

Further Developing Paragraphs and Essays

A Writer's Reference covers these strategies and more on pp. 20-31.

1. Clarify the main points

- Each paragraph should have a main point that is connected to the main point of the entire essay. For example, if the main idea of the paper is *"Giving a dog a bath is difficult,"* the writer does not have much room to expand.
- If the main idea is *"Giving a dog a bath is difficult because many dogs do not like water and they do not like standing still for a long period of time,"* the writer has room to cover all of these topics in the paper. From this main idea, each paragraph would have topic sentences that address the difficulties an owner may experience: dogs who do not like water and dogs who do not like to stand still.

2. Provide examples and illustrations

- Once the writer states the main idea of a paragraph, the writer can use examples from sources to show the point more clearly.
- If the paragraph is about the difficulties an owner may experience while giving his or her dog a bath, the writer could find a source that talks about this topic. See the example below:
"Polly Poodle, the owner of A Dog Wash, explains that many owners hate giving their dogs a bath because dogs run away, make a mess in the house, and splash water everywhere."
Using examples and stories from sources is a way to support and develop the points.

3. Add description to make examples stronger

- Examples and details have their own context, and a writer can use them to further develop the paper. Be careful not to give too many unnecessary details, but details that add support or credibility to the examples can be helpful.
- For example, stating Polly Poodle's education level and years of running her own business can add support to her explanation. See example below:
"Polly Poodle is the forty-eight-year-old owner of A Dog Wash. She has a master's degree in animal science and has successfully run her own business for twenty years, and she has many satisfied, regular customers."
Using relevant details can add support to the paper to further expand the ideas without adding unnecessary fluff to the paper.

4. Compare and contrast

- Another way to expand and develop the essay is to offer comparisons or contrasts to the main ideas. Make sure the comparisons and contrasts are related to the points by showing the reader the direct relationships between the things being compared or contrasted.

- For example, discussing how giving a dog a bath is harder or easier than giving a cat a bath could help further explain the difficulties of giving a dog a bath:
“Many pet owners find that giving a cat a bath is both similar to and different from giving a dog a bath. For example, cats are usually smaller than dogs, and they may be harder to hold while being bathed. Cats also have sharper claws than dogs, so the owner must wear more protective clothing to prevent scratches. Despite these differences, owners agree that bathing cats or dogs is often not a pleasant experience.”

5. Define terms and ideas

- When working with subjects that may have terms or titles that are unfamiliar to the general public, further develop the essay by adding definitions of the words. Be sure that the definitions are relevant to the main idea.
- For example, if a subject discusses military activities, the writer can help readers by fully defining the different types of activities or terms to be discussed. Below is an example about flea medication for cats and dogs:
“After finishing a bath, applying Revolution to a dog or cat is important. Revolution is the leading brand of flea, tick, and heartworm protection for cats and dogs.”
Definitions can often help to define the main terms that the writer plans to use throughout the paper.

6. Repeat key words throughout the paper

- One way to organize and develop the paper is to repeat important words throughout the paper. Often, words used in the thesis statement should reappear in the paragraphs that are related to each idea.
- If the thesis of the dog-bath paper is that “giving dogs a bath is difficult because it is messy and time consuming,” these words should reappear in their specific paragraphs and in the conclusion:
“One reason giving a dog a bath is difficult for the owner is that it is often a messy experience. . . . Another reason the owner hates bathing a dog is that it is time consuming.”
Repeating specific words and key phrases can add unity and connectedness to the paper.

7. Use transition words between sentences and paragraphs

- Transition words are important for helping ideas flow smoothly within a paragraph and within a paper as a whole. A list of common transition words can be found in *A Writer’s Reference* on p. 490. Use transition words to connect ideas between sentences and between paragraphs.
- When transitioning between points in a paragraph, use words like *first*, *second*, *also*, *before*, *after*, etc. See example below:
“When giving a dog a bath, the owner should first fill the tub with water and bubbles before bringing the dog into the bathroom. . . . Therefore, to decrease stress, the owner should make a plan before starting “bath time” or make an appointment at a dog wash facility.”

The Initial Text

Many pet owners hate bathing their dogs. Some of the reasons that owners hate dog baths are that dog baths are messy and take too much time. Instead of stressing themselves out by fighting with their dogs, owners should consider scheduling appointments at dog wash centers and letting someone else bathe their dogs.

The Amended Text

Numbers in superscript correspond to the techniques mentioned above:

¹ Giving a dog a bath is difficult because many dogs do not like water and do not like standing still for a long period of time. ² Polly Poodle, the owner of A Dog Wash, explains that many owners hate bathing their dogs because dogs run away, make a mess in the house, and splash water everywhere. ⁷ Another reason owners hate bathing their dogs is that it is time consuming. ¹ Bathing dogs is difficult because many dogs do not like water and do not like standing still for a long period of time. ⁴ Many pet owners find that giving a cat a bath is both similar to and different from giving a dog a bath. For example, cats are usually smaller than dogs and may be harder to hold while being bathed. Cats also have sharper claws than dogs, and the owner must wear more protective clothing to prevent scratches. Despite these differences, owners agree that bathing cats or dogs is often not a pleasant experience. ⁵ After finishing a bath, applying Revolution ointment to a dog or cat is important. Revolution medication is the leading brand of flea, tick, and heartworm protection for cats and dogs. ³ Polly Poodle is the forty-eight-year-old owner of A Dog Wash. She has a master's degree in animal science and has successfully run her own business for twenty years, and she has many satisfied, regular customers. Polly recommends that ⁷ "when giving a dog a bath, the owner should first fill the tub with water and bubbles before bringing the dog into the bathroom." When considering how ⁶ messy and time consuming bathing dogs can be, owners should make a plan before starting "bath time," or they should make an appointment at a dog wash facility.

Important reminder

Not all techniques fit every paper; use the techniques that best fit the paper. For more help on overall organization styles and more ways to develop an essay, see pp. 20-31 of *A Writer's Reference*.