**Paragraph Structure, Topic Sentences and Transitions**

Good essays are easy to read and follow a logical development. Structuring the content of your essay in an organized way is thus critical to making sure your reader(s) understand the argument you are making. Even the most content-rich essay can be misinterpreted if it is not structured properly.

A good structure relies upon effective paragraphing. You should try to only include one main content point per paragraph, even if this means some paragraphs are much smaller than others; the key when writing an essay that defends a thesis statement is to use one paragraph for each **reason** that you present to provide support for your main claim.

Once you have split your essay into discrete paragraphs, you should add in **topic sentences** to begin each one; these sentences should act as signposts for your reader(s), telling them clearly and succinctly what they can expect to read about in the following paragraph. You can think of them as mini development statements that map the logical development of your essay from paragraph to paragraph.

Finally, you should add in **transitions** (little words and phrases) that link each sentence together smoothly and make everything easy to read. Words such as ‘initially’, ‘secondly’, ‘however’, ‘furthermore’ and ‘lastly,’ and phrases such as ‘as a result’, ‘on the other hand’ and ‘in addition’ are typical examples that you probably already use on a day-to-day basis.

For more information on effective paragraphing, we advise you to read the following student guide before coming to class: ‘Organizing’

**Activity 1**

Think about the different elements that make a piece of writing effective, and come to class prepared to discuss some of these.

**Activity 2**

Also, make sure that you bring **at least two** primary sources that you have found to use in your essay; you will work on writing paragraphs about these with a partner in class.