



CHAPTER 09

the act of writing | develop it! | paragraph unity

When you write an essay, developing your **THESIS** with argument, evidence, proof, and discussion, you do it one paragraph after another, developing your **THESIS** from one paragraph to the next. Right? In order to communicate your ideas, in order to make your argument clear, each paragraph must have **PARAGRAPH UNITY**. So what do we mean by **PARAGRAPH UNITY**?

PARAGRAPH UNITY means that, in each paragraph, you write about **one** and *only one* and *not more than one* idea. You will organize each paragraph around one **MAIN IDEA**. For example, Diane Ackerman would not have written:

The invention of printing aided and abetted lovers. All the people who had been friends said good-bye to each other.

You would not write:

I am a Freshman in college. Only 6% of Americans now smoke cigarettes.

You have begun with **one** idea, so you must continue with that idea:

I am a Freshman in college. I graduated high school the year before last, but I couldn't begin college because I had to work for a year to save enough money for tuition and books.

You could go on writing more in this paragraph, as long as you stick to your **one** idea:

I am a Freshman in college. I graduated high school the year before last, but I couldn't begin college because I had to work for a year to save enough money for tuition and books. Working in a gas station as a mechanic, I saved up enough for my first year. I'm hoping now to get a scholarship to help me go on.

One idea: "I am a Freshman in college." Everything else is about that **one** idea.



I've decided to go to law school. My uncle became a lawyer, and he loves it. Every day he spends the whole day fighting for peoples' rights.

Next paragraph, also **one** idea: "I've decided to go to law school."

The second paragraph begins with the next idea, **developing** the author's **THESIS**.

one paragraph = one idea
each paragraph *develops from* the last paragraph

Let's imagine that we're in a class where the Professor gives us this assignment:

Write an essay analyzing the importance of books in Diane Ackerman's "Modern Love."

We're going to write this essay for you, reviewing all of the **STEPS FOR DEVELOPING AN ESSAY**. Notice that each paragraph focuses on one idea, so that each paragraph has **PARAGRAPH UNITY**, and each paragraph develops the **THESIS**. In the essay that follows, we will indicate, in the boxes beside each paragraph, the *one idea* that gives **PARAGRAPH UNITY** to that paragraph.

steps for developing an essay

Let's say we write an essay with the following thesis:

Step 1. (Present Your Thesis)

In the modern world, we are free to choose whom we love, and books have helped us to find that freedom. But it wasn't always that way.

Main Idea:
Books have helped us find the freedom to choose our love.

Step 2. (Present Examples As Evidence That Prove Your Thesis)

You can't just state your thesis and expect your reader to believe it. You have to prove it. *How* do you prove it? You use **EXAMPLES** as **EVIDENCE** that prove your thesis. Where do you get examples that you can use for evidence? You get those examples from inside the essay or the books you're reading, or you

get them from the real world. We're going to take **EXAMPLES** from world literature, and from Diane Ackerman's essay and use these examples as **EVIDENCE** to **PROVE** our thesis.

In her essay "Modern Love," Diane Ackerman writes, "When I think about the essence of being modern, the changes in attitude that led to the life we now know, three things come to mind: choice, privacy, and books." In the modern world, we are free to choose whom we love, and books have helped us to find that freedom. But it wasn't always that way. **Shakespeare's famous characters, Romeo and Juliet, who lived in the old world, did not have this choice.**

Main Idea:

Choice, privacy, and books have given us the freedom to choose our love, a freedom Romeo and Juliet did not have.

Step 3. (Discuss the Example/Evidence)

In her essay "Modern Love," Diane Ackerman writes, "When I think about the essence of being modern, the changes in attitude that led to the life we now know, three things come to mind: choice, privacy, and books." In the modern world, we are free to choose whom we love, and books have helped us to find that freedom. But it wasn't always that way. Shakespeare's famous characters, Romeo and Juliet, who lived in the old world, did not have this choice.

Could "choice, privacy, and books" have saved Romeo and Juliet? When Romeo and Juliet tried to live as modern lovers, they chose each other. But their families, in the ways of the old world, prohibited their love. In the end, Romeo and Juliet both die for their love.

Main Idea:

While Romeo and Juliet chose each other, their families prohibited their love.

How is it that, in the modern world, books give us choice, including the choice to choose our love? Books give us many freedoms, many choices. **For example, if you read about people who have freedom of religion, you see that you are free to practice your own religion. If you read about people who have the freedom to choose their love, you see that you, too, are free to choose your own love.**

Main Idea:

Books give us many freedoms.

Now, we'll discuss *how* this example provides **EVIDENCE** for our **THESIS**. Remember, our **THESIS** is: *In the modern world, we are free to choose whom we love, and books have helped us to find that freedom. But it wasn't always that way.*

Step 4. (Discuss How the Evidence Proves Your Thesis)

In her essay “Modern Love,” Diane Ackerman writes, “When I think about the essence of being modern, the changes in attitude that led to the life we now know, three things come to mind: choice, privacy, and books.” In the modern world, we are free to choose whom we love, and books have helped us to find that freedom. But it wasn't always that way. Romeo and Juliet, for example, who lived in the old world, did not have that choice.

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Books can give us many freedoms, many choices. If you read about people who have freedom of religion, for example, you see that you are free to practice your own religion. If you read about people who have the freedom to choose their love, you see that you, too, are free to choose your own love.

If Romeo and Juliet's parents had had easy access to books and read about the freedom to choose love, maybe they would have just let Romeo and Juliet choose each other. If that happened, poor Romeo and poor Juliet would not have died for their love. Of course, if that happened, we wouldn't have Shakespeare's wonderful play.

Main Idea:

Perhaps access to books would have saved Romeo and Juliet, but, not having that access, they died for their love.

Now, We'll move on to offer another **EXAMPLE** as further **EVIDENCE** of our thesis. Remember, that the **THESIS** is: *In the modern world, we are free to choose whom we love, and books have helped us to find that freedom. But it wasn't always that way.*

Step 5. (Further Develop Your Evidence or Present New Evidence)

In Step 5, we'll begin with another idea. **NOTICE** that our new idea *grows out of* what we have already written. Our new idea *still supports* our thesis, but it develops that support in a new direction. We'll put that new idea in red.

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If a book is good, it can give us a powerful experience. If you and I read the same book, we can relate to each other’s feelings.

Main Idea:

Good books can allow us, as readers, to relate to each other’s feelings.

Step 2. (Present Evidence for the New Idea)

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If a book is good, it can give us a powerful experience. If you and I read the same book, we can relate to each other's feelings. **Diane Ackerman writes, "A shared book could speak to lovers in confidence, increasing their sense of intimacy even if the loved one was absent or forbidden."**

Main Idea (more developed):

Good books can allow us, as readers, to relate to each other's feelings.

Step 3. (Discuss Evidence for New Idea)

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Main Idea (more developed):

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if the loved one was absent or forbidden.” **Books can cross the most difficult distances that might separate us from one another.**

Step 4. (Discuss How Your Evidence Supports Your Thesis)

In her essay “Modern Love,” Diane Ackerman writes, “When I think about the essence of being modern, the changes in attitude that led to the life we now know, three things come to mind: choice, privacy, and books.” In the modern world, we are free to choose whom we love, and books have helped us to find that freedom. But it wasn’t always that way. Romeo and Juliet, for example, who lived in the old world, did not have that choice.

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If a book is good, it can give us a powerful experience. If you and I read the same book, we can relate to each other’s feelings. Diane Ackerman writes, “A shared book could speak to lovers in confidence, increasing their sense of intimacy even if the loved one was absent or forbidden.” Books can cross the most difficult distances that might separate us from one another.

If you and your lover are separated, or if your families forbid your love, and you decide that you will each read the same book, you have shared something, you have become intimate, and you can feel closer to each other. **If you feel close enough to each other through your reading, you may end up together, even if your parents continue to forbid it.** Hopefully, your parents will come around to your point of view, and you will end up much better off than Romeo and Juliet did.

Main Idea:

The shared intimacy of books could make your love work.



Perhaps our parents or grandparents were not free to choose whom to marry and their families chose for them. This happened to two of our grandparents. They met in Romania, but their families didn't like each other and forbade the marriage. Luckily, our grandparents could flee to America, which they did, where they married and raised a family.

If your parents don't believe in this free choice, you can certainly give them books to read that talk about the modern freedom to love. That may bring them around. On the other hand, maybe your parents already believe in your freedom of choice. In that case, you and your chosen can sit out on the porch together, each reading your own copy of *Romeo and Juliet*.

Main Idea:

The free choice of our parents and grandparents.

Main Idea:

Dealing with your parents in regard to the freedom to choose your love.

We have written this essay using this pattern:

- STEP 1** — Thesis
- STEP 2** — Evidence
- STEP 3** — Discuss evidence
- STEP 4** — Discuss *how* evidence proves thesis
- STEP 5** — Present a new idea in support of your thesis
- STEP 2** — Present evidence for new idea
- STEP 3** — Discuss evidence
- STEP 4** — Discuss *how* evidence proves new idea



Chapter Review: Paragraph Unity

Paragraph unity means that, in each paragraph, you write about **one** and *only one* and *not more than one* idea.

Each paragraph develops from the last paragraph and develops the thesis.

Review of steps for developing an essay:

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- STEP 2** — Evidence
- STEP 3** — Discuss evidence
- STEP 4** — Discuss *how* evidence proves thesis
- STEP 5** — Present a new idea in support of your thesis
- STEP 2** — Present evidence for new idea
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