

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, <i>description</i> or <i>explanation</i>
Concluding Sentence (usually unnecessary)

(See illustration, description or explanation for useful transition words and phrases.)

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

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?

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.