

Writing Masterful Paragraphs!

Structure, Support, Secondary Support

FEATURES OF A BASIC PARAGRAPH

UNITY, DEVELOPMENT, COHERENCE

- **All Sentences Support one Main Point**
- **Variety of Types of Support**
- **Sentences are Connected (glued) logically Using Transitions**

BASIC PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE

Topic Sentence: Main point of paragraph; provides controlling idea or limited focus; can be directly stated or implied; can be at the beginning or the end of the paragraph.

Primary Support: Key points used to develop topic sentence. Imagine an outline (Point A, Point B, Point C).

Secondary Support: Additional ways of developing these key points, providing nuance and depth. Imagine an outline (A-1, A-2, etc.).

Transitions: Words or phrases that connect one sentence to the next and help tie writer's ideas together.

Concluding Sentence: Sentence that connects back to topic sentence or otherwise "finishes" the paragraph.

TOPIC SENTENCE

**MAIN IDEA
(TOPIC)**



“Root crops”

**CONTROLLING IDEA
(LIMITED FOCUS)**



**“Basic staple found
in most gardens”**

PRIMARY SUPPORT

Key sub-points that expand topic sentence.

TOPIC
SENTENCE



Root crops are a basic staple and are generally found in most gardens.

SUB
POINTS



1. Radishes
2. Carrots
3. Onions
4. Turnips
5. Potatoes

HERE'S A BASIC PARAGRAPH

Root Crops for the Household Garden

TITLE

TOPIC SENTENCE

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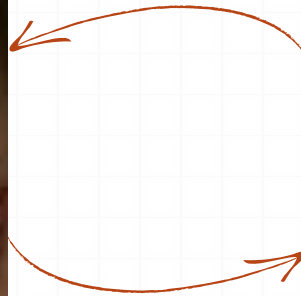
Root crops are a basic staple and are generally found in most home gardens. Many people grow → **radishes** since they are very quick and easy to grow. **Carrots** are quite useful and desirable, but most of them require a loose soil at least six inches deep to do well. **Onions** are bulbs and grow very near the surface and are quite popular in home gardens. **Turnips** used to be very widely grown, but now they are not nearly as popular as they once were. Perhaps the best known root crop is the **potato**; it comes in many varieties and is a favorite of home gardeners if they have room. *Root crops are an important part of our diets, and freshly picked from the garden they provide a great taste treat, as well.*

Word count: 132

My thoughts about that paragraph?

It's got
structure and
focus ...

but it lacks
substance.



To improve this paragraph without sacrificing structure and focus, the writer would need to provide **secondary support** for each of the five key points he's discussing.

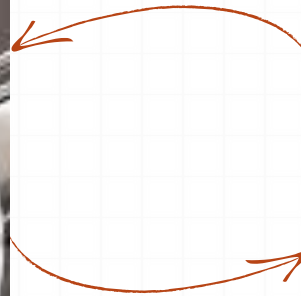
I call this process "frying" a paragraph.

SECONDARY SUPPORT

HAVE YOU “FRIED”



YOUR PARAGRAPH?



FACTS

REASONS

INCIDENTS

EVALUATION

DETAILS

“FRIED”



F = FACTS

Facts can be **verified**.

Does the discussion need verifiable data like ...

Dates

Places

Quotes

Statistics

Percentages

Etcetera,
etcetera,
etcetera

R = REASONS

Reasons reveal the author's purpose for writing.
Does the discussion need ...

Justification
Rationale
Explanation
Logic

I = INCIDENTS

Incidents engage readers on a personal level. Would the discussion benefit with the addition of...

Anecdotes
Narratives
Personal stories
Observed or reported stories

E = EXPOSITION

It's not enough to list facts, give examples, or tell stories.
Writers must also **comment** on the support they've provided.

Analysis
Judgment
Assessment
Observations
Reaction
Insights

TIP: Get in the habit of including one or two sentences of commentary after each type of support you provide.

D = DETAILS

Details add depth, personality, specificity, immediacy, and vibrancy to writing. Don't be stingy with—

CONCRETE DETAILS

Names of
people, places,
and things.
The more
specific, the
better.

SENSORY DETAILS

Sight
Sound
Smell
Taste
Touch

EXAMPLES

Types
Categories
Sub-Categories
Comparisons
Classifications

COMPARE: THE “BASIC” PARAGRAPH

Root Crops for the Household Garden

TITLE

TOPIC SENTENCE

S
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S

*Root crops are a basic staple and are generally found in most home gardens. Many people grow **radishes** since they are very quick and easy to grow. **Carrots** are quite useful and desirable, but most of them require a loose soil at least six inches deep to do well. **Onions** are bulbs and grow very near the surface and are quite popular in home gardens. **Turnips** used to be very widely grown, but now they are not nearly as popular as they once were. Perhaps the best known root crop is the **potato**; it comes in many varieties and is a favorite of home gardeners if they have room. *Root crops are an important part of our diets, and freshly picked from the garden they provide a great taste treat, as well.**

CONCLUDING SENTENCE

Word count: 132

WITH THIS “FRIED” PARAGRAPH

ORIGINAL SUBPOINTS IN BLACK

Root crops are a basic staple and are generally found in most home gardens. Many people grow radishes since they are very quick and easy to grow. After a radish seed has been planted, tiny shoots will appear within a week, and fresh, tasty radishes can be harvested and eaten within 3 weeks. Another root crop found in most home gardens are carrots. Carrots are quite useful and desirable, but most of them require a loose soil at least six inches deep to do well. That's why some gardeners have to do some serious soil amending before planting carrot seeds. However, once the soil is prepared, carrots, like radishes, grow fairly quickly. Another popular root vegetable is the onion. Onions are bulbs and grow very near the surface and are quite popular in home gardens. Once harvested, onions can last quite awhile if stored properly. That's why onions tend to turn up in many backyard gardens. Speaking of “turn-ups,” another interesting root vegetable is the turnip. Turnips used to be very widely grown, but now they are not nearly as popular as they once were. The reason for this isn't certain, but my guess is that today's finicky eaters simply don't know what a turnip tastes like, and wouldn't know what to do with one if they grew it, anyway. Perhaps the best known root crop is the potato; it comes in many varieties and is a favorite of home gardeners if they have room. In fact, space the reason many backyard gardeners don't grow potatoes: since potatoes need plenty of room underground to grow, gardeners tend to prefer growing more compact vegetables, opting instead to pick up their five-pound bags russets at their local supermarkets. Root crops are an important part of our diets, and fresh picked from the garden, they provide a great taste treat, as well.

Note the use of transitions to “glue” the sentences together.

Word Count: 311

A +





YOUR TURN!

PRACTICE: ANALYSIS

Working with a partner, choose one of the paragraphs in an essay in your text and do the following on a sheet of paper:

Identify and write the *topic sentence*. You should be able to identify the topic and the *controlling idea* about the topic.

Identify the *support* for the topic sentence, and label the support using our acronym (FRIED).

If the support can't be clearly labeled using one of these categories, don't worry. Just do your best to see how a good writer supports his ideas.



HOMEWORK: WRITING

Analyze a paragraph you've recently written. Have you used the FRIED technique of paragraph development that we just discussed? If not revise accordingly.

Your revision should also address your topic sentence (is it clear? does it have a controlling idea?).

The objective is to write a clearly focused, well-developed paragraph that includes a variety of support (Facts, Reasons, Incidents, Details) punctuated by your commentary (Exposition).



FOLLOW-UP

**EXCHANGE PAPERS
WITH A CLASSMATE
AND COMPARE FIRST
DRAFTS AND
REVISIONS OF YOUR
PARAGRAPH.**

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