

WRITING DEVELOPMENT

RULE #1: If anything I say on this page conflicts with what your teachers have told you, I am wrong, and they are right.

The U-2 Crisis

13. The structure of a paragraph

Paragraphs are the basis of writing. They vary greatly in length and form, but most include:

1. **A topic sentence:** tells you what the paragraph is about – its ‘idea’ – the ‘point’ it is making.
2. **Expository/development sentences:** expand on the point/ look at its different aspects & connected ideas.
3. **Factual information:** both to give more information about ideas, but also to prove the ‘point’ being made.

The topic sentence usually comes at the beginning, though sometimes it comes at the end. Elements 2 and 3 are usually muddled together in a ‘flow’ of ideas and facts. Your teacher may have taught you the acronym ‘PEE’ (Point – Explanation – Evidence) which is a simplified version of a ‘normal’ paragraph’s structure.

You don’t tend to notice this in your textbooks/ on the website because they don’t use paragraphs – topic subjects are highlighted by headings, sentences are kept short, and information is presented in bulleted lists. Real history books, however, use longer, often complex paragraphs, so you need to know what to look for...

1. Study the following paragraph about the U2 Crisis. Identify in it:
 - the topic and the key point being made;
 - ideas and/or factual information which further explain/develop the point;
 - factual information cited to prove the point.

“The superpower warming ended abruptly with the Powers shutdown. American cover stories about a weather reconnaissance plane straying off course were soon revealed to be bold faced lies. Khrushchev himself went to New York to denounce the overflights at the United Nations. Powers was put on trial and found guilty of spying. Eisenhower, poorly served by the Central Intelligence Agency in the affair, personally took responsibility. The long-planned summit meeting in Paris in mid-May was a disaster as Khrushchev demanded an apology from the president.”

TOP TIP 1: this skill – when you can identify the topic point, ideas and facts in a paragraph – is when researching history gets fun!

When you are sure you have grasped the basic issues (from your textbook or the website) you can now:

- look out a book/ chapter/ article/ webpage that looks useful;
- scan-read down the paragraphs’ topic sentences to find a paragraph that is ‘on topic’;
- when you have found one, skim-read it for interesting ideas/ facts you don’t know already.

2. Study the [Interpretations Sources](#) on the U-2 Crisis on the website.

Study the paragraphs; for each, identify where possible:

- the topic and the key point being made;
- ideas and/or factual information which further explain/develop the point;
- factual information cited to prove the point.

Then make a note of any ideas and facts you found interesting.

- **TOP TIP 2: this skill is VITAL for the ‘Interpretations’ questions in your GCSE exam.**