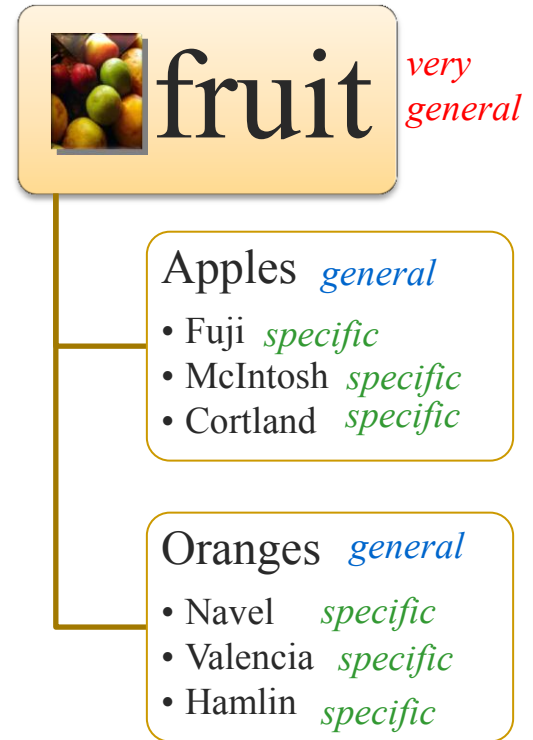
Paragraph Components

1. General and specific ideas
2. A topic sentence
3. Supporting points
4. Specific details
5. Organization
6. Idea connections



I. General and Specific Ideas

- General ideas
 - are larger than specific ideas
 - should be a part of topic sentences, introductions, and conclusions
 - can create a structure for a paragraph
- Specific ideas
 - are smaller than general ideas
 - should support general ideas
 - are facts, examples, and other kinds of details



I.1 Number of Idea Levels

Many paragraphs have four or more levels of **generality** and **specificity**.

very general

general

specific

very specific

general

specific

general

very general

Strong writing skills are important for academic success, career advancement, and personal communication. *Academic success is difficult to attain if a student cannot write well.* In most classes, students do a variety of writing activities, such as taking notes, answering questions on a quiz, and writing papers. Being able to write well will help with all of these academic tasks. *Strong writing skills will also be needed to do well in a career.* Many professional positions involve taking notes at meetings, writing reports, *Finally, people need to write well to communicate with friends and family members.* For example, *With classmates, professors, colleagues at work, friends, and family members,* **having strong writing skills is important.**



2. A Topic Sentence

- States a paragraph's main idea
- Is often placed at the beginning of a paragraph
- Is not a specific fact, an announcement, or a quotation
- Often includes:
 - the author's opinion
 - a plan of development that previews the different parts of a paragraph
 - a word suggesting a mode of development, such as "story" to suggest a narration or "compare" to suggest a comparison/contrast essay
- Not all paragraphs have topic sentences, but most readers like them because a topic sentence can clarify a main idea.

2.1 Positive Reactions to Papers

Writers want their readers to have positive, rather than negative, reactions. A topic sentence can help readers to better understand a paragraph and enjoy their reading experience.



Happy:

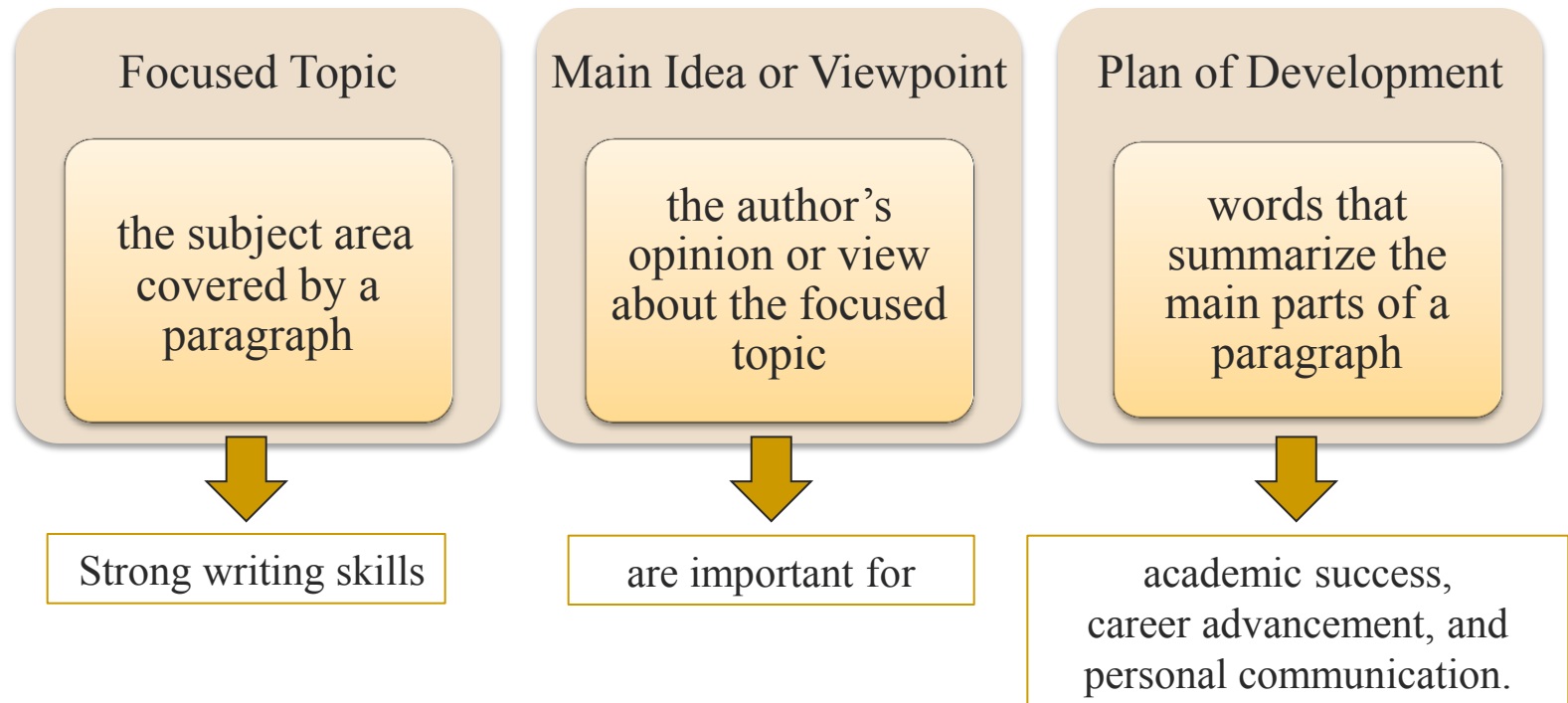
“The first time I read this paper, I understood everything. The writer is very skillful.”



Confused:

“I read this paper twice already, and I still don’t understand it. I’ll just throw it out in the trash.”

2.2 Parts of a Topic Sentence

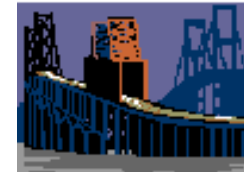


3. Supporting Points

Topic sentence: very general

Supporting points: general

Supporting points act like a bridge by connecting the topic sentence of a paragraph to the details.



- Topic sentence:
 - Strong writing skills are important for academic success, career advancement, and personal communication.**
- Supporting sentences should include:
 - Academic success + more words + details
 - Career advancement + more words + details
 - Personal communication + more words + details

4. Specific Details

- Support the general ideas of a paragraph
- Add interest to a paragraph
- Can take the form of:
 - narrative or descriptive details
 - examples
 - facts or statistics
 - explanations
 - information from one's own experience
 - information from other sources (with correct documentation)

5. Organization

- Organization refers to the arrangement of ideas, parts, or objects.
- Organization often includes the use of:
 - a mode of development
 - a logical order

**bad organization:
illogical arrangement**



**good organization:
logical arrangement**



5.1 Modes of Development

- Narration
- Description
- Process analysis
- Exemplification
- Definition
- Comparison/contrast
- Causes/effects
- Division/classification
- Argument

5.2 Logical Order

- The words and sentences in a paragraph must be placed in an order that coincides with how the words will be read.
- Written English is read from top to bottom and from left to right.
- The words in the box to the right illustrate how the word “**one**” is read before the word “**thirteen.**”
- Three ways to order ideas are time, space, and emphasis.

**One two three four five
six seven eight nine ten
eleven twelve thirteen**

6. Idea Connections

- A topic sentence, supporting points, and details need to be connected to each other.
- Idea connections are made with:
 - Repeated words
 - Repeated ideas
 - Synonyms
 - Pronouns
 - Transitional words and phrases



6.1 Colors Showing Some Idea Connections

repeated words
repeated words
synonyms & pronouns
transitions

Strong writing skills are important for academic success, career advancement, and personal communication. Academic success is difficult to attain if a student cannot write well. In most *classes*, students do a variety of writing activities, such as taking notes, *answering questions on a quiz*, and writing papers. Being able to *write well* will help with all of *these academic tasks*. Strong writing skills will also be needed *to do well* in a career. Many professional positions involve *taking notes* at meetings, writing reports, sending *e-mails*, and writing letters to customers. If an employee lacks writing skills, *he/she* will be looked at in a negative way; the employee might be laughed at, given easy tasks, and/or fired. Finally, people need to write well to communicate with friends and family members. For example, if *a party invitation* is poorly *written*, *someone* could bring a baby present to a high school graduation party. With *classmates*, *professors*, colleagues at work, friends, and family members, having strong writing skills is important.



6.2 Main and Supporting Idea Connections in a Paragraph

A paragraph's supporting ideas should not connect directly to the *topic*, but rather to the author's view and/or to the **plan of development**.

- Topic Sentence:

Strong writing skills are important for **academic success, career advancement, and personal communication**.

- Topic:

Strong writing skills

- Plan of Development:

academic success, career advancement, and personal communication.



6.3 Good Connections Are Needed for Good Support.

Good Connections between a **Plan of Development** and its support:

Topic Sentence:

Strong writing skills are important for **academic success, career advancement, and personal communication.**

Here is good support that connects to the first part of the plan of development:

Academic success is difficult to attain if a student cannot write well. In most classes, students do a variety of writing activities, such as taking notes, answering questions on a quiz, and writing papers.

Bad Connections between a **Plan of Development** and its support:

Topic Sentence:

Strong writing skills are important for **academic success, career advancement, and personal communication.**

Here is some bad support that connects only to the *topic*:

Strong writing skills are a part of my life. I write a lot because writing is fun. Many people have strong writing skills. Writing is a skill that people can improve; it is also a creative activity.



6.4 Concluding and Transitional Idea Connections

Concluding and transitional sentences often restate the *focused topic*, **the plan of development**, and/or other parts of a topic sentence.

- Focused topic:
Strong writing skills
- Plan of development:
academic success, career advancement, and personal communication.
- Concluding sentence:
 - With classmates, professors, colleagues at work, friends, and family members, having *strong writing skills* is important.

More Information

The Writing Center at the Community College of Rhode Island has more online resources.



Contact Information

This presentation is the creation of

Dr. Karen Petit

Community College of Rhode Island

400 East Avenue

Warwick, RI 02886

E-mail: kmpetit@ccri.edu

Phone: 401-825-2279

