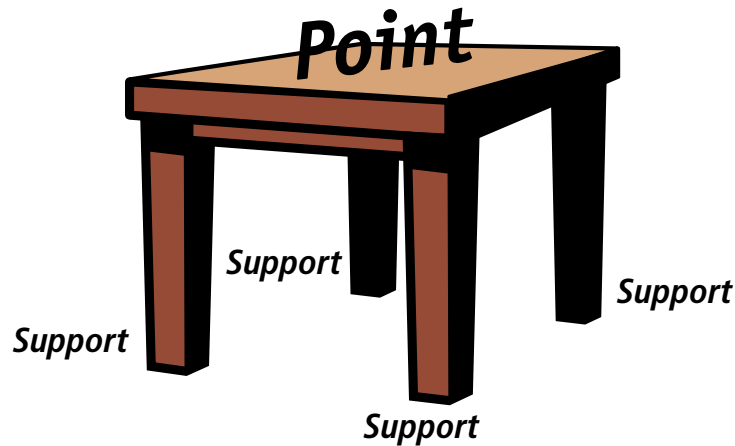


3 Point and Support Outlines

A **paragraph** is a series of sentences that support a point. A paragraph typically starts with a point (also called the **topic sentence**), and the rest of the paragraph provides specific details to support and develop the point. The illustration below shows the relationship between point and support.



An outline is a helpful way to plan a paper or to analyze it. An **outline** shows at a glance the point of a paper and a numbered list of the items that support the point. Here is an example of a paragraph and an outline of the paragraph.

People in my family love our dog Punch. However, I have several reasons for wanting to get rid of Punch. First of all, he knows I don't like him. Sometimes he gives me an evil look and curls his top lip back to show me his teeth. The message is clearly, "Someday I'm going to bite you." Another reason to get rid of Punch is he sheds everywhere. Every surface in our house is covered with Punch hair. I spend more time brushing it off my clothes than I do mowing the lawn. Last of all, Punch is an early riser, while (on weekends) I am not. He will start barking and whining to go outside at 7 a.m., and it's my job to take care of him. When I told my family that I had a list of good reasons for getting rid of Punch, they said they would make up a list of reasons to get rid of me.

Point: I have several reasons for wanting to get rid of Punch.

Supporting detail: 1. He knows I don't like him.

Supporting detail: 2. Punch sheds everywhere.

Supporting detail: 3. Punch is an early riser.



ACTIVITY 6

Look at each of the following five paragraphs and then complete the outline for each paragraph. Notice that words such as *first*, *also*, *another*, and *finally* often signal each new item of support.

1. **There are advantages to watching a football game or other sports event on television instead of going to the event.** For one thing, it's cheaper to watch the event at home. A ticket for the event and the cost of getting there and maybe some snacks could easily cost \$100 or more. For another, it's less stressful to watch at home. You don't have to deal with traffic or other transportation headaches. You don't have to put up with noisy, pushy crowds. And you'll sit on a soft sofa or chair, not a hard bench or stadium seat. Finally, you get more information from watching a sports event on television than from attending the event. Cameras show the action up close, and announcers explain each play as it takes place.

Point: _____

Supporting detail: 1. _____

Supporting detail: 2. _____

Supporting detail: 3. _____

2. **People lie for different reasons.** One common reason is to avoid hurting someone's feelings. For example, a friend might ask, "Do you like my new haircut?" If you think it's ugly, you might still answer, "Yes." Another common reason for lying is to avoid a fight. Say a friend angers you and then asks, "Are you upset with me?" You might answer, "No," to avoid an argument. People also lie so that they'll fit in, as when you listen to a boring person and politely say, "That's interesting." In addition, people lie to avoid spending more time with someone. For instance, you might lie, "I have to go now."

Point: _____

Supporting detail: 1. _____

Supporting detail: 2. _____

Supporting detail: 3. _____

Supporting detail: 4. _____

3. **High schools should require all students to wear uniforms.** To begin with, uniforms would save parents money. Parents could simply buy two or three inexpensive uniforms. They wouldn't feel any pressure to spend money on designer jeans, name-brand shoes, or other high-priced clothes. Also, students wouldn't have to worry about what to wear. They would get up every morning knowing how they'd be dressed for school. Their attention, then, could be more on learning than on making a fashion statement. Last of all, uniforms would help all students get along. Rich students wouldn't be able to show off by wearing expensive clothes, and poor students wouldn't have any reason to feel shabby. When rich and poor wear the same uniforms, there's a sense that everyone is equal.

Point: _____

Supporting detail: 1. _____

Supporting detail: 2. _____

Supporting detail: 3. _____

4. Many people think that they can't improve their writing. **The truth is that some tips can help you become a better writer.** First of all, write often. Writing improves with practice. Secondly, organize your writing with an outline. An outline gives you a structure to build on. In addition, write in a plain style. Don't try to use fancy language. Write as you would speak. Say what you mean simply and clearly. Finally, stick to your main ideas. Nothing improves writing more than avoiding unneeded words and statements.

Point: _____

Supporting detail: 1. _____

Supporting detail: 2. _____

Supporting detail: 3. _____

Supporting detail: 4. _____

5. **Certain basic fears are part of our lives.** For one thing, we fear being disrespected. Bullies play on this fear. They cruelly tease their victims and take away their self-respect. And we feel hurt and disrespected when someone doesn't return our phone calls or walks past us without saying hello. Another of our deepest fears is being alone. We all know in our hearts that we need each other. Not having other people in our lives makes us feel empty inside. A third basic fear, once we become adults, is growing old. Every year, Americans use plastic surgery to try to turn back the clock. And our magazines and TV shows and movies are full of beautiful young people. We do not want to be reminded that the clock keeps ticking.

Point: _____

Supporting detail: 1. _____

Supporting detail: 2. _____

Supporting detail: 3. _____