

Writing: Development

Writing is developed when the ideas are explained in sufficient detail. You need to show that you have thought about the topic and that you have something meaningful to say. Paragraphs that lack development often sound too general or are redundant.

You can develop a paragraph by adding supporting sentences. Supporting sentences can give examples, explanations, details, descriptions, facts, reasons, etc. Which types of supporting sentences you use will depend on your topic. In researched essays, using and explaining sources can also help you develop your ideas.

Compare the examples below. The first body paragraph is not developed well. The ideas are repeated and there are no solid examples, details, reasons, etc. Find the supporting sentences in the revised version that help develop the ideas.

Example 1: Body Paragraph (Little development)

The Great Pyramid in Egypt was built long ago and is still a Wonder of the World. The Great Pyramid was built thousands of years ago by the Egyptians. Egyptian laborers built the Pyramid. The Great Pyramid's size is great. The Great Pyramid is amazing.

Example 2: Body Paragraph (Better development)

The Great Pyramid in Egypt was built long ago and is still a Wonder of the World. The Great Pyramid, a large pyramid-shaped stone building, was built thousands of years ago by the Egyptians. It was built around 2560 BCE by what are believed by archaeologists to have been paid laborers (Taylor, 2022). The Egyptian laborers built the Pyramid for one of their pharaohs as his final resting place. A pharaoh was a ruler of Egypt, and in that time was considered a god. At about 755 feet square at the base and 482 feet tall when completed (Taylor, 2022), the size of this pyramid tomb matched its royal purpose. It has lost some height over time, but is still over 440 feet tall today (Public Broad Casting Service, n.d.) and is frequently visited by admirers from around the world. The ancient Great Pyramid of Giza is truly a Wonder of the World.

References:

Public Broadcasting Service. (n.d.). *Nova online/pyramids/scaling the pyramids/height*. PBS. Retrieved December 4, 2022, from [source](#)

Taylor, D. (2022, September 1). *Great Pyramid of Giza*. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. <https://edtechbooks.org/-seYL>

The first example paragraph had poor development because the ideas stopped too soon. The writer basically only said that the great pyramid is a world wonder, was created by Egyptians, and is large. Because the ideas in the 1st paragraph stop too soon and didn't give enough information, the reader is confused about why the writer is giving this information. The sentences are also very repetitive.

The revised body paragraph has better development. It also stated that the Great Pyramid is an impressive structure in Egypt, but it did not stop too soon. It gives lots of examples and relevant details. The 2nd paragraph gives enough information to explain the main idea, so the reader isn't confused.

Problems with Development

Two common problems with development are

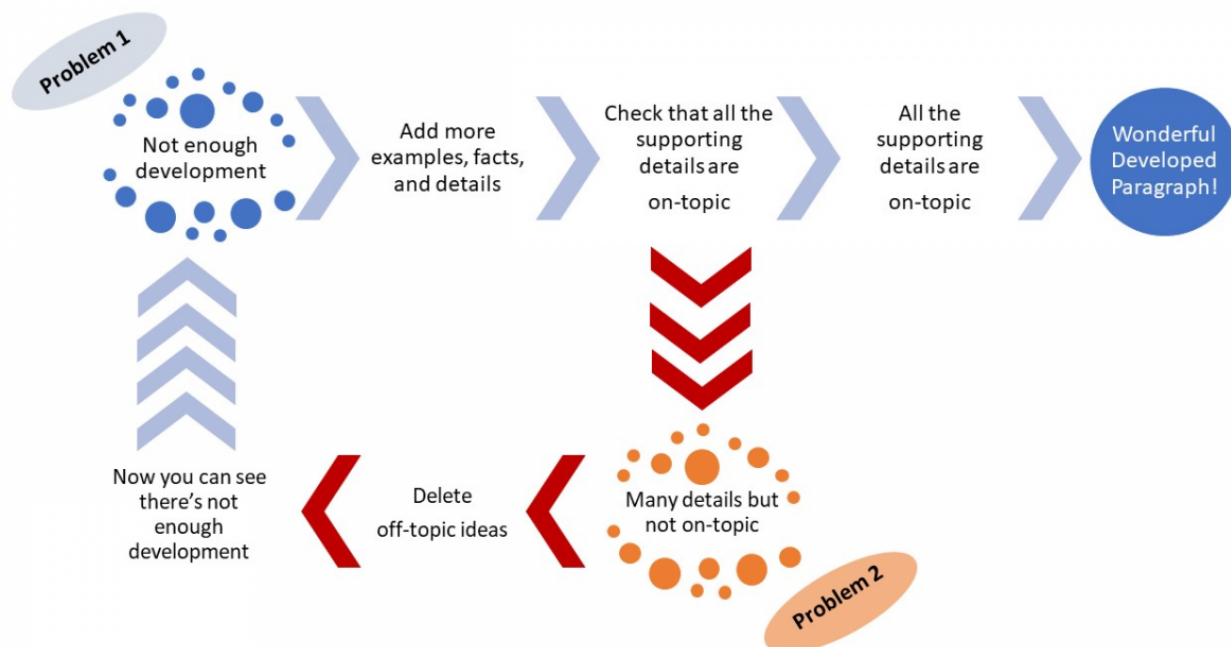
1. the obvious lack of development due to missing details
2. the less obvious lack of development due to off-topic details.

The first may be thought of as a matter of quantity; there is not a variety of details to explain the main idea. The second may be thought of as a matter of quality; the details written don't actually support the main idea.

The first problem is easy to see when you look at a paragraph. The paragraph itself may be smaller or shorter because there just aren't any supporting sentences written. Or, the paragraph may look long visually, but the sentences just repeat the same idea over and over, so there is actually only one or two supporting details instead of many. The reader can't understand the main idea well because the supporting details that would explain it are so limited.

The second problem might be more difficult to see because when you look at the paragraph, it visually looks full. It *seems* like there are many details supporting the main idea. However, many of the sentences aren't actually about the main idea, so they don't count. The reader can't understand the main idea well, because there aren't really that many details explaining it. Once you get rid of the off-topic sentences, you may notice that you don't have many sentences with on-topic sentences left. This brings you back to problem 1: not having enough development.

See the flow chart below for more about these problems.



Developing Questions

You can revise a paragraph that lacks development by adding supporting sentences. In order to know what supporting details the reader needs to understand your main idea, you can ask developing questions. Developing questions are questions that help you think like a reader to find where to add support.

You can start revising a paragraph by asking questions about the topic sentence (or the other supporting sentences). Ask questions like "Why?" "Like what?" and "How?" The answers to these questions can give you ideas to include that will develop your paragraph.

In order to revise the paragraph, the author might have asked questions like the ones below.

Sentence Being Considered: The Great Pyramid in Egypt was built long ago and is still a Wonder of the World.

- Question: What does that mean?
 - Answer: That means the large pyramid-shaped building called the Great Pyramid is very old and famous.
- Question: How long ago was the Great Pyramid built?
 - Answer: Thousands of years ago. Around 2560 BCE according to Taylor, 2022.
- Question: Why did they build the pyramid?
 - Answer: For their pharaoh as a tomb.
- Question: What is a pharaoh?
 - Answer: A ruler of Egypt that was considered a god.
- Question: Why is the great pyramid called "great"?
 - Answer: One reason is its size. It was 482 feet tall (Taylor, 2022) and is now 449.5 feet tall (Public Broad Casting Service, n.d.).
- Question: Why is it a "Wonder of the World"?
 - Answer: It is a famous and amazing structure. Many people admire it.

Exercises

Exercise 4.14: Discussion

After reading the 2 examples about the Great Pyramid, discuss the following questions with a partner.

1. What do you feel as a reader when you read the 1st example?
2. What questions do you have as a reader when you read the 1st example?
3. Why does the 2nd example have better development?

Exercise 4.15: Ask questions to generate supporting sentences

Write questions about this topic sentence or the answers to the questions you write.

Topic sentence: Finally, because you are not receiving enough nutrients, especially carbohydrates and sodium, it is likely that you will experience nausea.

- Question:
 - Answer:
- Question:
 - Answer:
- Question:
 - Answer:



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