Module 3 Unit 1

Structuring paragraphs

Summary

Paragraphing signals to your reader the introduction of a new argument or idea, or a new aspect of the same idea. All the information in the paragraph is focused around this idea.

Paragraphs share many of the structural features of essays and individual arguments. They are like mini-versions of these in that they have:

- introductions (topic sentences)
- bodies (development/elaboration sections)
- conclusions (concluding sentences)

Each of these components fulfils a function – orienting/previewing, elaborating, drawing together and linking.

There are no fixed rules about how long paragraphs should be. In deciding whether your paragraphs need to be longer or shorter, you need to be guided by how tightly the information in them relates to the controlling idea.

Paragraphs are not the same as arguments. A single argument may stretch over a number of paragraphs. You can indicate this to your reader by making sure there are clear conceptual and language links between the different paragraphs in a single argument.