Unity, Support, and the Topic Sentence
A paragraph is a group of sentences that develops an idea about a topic. A paragraph's controlling, or main, idea is usually summarized in a topic sentence, which functions in the paragraph as a thesis functions in an essay. Often, though not always, the topic sentence appears at the beginning of the paragraph.

Support your main idea with specific information—facts statistics, details, examples, illustrations, anecdotes—that backs it up. When every detail and example relate directly to the controlling idea, the paragraph has unity. A paragraph lacks unity when some of its sentences digress, presenting information or illustrations that do not support the topic sentence.

Development Patterns
The organization of a paragraph depends on your overall aim. The following list, though not exhaustive, describes several patterns of paragraph development:

- **From general to specific**: Use this pattern of organization to present a general idea first and then support it with details. Works well in introductory paragraphs.
- **From specific to general**: Use this pattern to give details first and then end with a generalization. Works well in results and discussion sections.
- **From known to new**: Use this to achieve cohesion between sentences by first presenting what readers already know (information previously presented) before introducing new information.
- **Climactic order**: Use this pattern to build up to your most important information.
- **Compare & contrast**: Use this pattern to show the similarities and/ or differences between two things.
- **Cause & effect**: Use this pattern to discuss causes or reasons for certain effects or results.
- **Chronological order**: Use this pattern to explain a sequence in time or to tell a story.
- **Spatial order**: Use this pattern to describe the relative physical positions of people or things.
- **Definition**: Use this pattern to clarify a term, assign meaning to a word, or discuss a concept.
- **Classification**: Use this pattern to group information into types based on categorical similarities.
- **Explanation of a process**: Use this pattern to show how something is done or how something works.