

Writing a “one idea” paragraph

I often use a “firstly, secondly, finally” structure in my main body paragraphs. However, this is only possible when we have 3 ideas (e.g. 3 reasons, 3 advantages etc.).

If we only have **one** idea, we need to explain it in much more detail. As usual, I try to write 5 sentences:

- I start with a topic sentence
- then explain in detail
- I sometimes use phrases like “In fact” or “In other words” to begin sentences that explain my idea in more depth or in a different way
- Sometimes I give an example
- or an alternative (explain the opposite of my idea, using a sentence beginning with “if”)
- or a result (as a result of this idea,...) - this could be a ‘concluding’ sentence

Let’s use the question below as an example

As well as making money, businesses also have social responsibilities. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Here’s my 4-paragraph essay plan:

1. Introduction: introduce the topic and completely agree
2. Main paragraph: explain why you agree that businesses need to make money, and what would happen if they didn’t (perhaps mention that many social responsibilities depend on money)
3. Main paragraph: explain why you agree that businesses also have social responsibilities (give examples)
4. Conclusion: repeat / summarise your answer

Here’s paragraph 2:

On the one hand, I accept that businesses must make money in order to survive in a competitive world. It seems logical that the priority of any company should be to cover its running costs, such as employees’ wages and payments for buildings and utilities. On top of these costs, companies also need to invest in improvements and innovations if they wish to remain successful. If a company is unable to pay its bills or meet the changing needs of customers, any concerns about social responsibilities become irrelevant. In other words, a company can only make a positive contribution to society if it is in good financial health.

Let's analyse the 5 sentences in this paragraph:

1) It starts with a **topic** sentence:

On the one hand, I accept that **businesses must make money in order to survive** in a competitive world.

2) I then explain **why** businesses need money to survive:

It seems logical that the priority of any company should be to **cover its running costs**, such as employees' wages and payments for buildings and utilities.

3) I then give **another reason** why businesses need money:

On top of these costs, companies **also need to invest** in improvements and innovations if they wish to remain successful.

4) I explain an **alternative** (what happens if businesses don't make money?):

If a company is **unable to pay its bills or meet the changing needs of customers**, any concerns about **social responsibilities become irrelevant**.

5) I finish with a **concluding** sentence. I restate the idea above with a more direct reference to the question:

In other words, a company can only **make a positive contribution to society if it is in good financial health**.