

## Contents of a Great Paragraph

-Mr. Kerr

1. Before you begin writing, Have Something to Say! If you think the paragraph is boring or does not make sense, chances are...you are right. Regroup and think harder.
2. Always begin any piece of formal analytical writing with a **Context Sentence**. There is only one context sentence per piece of writing (a paragraph, an essay, a thesis paper...). Where are you going with this paragraph? Restate the question/assignment, and explain the importance/significance of your topic.  
i.e. "In the early 19th century the system of longitude was developed..."
3. **Topic Sentence** that clearly states what you are going to cover, argue, prove, or discuss. It should be more specific than your context sentence. Every paragraph has a topic sentence, whereas each piece of writing only has one context sentence.  
i.e. "The method that longitude uses to measure distance is a complex one..."
4. **Three Evidence Sentences** that use specific data, arguments, quotations, information, or details to support your topic sentence.  
i.e. "First, longitudinal lines range from 0° to 360°, because the earth completes one revolution in a 24 hour period, 360° is divided by 24, which produces the ratio of: 15° being equal to one hour." "Second longitudinal lines..."  
"Third longitudinal meridians..."
5. **Concluding Sentence** that ties the paragraph together, tells the reader how to best use the information, summarizes or restates the now proven argument, or argues the larger point of the paragraph. A good concluding sentence should answer the question "So what?" Good verbs for concluding sentences are: illustrates, demonstrates, reflects, supports, proves, develops, enhances...  
i.e. "The complex relationship between time and distance in terms of longitude illustrates..."

**Do's:** Always type, spell-check, and read aloud your paragraph to at least one other person before handing it in. Put your name, subject, assignment, date in the top left-hand corner. Check to see if your paragraph has all five ingredients to make it great.

**Dont's:** -contractions (didn't, don't, aren't), misspelling/grammar  
-weak nondescript words such as "things" "ways"  
-first person "I think",  
-addressing the reader such as, "As you read above", "In conclusion"