

How to Build Research Paper Paragraphs

Having trouble building paragraphs for your research paper? Try following this 9-sentence

✨*magic* 🧙 formula for writing paragraphs for your research paper!

Sentence Guide	Examples
<p>1.) A topic sentence that makes a claim</p> <p>Just like how your thesis is your paper's central argument or "main claim," your paragraph's topic sentence should make a secondary argument or "sub claim" related to your thesis.</p> <p>Resist the urge to begin your paragraph with either a quote or factual information - start with your own ideas first!</p> <p>A claim:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defines the paragraph's goals, direction, and scope • Is supported by evidence (your sources' quotes) • Makes a focused, rather than general, argument 	<p>1.) A topic sentence that makes a claim</p> <p>Besides functioning as entertainment, sports serve an essential social role in organizing modern human society.</p> <p><i>This sentence gives a transition from an earlier idea ("sports as entertainment"), and establishes that this paragraph will make the claim that sports perform a social function - a claim that will have to be supported in the rest of the paragraph.</i></p>
<p>2.) Introduce Quote 1 from Author A</p> <p>Before stating the quote, introduce it. Try to either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Point to the quote's main idea • Provide necessary background to understand the quote • Explain who the source is and why they're credible • Put the source's ideas in conversation with your own 	<p>2.) Introduce Quote 1 from Author A</p> <p>As traditional social institutions dwindle in importance, sociologist Craig T. Russell argues that sports have stepped in to fill that role.</p> <p><i>This sentence identifies the source ("sociologist Craig T. Russell") and establishes the source's main idea (sports replacing social institutions).</i></p>
<p>3.) Quote 1 combined into own sentence</p> <p>Consider these templates (or make your own!)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • According to X, "_____" • In her book, _____, X explains that "_____." • As the influential scholar X puts it, "_____." 	<p>3.) Quote 1 combined into own sentence</p> <p>Russell notes that "the decline of organized religion affiliations has been offset by an increase in sports event attendance, as well as a growth in television viewership" (75).</p> <p><i>Cite your sources! This sentence uses MLA, which means since the author's name is in the sentence, the parentheses just need the page number.</i></p>
<p>4.) Interpret or analyze Quote 1</p> <p>Analysis keeps the focus on your ideas rather than the source's, and is your chance to respond to the quote. Try out these questions or templates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does the author mean? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In other words, X believes ____. ○ The essence of X's argument is that ____. • What are the implications of what the author has written? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In making this comment, X urges ____. ○ X's claim that _____ rests upon the assumption 	<p>4.) Interpret or analyze Quote 1</p> <p>Consequently, instead of developing social bonds through religious institutions, people are being connected through their experience of sporting events and teams.</p> <p><i>This sentence uses "consequently" to shift to an analysis of the quote. The "increase" from the sentence before leads to people "being connected through their experience of sporting events."</i></p>

<p>that ____.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the quote connect to your claim or thesis? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I agree that ____ because ____. X's position overlooks ____. 	
<p>5.) A bridge, transition, or connection to Another Quote</p> <p>This sentence explains the relationship of the first author's idea to the second author's idea.</p>	<p>5.) A bridge, transition, or connection to Another Quote</p> <p>This shift to sports means that cities and states have begun to identify themselves as communities by their local sports teams.</p> <p><i>This sentence relates the idea from the first author ("shift to sports" to the idea of the second author "identifying communities by sports teams."</i></p>
<p>6.) Introduce Another Quote from a Source</p> <p>As with Quote 1, you want to introduce Quote 2. Remember to either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Point to the main idea behind the quote Provide the necessary background to the quote Identify the source of the quote Relate the source's ideas to your own 	<p>6.) Introduce Another Quote from a Source</p> <p>Anthropologist Kathleen Dombrowski highlights how this shift to sports unifies these diverse communities.</p> <p><i>Again we establish the source's main idea ("unifies these diverse communities") and identify the source (Kathleen Domobrowski").</i></p>
<p>7.) Quote 2 combined into your own sentence</p> <p>In addition to the templates from Step 3, consider ways to compare or contrast your two sources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Y agrees/disagrees with X when she writes, "____." Similar to/unlike X, Y asserts, "____." 	<p>7.) Quote 2 combined into your own sentence</p> <p>According to Dombrowski, "the shift to cities being identified by their sports teams, such as LA with the Dodgers, Boston with the Red Sox...[and] Pittsburgh with the Steelers, provides a common identity for all residents of the city, regardless of their background" (139).</p> <p><i>You can use brackets [] and ellipses...to help better fit quotes into your sentences.</i></p>
<p>8.) Interpret or analyze Quote 2</p> <p>In addition to the templates from Step 4, consider ways to compare or contrast your two sources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the quote connect to your other sources? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> According to both X and Y, ____. Y adds to/disagrees with X's idea of ____, when they say ____. 	<p>8.) Interpret to analyze Quote 2</p> <p>LA residents, whether they be Latino, wealthy celebrities, Asian American, working class, or first generation immigrants, can all celebrate the Dodgers' victories, and mourn their losses as fans.</p> <p><i>This sentence analyzes the quote by elaborating on the source's idea ("a common identity for residents of the city").</i></p>
<p>9.) An original claim or idea about the insight you've gained from working the two quotes together</p>	<p>9.) An original claim or idea about the insight you've gained from working the two quotes together</p> <p>Sports have the power to bring people together, building new types of social connections that overcome preexisting social distinctions to create a greater unifying social connection.</p> <p><i>This sentence develops the claim of the topic sentence ("Sports serve an essential social role") and connects it to the ideas of both sources (sports as a "new type of social connection" and "overcoming social distinctions").</i></p>

Here's what it looks like when we put it together!

(1) Besides functioning as entertainment, sports serve an essential social role in organizing modern human society. (2) As traditional social institutions dwindle in importance, sociologist Craig T. Russell argues that sports have stepped in to fill that role. (3) Russell notes that “the decline of organized religion affiliations has been offset by an increase in sports event attendance, as well as a growth in television viewership” (75). (4) Consequently, instead of developing social bonds through religious institutions, people are being connected through their experience of sporting events and teams. (5) This shift to sports means that cities and states have begun to identify themselves as communities by their local sports teams. (6) Anthropologist Kathleen Dombrowski highlights how this shift to sports unifies these diverse communities. (7) According to Dombrowski, “the shift to cities being identified by their sports teams, such as LA with the Dodgers, Boston with the Red Sox...[and] Pittsburgh with the Steelers, provides a common identity for all residents of the city, regardless of their background” (139). (8) LA residents, whether they be Latino, wealthy celebrities, Asian American, working class, or first generation immigrants, can all celebrate the Dodgers’ victories, and mourn their losses as fans. (9) Sports have the power to bring people together, building new types of social connections that overcome preexisting social distinctions to create a greater unifying social connection.

Now it's your turn!

Use this “fill in the blank” version to create your own 9-sentence magic paragraph! Your essay does not need to adhere to this formula, but it can be a helpful way to consider how to develop a paragraph which incorporates research. Sometimes, it is helpful to build the paragraph from the middle out [or often from sentence three to seven, and then add the beginning and ending] sentence by sentence according to this “formula.”

- **Sentence one:** A topic sentence that makes a claim.

- **Sentence two:** Introduction of Quote one (from author A) by pointing to the main idea you want your reader to notice or providing background necessary to understand the quote.

- **Sentence three:** Quote 1 integrated smoothly into your own sentence.
They Say, I Say Templates for Introducing Quotations (page 47):
 - a. In her book, ____, X maintains that “_____.”
 - b. According to X, “_____.”
 - c. X agrees/disagrees when she writes, “_____.”

- **Sentence four:** Interpret or analyze the first quote.
They Say, I Say Templates for Explaining Quotations (page 48):
 - a. In other words, X believes _____.
 - b. The essence of X's argument is that _____.
 - c. In making this comment, X urges us to _____.
 - d. X's point is that _____.

- **Sentence five:** A sentence that explains the relationship of the idea from the first author to the idea from the second author. It is a bridge, transition, or connection between quote one and quote two.

- **Sentence six:** Introduce a 2nd quote (from Author B) by pointing to the main idea you want your reader to notice or providing background necessary to understand the quote.

- **Sentence seven:** Quote 2, incorporated smoothly into your own sentence.
They Say, I Say Templates for Introducing Quotations (page 47):
 - a. In her book, _____, X maintains that "_____."
 - b. According to X, "_____."
 - c. X agrees/disagrees when she writes, "_____."

- **Sentence eight:** Interpretation or analysis of the 2nd quote
They Say, I Say Templates for Explaining Quotations (page 48):
 - a. In other words, X believes _____.
 - b. The essence of X's argument is that _____.
 - c. In making this comment, X urges us to _____.
 - d. X's point is that _____.

- **Sentence nine:** An original claim or idea about the insight you've gained from working with the two quotes together.