the
writing centers at Saint Mary's
winona and the twin cities

Writing Process: Paragraph Organization

While every assignment has different requirements, this handout will give you the basics of strong paragraph structure. In general, every paragraph should have a topic sentence, evidence, connections, and a concluding sentence. Let's look at a sample paragraph below:

The daily use of technology has become more of a societal norm in recent years, especially among adolescents. There is an increased prevalence of technology in the daily lives of teens today, beyond just television watching (Straatman, Oliveria, Rostila, & Lopes, 2016). Bucksch et al. (2016) added that these "screen-time behaviors" have become normalized due to "the availability of screens, ready access to the Internet, and the increasing importance of social media in young people's lives" (p. 422). Screen time is increasing because technologies pervade the everyday life experiences of teenagers: using iPads at school, listening to music on cell phones, checking in with parents on Facebook. This increased use of technology, however, has a negative effect on the psychological wellbeing of adolescents.

Topic Sentence: A sentence that provides an overview of the paragraph and connects back to the main idea.

Evidence: This is usually source support in the form of paraphrases or exact quotations (with correct citations, of course).

Connections: This is using your own words to provide summary, explanation, analysis, and/or synthesis of the source support.

Concluding sentence: A sentence that summarizes the paragraph and/or transitions into the next paragraph.

As you are writing or revising, you can ask yourself the following questions to make sure that your paragraphs are strong:
- Does my topic sentence connect back to my thesis statement and outline the paragraph?
- Do my examples/evidence support my topic sentence?
- Are there any points in my paragraph that don't connect to my topic sentence?
- Do I explain my example/evidence?
- How does this point connect to the next point? How could I use this connection in my concluding sentence?

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