

Paragraph Types: Description

A **description** paragraph is required when you are asked to describe features or characteristics of something. This may include how something looks, sounds, smells, tastes, or feels. You should provide specific details of the most important features and use appropriate adjectives to describe attributes and qualities.

Topic Sentence identifies the phenomenon to be described

Support Sentences give an organised description of its parts, functions, and/or characteristics

Ways of sequencing include the following:

- from left to right
- from most important features to least important features
- from main characteristics to minor details.

Concluding Sentence is usually unnecessary unless the definition is embedded in a longer text. If this is the case, a concluding sentence may link the description to the next paragraph or series of paragraphs.

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

Examples of questions requiring a *description* paragraph

Describe the main features of *Heteronema*.

Describe the major characteristics of obsessive-compulsive disorder.

Describe a single-dish radiotelescope.

Describe the castle at Vincennes.

Describe the main features of the lemur.

Describe a situation in which communication difficulties occurred.

Sample paragraph 1

Describe the main features of *Heteronema*.

Heteronema is a flagellate protozoan. It is spindle-shaped, 65 microns in length and 10 microns in diameter (Wyatt, 2015). At the anterior end, there is a reservoir where the two flagella arise, there is a contractile vacuole near the reservoir, and there are several large paramylon bodies scattered through the body (Wyatt, 2015). The single nucleus is egg-shaped and lies near the centre of the body (Wyatt, 2015).

Sample paragraph 2

Describe the main features of the *lemur*.

Lemurs and their relatives are small mammals with thick or woolly hair and large eyes. Some have long bushy tails, others have rat-like tails, and a few have only a stub (Mason, 2011). The lemur has a moist nose, a cleft upper lip, a striking foxlike muzzle, and a good sense of smell (Bremmer, 2015). Most lemurs have nails on the fingers and toes, except for the second toe, which has a claw that is called the 'toilet claw' because it is used in grooming (Bremmer, 2015). Lemurs also groom their fur with the tongue and the lower front teeth, which slant outward almost horizontally (Bremmer, 2015).

Sample paragraph 3

Describe the major characteristics of obsessive-compulsive disorder.

Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) is a severe and disabling clinical condition. It usually begins in late adolescence or early adulthood, and is characterised by obsessive thoughts that continue regardless of efforts that are made by the sufferer to challenge the behaviours (Mallory, 2016). People with OCD frequently perform tasks repetitively because they are seeking relief from the anxiety that is created by their obsession (Mitchell, 2017). Some of these common compulsions that sufferers may have are counting specific things (such as money, footsteps, letters), repeatedly washing their hands, continually clearing their throats, persistently ensuring that certain items are in a straight line, repeatedly checking that their parked cars have been locked before leaving them, constantly organising things in a certain way, turning lights on and off, opening and closing doors, touching objects a set number of times before exiting a room, and walking in a certain routine by stepping on a certain colour or shape of floor tile. The strength of the observed addiction or compulsion leads to a diagnosis of the disorder.