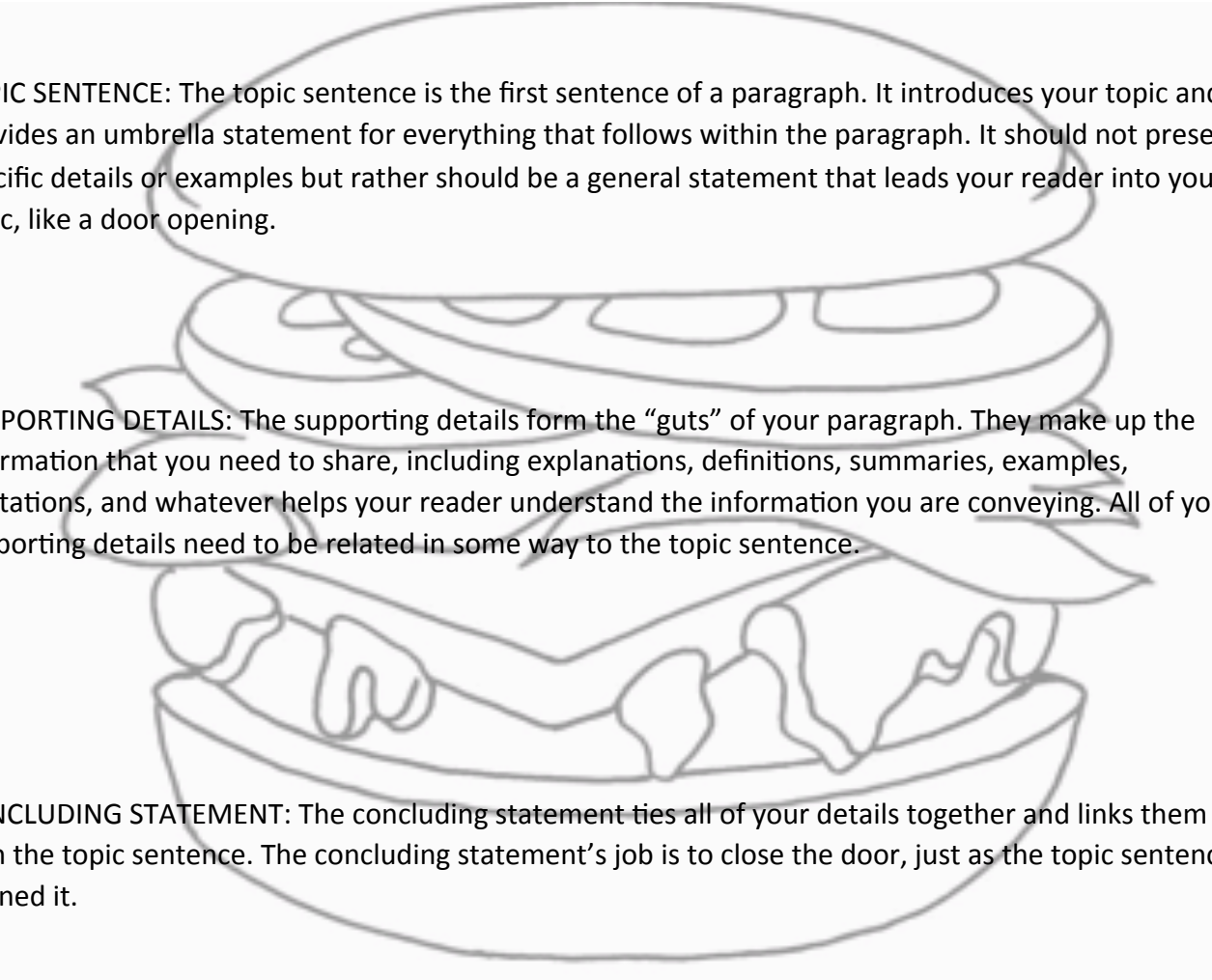


## Hamburger Paragraphs

A paragraph has three major parts: a topic sentence, supporting details and a concluding statement. Another way to think about this is by visualizing a **hamburger**. In a hamburger, the top and bottom of the bun hold the sandwich together, while all the fillings make up the sandwich and give it its flavor. The top and bottom buns are a matching pair but are not exactly the same. And when you consider the fillings, some things stand out as more important and more delicious than others. It's no different in a paragraph. The topic and concluding sentences are similar but not the same and the fillings are of varying levels of importance.



TOPIC SENTENCE: The topic sentence is the first sentence of a paragraph. It introduces your topic and provides an umbrella statement for everything that follows within the paragraph. It should not present specific details or examples but rather should be a general statement that leads your reader into your topic, like a door opening.

SUPPORTING DETAILS: The supporting details form the “guts” of your paragraph. They make up the information that you need to share, including explanations, definitions, summaries, examples, quotations, and whatever helps your reader understand the information you are conveying. All of your supporting details need to be related in some way to the topic sentence.

CONCLUDING STATEMENT: The concluding statement ties all of your details together and links them with the topic sentence. The concluding statement's job is to close the door, just as the topic sentence opened it.

## Transitions

As you put together your paragraph, you must be mindful of how your ideas flow from one to the next. This is called '**sentence fluency**'. You should end up with a neat 'package' rather than a disconnected list of facts or examples.

The way you connect ideas is through the use of transitions, which are connecting or linking words or phrases. They help your reader understand how each idea is related to another.

- Sometimes these transitions indicate sequence: *after that, then, next, first/second/third*
- Sometimes they indicate conclusion: *therefore, as a result of, this leads to/shows/results in/causes, because, thus*
- Sometimes they indicate extension: *furthermore, moreover, also, additionally, in addition to, another*
- Sometimes they indicate contrast: *in contrast to, however, on the other hand, while*
- Sometimes they indicate emphasis: *in fact, indeed*

Try to use such transitions (and there are many more) to demonstrate the relationship between your supporting ideas.

## Quotations

In a **literary paragraph** or essay, you must include quotations. A quotation serves as hard evidence for your ideas. Selecting quotations is a difficult skill to master. You need to pick phrases that are fairly short and very clearly related to your topic.

When you use your quotations, you need to integrate them into your own sentences. Just like a piece of evidence in a trial cannot sit on its own and have any impact, a quotation cannot sit in your paragraph alone. You must put it into context by showing your reader how it relates to the points you are making. So, rather than writing something like this, where the quotation is left hanging alone...

*One moment when Odysseus demonstrates hubris is when he is speaking to the Phaeacians at the beginning of the episode. "Men hold me / formidable for guile in peace and war" (7-8).*

...place the quotation into **context** for your reader. Let it grow out of your sentence.

*One moment when Odysseus demonstrates hubris is when he is speaking to the Phaeacians at the beginning of the episode. He introduces himself by stating that "Men hold [him] / formidable for guile in peace and war" (7-8).*

Notice how, in the second example, the quotation is part of the writer's sentence rather than a sentence on its own. The reader is shown how the quotation fits rather than having to draw conclusions about this independently.

## Tips and Pointers

**Literary paragraphs**/essays should always be written in the **present tense**, which we call the **literary present**. So, rather than saying that Odysseus **met** Polyphemus, you write that he **meets** Polyphemus. Sometimes this sounds a bit awkward, especially when the quotations you are using are written in past tense. But, it is still correct.

To avoid awkwardness when using quotations, you can change minor aspects of your quotation so that it fits better. In the preceding example, the word “me” has been replaced with the word “him” so that the sentence will flow more smoothly. If you do this, you must acknowledge the adjustment by using **brackets** ( [ and ] ). You can also clip off the parts of quotations you do not wish to include. Anything omitted should be indicated by the use of **ellipses** (...).

Finally, avoid referring to yourself or your paragraph. Do not say “I think” or “in my opinion”. This is a given as it is your paragraph. Also, avoid saying “in this paragraph, I will discuss...” Using either of these makes you sound less sure of your ideas. Write like an expert – like your opinions are facts.