

## Mr. Taylor's Language Arts Class

### Notes on Writing an Effective Paragraph



When you write a paragraph, you strive to meet certain criteria. Specifically, you try to achieve three essential characteristics of effective paragraphs: **unity, support, and coherence**.

When a paragraph has a clear main idea and all sentences of the paragraph relate to that idea, the paragraph has **unity**. In a unified paragraph, the writer stays focused on the main idea and does not drift off into unrelated matters.

When the main idea of a paragraph is supported or developed by specific information, the paragraph has **support**. Facts, details, examples, and other information form the supporting structure on which the main idea is built.

When the supporting information of a paragraph is logically organized and smoothly connected, the paragraph has **coherence**. For example, to explain how to change a flat tire, you might write, "First, assemble and position the jack. Next, raise the car. Then remove the hubcap." Organizing the information in sequential order gives a logical flow to the paragraph, and using words like first, next, and then helps to connect the ideas. The final or concluding sentence connects the whole paragraph.

\* \* \* \* \*

The following example paragraph has unity, support, and coherence.

**My grandmother is the most creative person I've ever met.** For example, she writes poetry and paints portraits. In addition, she sings and dances like a Broadway performer! Give her a box of household odds and ends, and she'll make a child's toy or create an abstract sculpture. When there's a problem to be solved, she'll suggest three possible solutions before anyone else thinks of one. Finally, my grandmother is a person who never gives up. Unlike others who just quit, she insists on finding a solution. *I don't know anyone who's more creative.*

Key:

**Bold** = Main Idea/Topic Sentence [unity]

Underline = Transition words or phrases [coherence]

All other words & sentences are the support [support]

*Italicized* = concluding sentence

Note: The *Writing Point* Figurative language was added in sentence #3 to add spice to the writing.