

- Reading your highlighted text
- Answering the questions at the end of the unit
- Answering the questions you created during the question process of this method
- Quizzing yourself on the material
- Making and studying flash/index cards
- Studying with a classmate or study group

### Connections Between Main Ideas and Supporting Details

#### How can you ensure you have a strong paragraph?

1. Always remember that a paragraph needs **control and focus**. This happens when you establish a **main point or topic sentence**. The topic sentence establishes not only what the topic is but your point about it. An example would be Students with time management problems can help solve this problem by creating a calendar of things they need to do each week. This sentence identifies a topic (time management problems for students) and the writer's point about it (this can be solved through a to-do calendar).
2. **That main point then needs to be demonstrated, explained, developed, and/or clarified.** This is where you explore the idea, show the audience what you mean, or prove the point you are making. In a paragraph on time management problems being solved through a calendar, a writer could use personal experience showing how a calendar helped her with class projects; or a writer could include a research study that demonstrated how this technique works for most students.
3. The various details within a paragraph need to be connected to each other. **Transition or connecting words** like “for example” or “also” and “next” help the reader to see the connection between ideas and give your paragraphs a logical flow and organization.

#### PUTTING THIS INTO PRACTICE

Here's an annotated paragraph from an essay that shows you the parts of a successful paragraph. The annotations or comments show how the paragraph succeeds in being unified by a main point, coherently developed through various writing strategies, and connected through appropriate transition words.

Juggling the demands of school, work and family can be really challenging for anybody, but if you want to be a successful student, consider creating a calendar

**Commented [1]:** Notice here that the writer identifies a topic (the challenges students have with managing their work) and the point this whole paragraph is going to focus on (creating a calendar with a to-do list can solve the problem). The main point or topic sentence is highlighted in green.

with a to-do list. My first semester at college was a near disaster. I was adjusting to a new environment, trying to figure out how to carve out enough time in my day to get everything done, and my grades suffered as a result. Thankfully, a friend of mine suggested that I try a calendar, where I identify everything I need to do in my 2 college courses and then prioritize those items and divide my class assignments up throughout the week to ensure I was stay focused and manage everything. The contrast is night and day. For example, I now take out my big planner calendar on my desk, look at everything that is due this week in both my classes, chart them out day by day and step by step, and I allot 2 hours each day to complete what I have to get done that day. I know that on Wednesdays I have to complete the reading for both classes and that then on Thursday I need to write and submit my first discussion board post in both classes. This keeps me on track and also gives me a sense of accomplishment. I find my grades are consistently higher now, I have less stress and I find the work far more manageable. It's changed everything and every student should try it.

Use this model for writing strong paragraphs, whether in your discussion board or class assignments to help you stay focused and write more organized and better developed paragraphs!

**Commented [2]:** The main point of the paragraph is here developed through personal experience, example, details and analysis, highlighted in blue. The writer contrasts her experience before creating a calendar. She gives an example of how she uses it to make sure she gets all her work done. She also analyzes how this has affected her grades and her outlook as well. If this had been a more formal assignment, she might have included research evidence showing how this strategy improves student grades overall.

**Commented [3]:** Transition words and phrases like "for example" help to connect the ideas within the paragraph. The paragraph is also organized by time, contrasting the past, negative experience, with the present, more positive and effective experience.

**Commented [4]:** This concluding sentence, highlighted in purple, briefly concludes the paragraph, summing up the student's experience and recommending that others try it.

### Awareness of Audience and Purpose

Audience and purpose create the foundation of your writing. Understanding your audience and knowing your purpose also determines your content (subject). The concepts are interdependent and shape the tone and style of your writing.

It's important to determine audience and purpose because you want your writing to be easily interpreted and useful for your reader. A note to your grandmother doesn't require complex language and research. In fact, she may even be offended if you write too formally! A friend or family member probably wants to read a letter that lets your personality shine through in the writing. Therefore, with this kind of writing, an informal tone and more personalized content is best for your reader. On the other end of the spectrum, an email to your manager at work should be formal, use precise grammar, and avoid slang so as to maintain your professional reputation and standing within your company. Business writing should also be clear and precise so there is no room for error when making a decision or carrying out a procedure. In this way, a formal tone and style is most useful for this particular reader.

When trying to determine the appropriate audience and purpose, you first want to define the writing situation. Is it a high stakes writing situation where a lot depends on the success of your writing (a grant or business plan, for example)? Is the writing situation one that is low-key and personal where informal writing works better (a letter to a relative, or an email to an old friend, for example)? The higher stakes the writing situation is, the more likely it is that you'll need to use a formal tone and style to meet the expectations of your readers. You can think about formality as a spectrum. On one end of the spectrum is formal writing (for example, a research paper due in one of your courses) and on the opposite end is informal writing. The writing situation will probably fall somewhere between the two on this spectrum.

Additionally, you can ask yourself: who will be reading this writing? The answer to this question determines your audience. From here, ask: what do I want my readers to take away from my writing? The answer to this question determines your purpose. For example, if you were writing a short essay about your favorite sports team for a sports magazine, you would ask yourself: who typically reads this magazine? Try to gather as much information on the audience as you can from whoever is assigning you the writing task. It is likely that this magazine would have demographic information on who the readers are. (For an academic essay, your instructor or assignment instructions will likely provide some key information about the reader). If the readers of the magazine are the general public, you'd then ask yourself: what do I want the general public to take away from my article? This will determine your purpose and help you to focus your research and writing as you move through the steps in the writing process.

Learning to adjust your writing to meet the needs of your audience is something we will focus on in this course. By the time you finish the course, you will feel more confident in your ability to write successfully in a wide variety of situations both personal and professional.