

# ***DukeWrites* Enrichment Suite**

## **Paragraphs, part four**

*With Beth Long, Writing Studio Consultant*

To end our discussion about paragraphs – I'd like to talk about a few myths associated with writing paragraphs.

We haven't talked about how long a paragraph should be – we've focused on the purpose of the paragraph – to present one main idea – and the function of the sentences in the paragraph – the topic sentence and the supporting sentences.

So how long should a paragraph be? As long as it needs to be – no longer and no shorter. There is no requirement for a number of sentences. And the number of sentences in a paragraph varies depending on what type of writing you are doing – and where the writing is found. Paragraphs may look different in research articles versus magazines and might vary depending on what field you're writing in.

Another myth we hear sometimes is that the main idea of the paragraph needs to be in one sentence and should be the very first sentence.

It is true that we talked about presenting the main idea of the paragraph at the beginning of the paragraph – but it doesn't necessarily have to be stated all in one sentence and at the very beginning. A writer might have a transition from the previous paragraph – or need to prepare the reader for the main idea. And so while we do present the main idea in the beginning of the paragraph – it doesn't have to be the very first sentence. The main idea might be stated over more than one sentence.

Another myth we sometimes hear is that every paragraph needs a concluding sentence – and while this might be preferable in a paragraph that stands alone and is not part of a larger text – a concluding sentence is not always needed nor even sometimes advisable in a paragraph that is part of a larger text.

In this module we've looked at some strategies to build better paragraphs including a Broad to Specific structure, building flow, and paragraph myths. These tools can help you to build better paragraphs.

Thanks for listening ~ and happy writing.