

## Drafting Body Paragraphs: Purpose-Based Organization Strategies Chronological

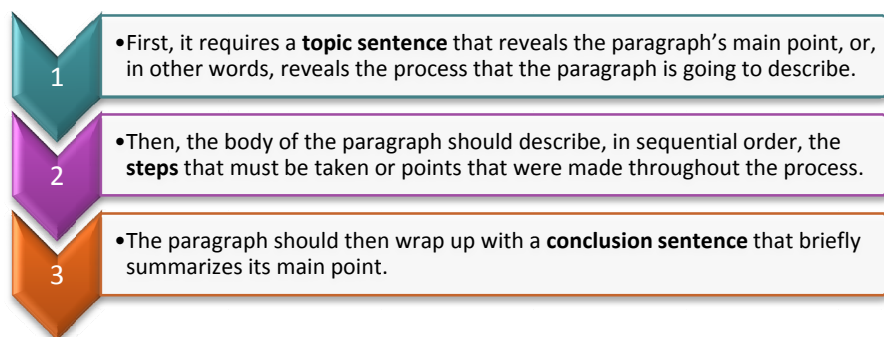
There are several different organizational strategies designed for specific types of body paragraphs, including cause-effect, problem-solution, comparison-contrast and chronological. You must identify the purpose of the paragraph before you begin writing and then seek out the appropriate organizational strategy for writing a paragraph with that specific purpose. This handout discusses the **chronological strategy** in detail.



First, there's one thing you should know about this handout and its connection to another Academic Center handout. This handout is best used in conjunction with the Academic Center handout *Drafting Body Paragraphs: CECC: An Internal Organization Strategy*, which discusses a method of paragraph development that focuses on claim, evidence, commentary and conclusion. The **CECC method** accounts for the labeling in brackets of the example paragraphs in this handout. These labels in brackets are merely meant to show how each purpose-based organization strategy also corresponds with the CECC method.

The chronological approach to paragraph organization is used when describing a process because it typically offers information in step-by-step order. The chronological approach is not only used to describe an instructional process (i.e. lesson plan, bike assembly diagram); it may also be used to describe something in the time order in which it occurred. For example, the chronological approach could be used to effectively write a paragraph on the evolution of eighteenth-century American literature. However, chronological paragraphs are not only for instructional or historical data; they can also present a narrative or story.

The format for a chronological paragraph is three-fold.



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Let's take a look at an example:

**Topic sentence [claim]**

- It is important to set up your document correctly before you begin writing an APA-style research paper. Fortunately, Microsoft Word allows you to make format selections before you even begin to type inside the document.

**Step-by-Step Process Description [evidence]**

- The following steps are adapted from Pearl's *Using Microsoft Word* (2006): First, open up your Microsoft Word program. After doing this, visit the "File" menu at the top of the page and click on "Page Setup." Under "Page Setup," click on the "Margins" tab and change the left and right margins from 1.25 inches to 1 inch. Then, click "OK." Now, visit the "Format" menu at the top of the page and click on "Paragraph." When the "Paragraph" box opens, change the "Line Spacing" from "single" to "double" and click "OK." After doing this, check your font size by again visiting the "Format" tab and, this time, clicking on "Font." The font should be "Times New Roman," the font style should be "regular" and the font size should be "12." Click "OK" here just to make sure that this font is set.

**Conclusion sentence [commentary; conclusion]**

- After you complete these steps, your paper's format is set according to the guidelines of APA style, and you are ready to begin formatting your title page, which will be discussed in the following paragraph.

Keep in mind that when you write a chronological paragraph, it is important to include transition words (first, second, then, finally) so that the reader knows the order in which to approach the task. Transition words work especially well when you include a step-by-step description as part of the paragraph, such as when you are telling a story in chronological order. More information on transition words is available in the Academic Center handout *Draft Body Paragraphs: Transitioning*.

In some instances, for example, when you are writing about how to assemble a desk, it might be more acceptable to format the step-by-step description of the process as a bulleted list rather than include each step within the paragraph. Thinking about the underlying purpose of your chronological paragraph will help you to decide whether you should include the information inside the paragraph or list out the information with bullets or numbers.

Not only is the chronological pattern present, but the components of the CECC pattern also emerge in this example paragraph. For example, in the step-by-step process section, the evidence, or explanation of how to use Microsoft Word, is cited from Pearl. In this case the writer's commentary, which follows these statements, does not interpret the evidence; instead, it briefly summarizes the evidence and transitions into the conclusion statement. More information on providing and signaling commentary is available in our handout *Signal Your Commentary on Source Material*.



**How can I enhance the audience's understanding of a chronological paragraph?** Visual aids can be a helpful addition to a chronological paragraph because they offer a concrete, recognizable picture of the process being described. However, before including a visual aid in your document, be sure that you understand its purpose and formatting requirements. More information on using tables, charts, graphs and illustrations/ photographs can be accessed by visiting the Academic Center's *Visual Aids* series.

Although this handout discussed the chronological approach to paragraph organization, there are many other methods you can use to organize information within a specific paragraph. Additionally, while the information presented in this handout is tailored toward paragraph development, this organizational strategies discussed can be applied as overall organization strategies for research papers or can be used as organization strategies for paragraph blocks within a larger paper.