***Techniques of Paragraph Writing***

**What is a paragraph?** Paragraphs represent the building blocks of your essay (or piece of written work). In this way, paragraphs provide your work with a structure, which allows you to organise your points effectively. They also provide the means by which you communicate knowledge, understanding and analytical skills. However, more than this, paragraphs are the building blocks of your argument.

Each paragraph forms a layer of your argument; as you add paragraphs to your work, you are gradually building and adding depth to your argument.

In most pieces of work, each paragraph expresses a single point or aspect of your argument. But paragraphs – and their organisation within a piece of work – should also assist the reader in following and understanding your argument. The first and last sentences, for example, should steer the reader from one point to the next in a seamless and logical way.

Paragraphs fulfil an important function in signposting to the reader each point or aspect of your argument. It is therefore very important that you have a clear idea of the essay’s overall structure before you begin writing. Try to organise you paragraphs clearly and logically, in a way that heightens the impact of your argument.

**Paragraph structure**

A paragraph doesn’t need to have a complicated structure for it to be effective, but it does need to do several things:

* convey the depth of your own knowledge and understanding;
* highlight supporting evidence;
* demonstrate analytical skills, such as analysis and evaluation;

In order to meet this criteria, the following structure is suggested:

**Topic sentence**

The topic sentence is the headline of the paragraph. In other words, in its opening sentence, you must make it very clear to the reader what the paragraph is about. You need to be specific; remember, each paragraph deals only with an aspect or element of your argument, rather than the whole thing. Focus on the point you are trying to make.

**Discourse / debate**

Following the topic sentence, in one or two sentences, set out the discourse or debate on this particular point (i.e. the perspectives of academics or published authors). Together, these sentences frame your own viewpoint, which comes next.

**Constructing a paragraph**

Having set out the academic context in the discourse / debate section, it is now time to express your own view. You are usually expected to express your view in a scholarly and objective way. This might be achieved by using the third person and commenting on the views highlighted in the discourse debate section. (E.g. ‘However, whilst this may be true, it can be argued that . . . .’.)

**Supporting evidence**

Your own view should always be supported by relevant and appropriate evidence. Depending on your subject, it may consist of the views of academic.

**Signpost next paragraph**

Ideally, a paragraph will end with a sentence that steers the reader to the next point. This is a difficult skill to develop; it is much easier to do if you have planned the overall structure of your essay clearly and carefully.

**Tips for an effective and complete paragraph:**

i. Paragraphs are the building blocks of an argument, not only an essay.

ii. Plan your essays carefully and clarify your argument before beginning.

iii. Structure your paragraphs clearly (try using the structure suggested here)