

Paragraph types: Definition

The starting point for a definition paragraph is a **simple definition*** which becomes the topic sentence of the paragraph.

Topic Sentence gives a simple definition

Support Sentences give more information through the use of examples, *description* or *explanation*

Concluding Sentence (usually unnecessary)

* A simple definition has three parts: **item**, **category** and **features**.

1. ITEM	2. CATEGORY	3. FEATURES
A forsythia	is a flowering shrub	With yellow bell-shaped blossoms.
Herbivores	are animals	which feed on plants.
Change	is a type of process	which involves passing from one state or phase to another.

Useful transitional words and phrases

in the foreground, in the middle distance, in the background, in the far distance, next to, near, up, down, between, above, below, on top of, beneath, left right, centre, front, back, middle, in the interior, on the exterior, on the inside, on the outside, surrounding

for example, for instance, an illustration of this, another example

For beginning an explanation

at first, initially, to begin with, in the beginning, first of all, the first step

For continuing an explanation

while, as, at the same time, the next step, after, next, then

For ending an explanation

finally, eventually, at last, the final /last step

Examples of questions requiring a *definition* paragraph

1. What is venture capital?
2. Define 'over-fishing'.
3. What are longitudinal dunes?
4. What is meant by protein quality?
5. What is cholera?

Sample paragraph 1

What are longitudinal dunes?

Longitudinal dunes are long low ridges of sand that lie approximately at right angles to the trend of the sand waves, or parallel to the direction of the wind. Some of the ridges are almost straight; others are slightly wavy. They range up to about 10 metres in height and 30 metres in width. Many are more than one and one-half kilometres long. Both sides of these dunes have practically the same slope and are usually covered with grass and shrubs. While the crest is usually bare of vegetation, on some dunes, even the crest is covered. Where this occurs, it means that wind action has stopped on this particular dune.

Sample paragraph 2

What is meant by protein quality?

The term protein quality refers to the ratio of essential amino acids (eaa) in a protein in comparison with the ratio required by the body. A high quality protein contains eaa in a ratio that matches human requirements. A protein which is lacking or low in one or more eaa is termed a low quality protein. The eaa which is in the shortest supply is called the 'limiting' amino acid. In general, animal proteins tend to be high quality while vegetable proteins tend to be low quality. The exception is soy protein which is quite high quality.

What is Cholera?

Cholera is an intestinal infection that can be described according to its cause, symptoms, and treatment. Cholera is caused by a bacterium, called Vibrio cholera. Contaminated food, water, or faeces can result in the rapid spread of this disease. Patients who have been exposed to the disease may exhibit mild to extreme symptoms. The primary signs are watery diarrhea and loss of water and salts. Other symptoms include clammy skin, wrinkled hands and feet, sunken eyes and a dry mouth. If the severe diarrhoea is not treated, it can be life-threatening because of dehydration and electrolyte imbalances. Possible treatments for cholera can include oral or intravenous replacement of fluids and salts as well as certain antibiotics. Prompt and appropriate treatment appears to significantly reduce the mortality rate and suffering.

