# Examples of paragraphs in academic writing

Each of the following paragraphs have notes that explain how they work and what you can learn from them. The examples are from published academic work from a wide variety of disciplines and you can read each item online using the reference provided.

## Using multiple sources in broad agreement with one another (synthesising).

### Paragraph example

Even though early treatments for ADHD are efficacious, few children typically receive specialty mental health care ([Danielson et al., 2018](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1087054720986909); [Hoza et al., 2006](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1087054720986909)). In the 2016 National Survey of Children’s Health, more than six million children and teens had been diagnosed with ADHD, and of these, 5.4 million had current ADHD. About 23% of children with current ADHD diagnoses had not received any treatment ([Danielson et al., 2018](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1087054720986909)). Yet, there are often delays in identification which lead to high societal costs ([Biederman & Faraone, 2006](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1087054720986909); [Mahone & Denckla, 2017](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1087054720986909)). The reason for these high costs is that children and adolescents with ADHD are at high risk of other issues such as accidents, injuries, and substance abuse ([Hurtig et al., 2016](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1087054720986909" \o "Hurtig et al., 2016); [Leibson et al., 2001](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1087054720986909); [Molina & Pelham, 2014](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1087054720986909)). Moreover, it is difficult to ascertain the reasons why children diagnosed with behavioral issues are unable to access timely treatment.

#### Source

Kappi, A, Martel, M. 2021. [Forthcoming]. Parental Barriers in Seeking Mental Health Services for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder in Children: Systematic Review. *Journal of Attention Disorders.* [Online]. Available from: [Parental Barriers in Seeking Mental Health Services for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder in Children: Systematic Review - Amani Kappi, Michelle Martel, 2021 (sagepub.com)](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1087054720986909).

### Paragraph features

* Supporting your points with multiple sources which broadly agree with one another, can give extra credibility and strength to your writing.
* The first sentence uses two sources to support the opening statement. Using more than one source is a good way to show that the point you are making may have a solid basis in research, therefore adding strength to your point.
* This technique is also used later in the paragraph, grouping together two or more sources which are broadly in agreement with one another and backing up the points being made.

## Giving context or explanation

### Paragraph example

The mobile nature of digital games ensures that the lines between in-school and out-of-school gameplay is blurred. Thus, it is important to explore the possibilities of these games to create new spaces for learning and engaging with mathematics. From a social learning perspective, research has been concerned with the ways in which the games industry has been influencing ‘interactive’ learning via computers (Scanlon et al. 2005); creating spaces for students to create their own digital games in order to teach concepts to peers (Li 2010); or the ways in which the games are arranged to motivate learners to engage with the games (Habgood and Ainsworth 2011) and engage with higher-order problem solving abilities (Sun et al. 2011). These and many other studies seem to support the possibilities of digital games to promote learning.

#### Source

Lowrie, T. and (Zevenbergen) Jorgensen, R. 2015. *Digital Games and Mathematics Learning : Potential, Promises and Pitfalls.* Netherlands: Springer.

### Paragraph features

* Whilst good academic writing needs to show critical analysis, using a variety of sources and demonstrating clear arguments, it is also important to add context and explanations where necessary.
* This paragraph outlines the topic, setting the scene for a more thorough and detailed examination in the rest of the chapter.
* The writer gives the subject matter context by summarising the current situation.
* References to the work of other authors are used to bring in real examples which also help to build a general picture of the area.

## Using sources as evidence

### Paragraph example

The Australian Psychological Society (APS) reports that one in four Australians feel lonely and over half of the population feel that they lack valuable social connection[1](https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-021-81966-2#ref-CR1). Whether objective or perceived (i.e. loneliness), the consequences of prolonged social isolation are significant. Social isolation is linked to severe negative health implications including increased risk of heart disease[2](https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-021-81966-2#ref-CR2), cancer[3](https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-021-81966-2#ref-CR3) and obesity[4](https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-021-81966-2#ref-CR4), culminating in reduced life expectancy[5](https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-021-81966-2#ref-CR5),[6](https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-021-81966-2#ref-CR6). Social isolation also comes with significant risk of mental health and neuropsychiatric disorders, including chronic anxiety and depression[7](https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-021-81966-2#ref-CR7),[8](https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-021-81966-2#ref-CR8). Alongside this complex aetiology, social isolation has been linked to the increased prevalence of substance use disorders across a range of drug types[7](https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-021-81966-2#ref-CR7), where social isolation both predicts drug abuse, and drug abuse occurs as a consequence of social isolation[9](https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-021-81966-2#ref-CR9),[10](https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-021-81966-2#ref-CR10),[11](https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-021-81966-2#ref-CR11). Unfortunately, when socially isolated individuals wish to moderate or quit drug-intake, quitting is more difficult and less successful[12](https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-021-81966-2#ref-CR12),[13](https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-021-81966-2#ref-CR13), limiting the likelihood of a long lasting recovery.

#### Source

Mastrogiovanni, N. Wheeler, A. Clemens, K. 2021. Social isolation enhances cued-reinstatement of sucrose and nicotine seeking, but this is reversed by a return to social housing. *Scientific Reports.* **Volume 11** (2422).

### Paragraph features

* Reading academic texts not only gives you a deeper understanding of your subject area, but also exposes you to different viewpoints and evidence.
* When you write at university, you use your reading to support the claims or arguments that you make in your work. You could also present sources giving counter arguments to demonstrate alternative perspectives.
* The frequent use of citations for other sources in this example, shows that there is evidence for all of the claims being made. This gives credibility to the writing.
* Citations can be used in the middle or at the end of your sentences and in some STEM subjects they may be used at the end of a paragraph, which is not the norm in Arts and Humanities academic writing. Check with your department if you are unsure what is expected.

## Introductory paragraphs

### Paragraph example

Stonehenge, a Late Neolithic–Early Bronze Age monument in Wiltshire, southern England, was constructed in five stages between around 3000 BC and 1500 BC (Darvill *et al.* 2012). The first stage consisted of a circular ditch enclosing pits thought to have held posts or standing stones, of which the best known are the 56 Aubrey Holes. These are now believed to have held a circle of small standing stones, specifically ‘bluestones’ from Wales (Parker Pearson *et al.* 2009: 31–33). In its second stage, Stonehenge took on the form in which it is recognisable today, with its ‘sarsen’ circle and horseshoe array of five sarsen ‘trilithons’ surrounding the rearranged bluestones.

Starting in 2003, the Stonehenge Riverside Project explored the theory that Stonehenge was built in stone for the ancestors, whereas timber circles and other wooden structures were made for the living (Parker Pearson & Ramilisonina 1998). Stonehenge has long been known to contain prehistoric burials (Hawley 1921). Most were undated, so a priority for the project was to establish whether, when and in what ways these dead were associated with the monument. Until excavation in 2008, most of the recovered human remains remained inaccessible for scientific research, having been reburied at Stonehenge in 1935 (Young 1935: 20–21).

#### Source

Willis, C, Marshall, P, McKinley, J, Pitts, M, Pollard, J, Richards, C, Richards, J, Thomas, J, Waldron, T, Welham, K, and Parker Pearson, M. 2016. The dead of Stonehenge. *Antiquity.* **Volume 90** (350), pp. 337 – 356.

### Paragraph features

* Introductory paragraphs give the reader an understanding of what is coming up in the article.
* This paragraph uses linguistic ‘signposts’ to help the reader to understand major developments in the history of Stonehenge.
* The writer gives some background about Stonehenge and the way in which it changed and developed over time. If you knew nothing about the topic, this introduction gives key facts, information and context. If, however you are familiar with the subject, this paragraph is a neat overview, creating a gateway to the rest of the article.
* The second paragraph begins with an introduction to the aims and objectives of the Stonehenge Riverside Project.
* This provides useful signpost, in the last sentence, what is coming up next.

## Demonstrating your position (your voice)

### Paragraph example

Science fiction is a useful tool for investigating habits of thought, including conceptions of gender. Gender, in turn, offers an interesting glimpse into some of the unacknowledged messages that permeate science fiction. Each reads the other in very interesting ways. Examining stories with a view to both their science-fictional qualities and their uses of gender generates new questions about both gender and genre. Then those questions can be addressed to those and other stories to yield further insights. The process is a particularly rewarding version of the hermeneutic circle-a decoding ring.

Impulses travel along nerves at a speed called the nerve conduction velocity (NCV). This velocity has been extensively measured in human peripheral nerves because of its utility in clinical medicine (Liveson & Ma, 1992; Oh, 1993). Appreciably decreased NCV can be an important indicator of nerve injury or disease (Liveson & Ma, 1992; Oh, 1993).

#### Source (first paragraph)

Attebery, B. 2002. *Decoding Gender in Science Fiction.* [Online]. Abingdon: Taylor & Francis Group. [Accessed 16th February 2021]. Available from: <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/leeds/detail.action?docID=1588515>.

#### Source (second paragraph)

Reed, T, Vernon, P and Johnson, A. Sex difference in brain nerve conduction velocity in normal humans. 2004. *Neurophysilogica.* **Volume 42** (12), pp. 1709-1714.

### Paragraph features

* The way in which you express your thoughts in academic writing can vary depending on your subject area.
* This writer makes statements that clearly demonstrate their opinion. They say for example that “Science fiction is a **useful** tool...”, “Gender, in turn, offers an **interesting** glimpse...”, “The process is a **particularly rewarding** version...”. The language chosen shows what the writer thinks about this topic.
* In this second paragraph (from a different source) the writer makes clear their position about decreased nerve conduction velocity and why this matters: ‘appreciably decreased NCV can be an important indicator of nerve injury or disease’.

## Concluding paragraphs

### Paragraph example

Given the fragile health systems in most sub-Saharan African countries, new and re-emerging disease outbreaks such as the current COVID-19 epidemic can potentially paralyse health systems at the expense of primary healthcare requirements. The impact of the Ebola epidemic on the economy and healthcare structures is still felt five years later in those countries which were affected. Effective outbreak responses and preparedness during emergencies of such magnitude are challenging across African and other lower-middle-income countries. Such situations can partly only be mitigated by supporting existing regional and sub-Saharan African health structures.

#### Source

Velavan, T, Meyer, C. 2020. The COVID-19 epidemic. *Tropical Medicine and International Health.* **Volume 25** (3), pp.278-280.

### Paragraph features

* Depending on the written work that you do, you may need one or several concluding paragraphs.
* This is an example of a concise stand-alone conclusion paragraph.
* This conclusion brings together the main arguments that were made in the main body of the work.

## Discussing results

### Paragraph example

These results further indicate that not only liquid-bearing clouds[16](https://www.nature.com/articles/ncomms10266#ref-CR16) but also clouds composed exclusively of ice significantly increase radiative fluxes into the surface and decrease GrIS SMB. This underscores the need for continued research into the factors that govern the formation and maintenance of these distinct cloud regimes, and their evolution in a future warmer and wetter Arctic[36](https://www.nature.com/articles/ncomms10266#ref-CR36). Evidence of the large spread in cloud cover and liquid/ice partitioning over the GrIS in current state-of-the-art climate models, in combination with our limited understanding of the interaction between clouds, circulation and climate[37](https://www.nature.com/articles/ncomms10266#ref-CR37), suggests that improved cloud representations in climate models could significantly increase the fidelity of future projections of GrIS SMB and subsequent global sea level rise.

#### Source

Van Tricht, K, Lhermitte, S, Lenaerts, J, Gorodetskaya, I, L’Ecuyer, T, Noël, B, van den Broeke, M, Turner, D, and van Lipzig, N. 2016. Clouds enhance Greenland ice sheet meltwater runoff. *Nature Communications.* **Volume 7**, Article number: 10266 [no pagination]

### Paragraph features

* This paragraph effectively discusses the results of a research project. Paragraphs like this one are very common in STEM subjects.
* The first sentence contains the major finding of the research, which is then explored in more detail.
* In the second sentence, the writer clearly states the need for more research as a major factor in the results obtained.
* The language throughout this paragraph is precise and uses citations to other work to back up significant points.

## Using a quotation to illustrate a point

### Paragraph example

Rowling creates this intense tension between Harry’s substitute maternal and paternal figures to highlight just how connected Mrs. Weasley is to Harry Potter, and to illustrate how Harry’s situation has changed dramatically, though his journey is not nearly over. Harry is now part of several families: Hogwarts, the Weasley’s and soon the Order of Phoenix. He is cared for in a way he has never experienced before now, as is evident by Mrs. Weasley’s maternal wrath: “‘He’s not your son,” said Sirius quietly. “He’s as good as!” said Mrs. Weasley fiercely” (Rowling, 2004, p. 90). Mrs. Weasley continues to clash with Sirius throughout OotP, believing he makes poor choices and doesn’t recognize that Harry would risk his own life for him. She can accept the peril Harry faces from Lord Voldemort, but she cannot tolerate that Sirius might carelessly expose Harry to danger.

#### Source

Weiss, M. 2013. The role of maternal females in Harry Potter’s journey. Bell, C. (ed). *Legilimens! : Perspectives in Harry Potter Studies*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. P.23.

### Paragraph features

* Using quotations is not the norm in all subject areas but can be very important in others. Quotations are particularly useful where the phrasing will enhance your argument or point in a way that your own words could not.
* This paragraph incorporates a quotation from a book to illustrate and strengthen the main point (set out in the first sentence).
* The quotation is introduced mid-paragraph and deepens our understanding of the argument by giving us insights into the feelings of the characters.

## Paragraphs that link together

### Paragraph example

The men and women who saw or met the royal family in the war regularly confronted a perceptual gap between their own close-up sighting of them and official projections. A private with the 1st Battalion of the Welsh Regiment on the Western Front, who saw George V coming down from the line in 1916, remembered how surprised he was to find that the king was just a ‘little fellah with a beard’ – an observation that registered the difference between seeing the king nearby and how he was imagined in his public and ceremonial roles. [18](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03071022.2020.1771865) The early twentieth century witnessed a significant shift towards the democratization of public reputations in Britain and across the Anglophone world, involving the partial displacement of older notions of charisma by more commodified public personalities driven by the media. Soldiers and nurses who encountered the king and his family frequently registered a tension between traditional, prestigious images of royalty and those that were redolent with what journalists now defined as ‘human interest’ and even entertainment. [19](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03071022.2020.1771865) The article argues that one consequence of the intimate exposure of royalty during the war was that some who saw or met the king and his family perceived them more horizontally and less vertically, in ways that paralleled other forms of popular modernism. Adrian Gregory and Paul Fussell have emphasized that the war was fundamental in breaking social and cultural hierarchies, creating the conditions in which modernism would flourish. [20](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03071022.2020.1771865) One long-term effect of the loosening of traditional authority in the minds of some observers involved a partial desacralization of sovereignty, whereby royalty was brought closer to the lives of ordinary people in ways that intersected with developments in the popular media.

Publicity was one significant factor shaping the views of men and women who encountered royalty; the practice of letter-writing and diary keeping was another. Letters and postcards sent by troops at the front to family and friends at home were forms of social and cultural communication shaped by the long history of epistolary writing and its specific uses as a resource in wartime. Wartime censorship, which was enforced by officers for British and dominion rank-and-file troops, influenced what could be written in letters about a sensitive issue like the monarchy, though standards of inspection were uneven and critical comments did get through. [21](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03071022.2020.1771865) Diaries and memoirs encouraged greater reflection, and this was where more expansive and often trenchant remarks about the royal family emerged. The oral histories drawn on here pivot between remembering early twentieth-century royalty through the prism of nostalgia, or remembering them as central figures in a hierarchical society where witnesses saw themselves as either resistant or subaltern subjects. These personal testimonies provide historians not simply with an archive of opinion about the monarchy, but with a window onto competing structures of belief and feeling, as they were shaped by what Penny Summerfield has called distinctive ‘conduits of expression’. [22](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03071022.2020.1771865) They constructed meanings about sovereignty, while simultaneously involving audiences in their own projections of selfhood, in the context of both the structures of their own lives and the impact of European warfare.

#### Source

Mort, F. 2020. Accessible sovereignty: popular attitudes to the British monarchy during the Great War. *Social History*. **45**:3, pp.328-359.

### Paragraph features

* Paragraphs often (but not always) link together thematically, which means that one may continue an idea or argument from a previous paragraph.
* The first sentence of the first paragraph sets out the topic under examination.
* The first paragraph goes on to explore the topic in more depth, giving relevant examples and evidence as part of the discussion.
* The second paragraph is intrinsically linked to the first. It acts as an extension, allowing the author to develop the point further by bringing in a new aspect of communication and analysing this in detail.

## Proposing a new idea or theory

### Paragraph example

Three strategies for reinserting class into planning theory and practice can be proposed. The first strategy is the acknowledgement that capitalism is based on economic antagonisms. When identifying “needs” in planning theory or practice, it is important to ask, whose needs? In contrast to contemporary assumptions where “communities” are the subjects and where “consensus” is an ideal (as in the King’s Cross Development), we would argue that one should recognize and consider antagonisms like class.

#### Source

Class, Community and Communicative Planning: Urban Redevelopment at King's Cross, London (wiley.com) <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/j.1467-8330.2009.00676.x?saml_referrer>

### Paragraph features

* Sometimes your writing will need to propose a new idea, theory or way of looking at an issue, or you may be trying to show that another writer’s point or argument is strong or weak. In these and other cases, your writing needs to be persuasive.
* The opening sentence signals that three new strategies are going to be set out.
* In the second sentence, the first of these strategies is introduced.
* The final two sentences begin to unpack the first strategy. Further emphasis is given to persuade the reader by the tone and use of language such as “important”.