

# Writing Center

## Paragraph with Subtopics and Outline

Some paragraphs have multiple levels of support, called secondary supports or subtopics. The following outline illustrates the structure of such a paragraph.

Topic Sentence Aunt Jane is a talented cook.

- Subtopic 1 Salads
  - Support Gelatin salads
  - Support Caesar salads
- Subtopic 2 Desserts
  - Support German chocolate cake
  - Support Baked Alaska
- Subtopic 3 Sauces
  - Support Hollandaise
  - Support Mayonnaise
  - Support Tomato

Concluding Sentence Jane's cooking is memorable.

Note that each subtopic is an aspect of the controlling idea in the topic sentence. Each support is an example to illustrate the subtopic above it. On the other side of this page is a sample of a student paragraph based on this outline.

Sally Student  
English 111-01, TR 8 am  
Sept. 16, 1985  
Paragraph with Subtopics

### A Talented Cook

My fondness for good food is a direct result of the culinary skill of my Aunt Jane, whose dishes were the highlight of every family gathering during my childhood. Jane's salads, for example, were always fresh and imaginative. All of us enjoyed her strawberry gelatin mold with its garnish of fresh strawberries and, whipped cream. For a more tart taste, Jane might prepare a lime gelatin dish decorated with thin slices of lime and lemon. Our favorite salad was a Caesar, which Jane made especially good by mashing the anchovies and mixing the dressing at the table to the delight of all the children. In addition, Jane's desserts outshone her salads. She frequently name German chocolate cake from scratch, not only buying the finest baking chocolate but also grating fresh coconut for the frosting. Once Jane impressed her bridge club with a baked Alaska—made with homemade mocha ice cream. The flavor of that confection has never left my memory. Although Jane's salads and desserts won praise from everyone who tasted them, her sauces were the most impressive aspect of her cooking. While her friends and relatives were relying on canned and powdered sauces, Jane made hollandaise with egg yolks, lemons, and patience. Few people in the final quarter of the twentieth century have ever tasted homemade mayonnaise, but Aunt Jane's nieces and nephews will never forget the tangy garlic-lemon flavor of the creamiest mayonnaise in existence, a product of Jane's kitchen. Her family and friends were especially proud of Jane's ketchup and spaghetti sauce, lovingly prepared from tomatoes and herbs she had grown in how own garden. Aunt Jane certainly spoiled me and many of my relatives with her exceptional cooking talents; every good meal we eat today brings back fond memories of her skill.

## PARAGRAPH WITH SUBTOPICS: STUDENT MODEL

Sam Student  
English 111-02/TR 8 a.m.  
15 Feb. 1986  
Final Stage 2 Paragraph

### A Giving Person

My wife, Susanna, is a generous person. For example, she is involved in many youth-oriented programs. Serving as an advisor for the 4-H clubs or the area, she organizes and directs programs designed to teach young people about leadership, citizenship, and self-esteem. In addition, Susanna serves as a sponsor for various youth groups at our church. As a sponsor, she organizes and chaperons field trips and campouts. Equally typical of her generosity is Susanna's devotion to helping the elderly. Through the city's agriculture department, she organized a pet therapy program that brings homeless pets to visit nursing homes and shut-ins. Susanna also visits Eva, an elderly widow in our neighborhood, whenever she can. Eva says that Susanna's visits bring a ray of sunshine to what otherwise would be a dull and lonely day. Her most important generous attribute is Susanna's assistance of disabled people in the community. Last summer, for instance, she devoted almost every Saturday morning to instructing handicapped children in horseback riding as part of a recreational therapy program. As busy as she is, Susanna finds time to volunteer an afternoon a month supervising swimming lessons for disabled children. Indeed, Susanna gives her time generously to help others.