



Paragraphing in emails

Paragraphing discussion questions

1. How many paragraphs should a twenty-line email have?
2. How can you show that you are starting a new paragraph?
3. What is a paragraph in English? What does changing to a new paragraph mean?
4. Why is it important to make it clear that a new paragraph is starting?
5. How many sentences should a paragraph have?
6. What are the exceptions to the rules above, e.g. things which are not really paragraphs but are often in emails?

Generally good, bad or okay?

- One sentence paragraphs
- A sentence explaining the paragraph structure, e.g. "I've... and ... below"
- A phrase or sentence introducing each paragraph
- Just one main paragraph
- One sentence closing line
- One sentence opening line
- Linking expressions to show the connection between ideas, especially ones which aren't obviously linked
- Plan paragraphs before you start writing

Planning paragraphing

Plan one typical paragraph structure for each of the situations below, with at least two main paragraphs

- A complaint
- A reply to complaint
- Suggesting a meeting time and place
- Saying that time and place is impossible
- Asking for information
- Giving information

Phrases for paragraphing

What phrases can you use to introduce paragraphs and link them together?

Suggested answers

1. Probably two to four main paragraphs plus opening and closing
2. Usually leave a blank line, but an indent (with no blank line) is traditional in letters and possible in emails
3. One paragraph is one topic, so changing paragraph means changing topic (in some way)
4. Otherwise you don't know whether you are talking about the same topic or a new one
5. Two to five is usually about right
6. Opening and closing lines, e.g. "Thank you for your letter yesterday" and "I look forward to hearing from you soon."

Generally good, bad or okay?

- One sentence paragraphs – Generally bad
- A sentence explaining the paragraph structure – Generally good
- A phrase or sentence introducing each paragraph – Generally good
- Just one main paragraph – Generally bad
- One sentence closing line – Generally okay
- One sentence opening line – Generally okay
- Linking expressions to show the connection between ideas, especially ones which aren't obviously linked – Generally good
- Plan paragraphs before you start writing – Generally good

Planning paragraphing

- A complaint – Background information/ Problem/ Expected action
- A reply to complaint – Thanks for email (or other contact)/ Apology/ Reason/ Future action
- Suggesting a meeting time and place – Social language/ Reason for meeting/ Suggested time and place (and maybe other possibilities)/ Deadline to decide and future contact
- Saying that time and place is impossible – Thanks for invitation/ Apology and reason/ Other possible times and places
- Asking for information – Reason for writing/ Questions about first topic/ Questions about second topic/ Deadline for answers
- Giving information – Thanks for contact/ Answers about first topic/ Answers about second topic/ What to do if need more info

Phrases for paragraphing

I've/ I'll ... and then.... below.

I'll... first and then...

The first thing I want/ would like/ wanted to... is/ was...

The next...

Another...

I also...

Moving on to...

Finally...