A Guide to Writing a Good Paragraph

How should I organize my paragraph?

1. Begin with a topic sentence that states what your paragraph is about.
2. The next few sentences should provide details and examples on the chosen topic.
3. The last sentence answers the question, “So what?” In other words, sum up the reason you wrote the paragraph, ideally linking it to your thesis.
4. Begin each new paragraph with a smooth transition from the previous one.
5. Be sure to cite any information that is not common knowledge.

How long should my paragraphs be?

There is no set length for paragraph size. In academic writing a standard paragraph contains between 4 and 8 sentences, but this is merely an approximation and should not be seen as a rule. A good guideline would be to compose 2 to 3 paragraphs per page. Avoid one-sentence paragraphs.

How do I know when to start a new paragraph?

Paragraphs should contain one topic only. Make sure that every sentence in the paragraph relates to its topic sentence. When you have finished that topic, move on to the next paragraph. Each paragraph should be distinct and contribute to the paper as a whole, relating to the paper’s thesis.

Sample Paragraph:

(1) Another problem that the sculptor Bartholdi encountered when building the Statue of Liberty was structural support. (2) Not only was there a problem with how Lady Liberty was to stand on her own two feet, but there was also the issue of how she would keep from being blown over by the winds in the bay. (3) The entire project faced cancelation until the artist contacted a noted engineer, Gustav Eiffel, who would later become famous for constructing the Eiffel Tower (Mitchell, 2014). (4) Eiffel employed his bridge-building skills to design a flexible iron framework that has lasted for over one hundred years. (5) Bartholdi’s efforts in solving this problem illustrate the fact that artists need to rely on more than their artistic talent to complete a project.

Sentence 1 begins with the transition phrase, “Another problem,” and tells the reader that the paragraph will be about supporting the statue.
Sentences 2-4 provide supporting details and examples. All relate directly to the topic sentence. A citation in APA format follows sentence 3.
Sentence 5 connects the paragraph to the writer’s thesis, which claims that artists need more than talent to be successful.