

WRITING DEVELOPMENT

Making notes is a skilled task, develops over years, and everyone has their own variant! The exercises in this unit are a brief intro. The best way to learn this skill, however, is to do it; every page you study should be read with a pencil and notebook by your side. PS research has shown the hand-WRITING the notes 'fixes' the information in your brain better than typing or highlighting.

Hitler's Foreign Policy Aims

15. Making Notes IV – the structure of a paragraph

Paragraphs are the basis of writing. They vary greatly in length and form, but most include:

1. **A topic sentence:** tells you what the paragraph is about – its 'idea' – the 'point' it is making.
2. **Expository/development sentences:** expand on the point/ look at its different aspects & connected ideas.
3. **Factual information:** both to give more information about ideas, but also to prove the 'point' being made.

The topic sentence usually comes at the beginning, though sometimes it comes at the end. Elements 2 and 3 are usually muddled together in a 'flow' of ideas and facts. Your teacher may have taught you the acronym 'PEE' (Point – Explanation – Evidence) which is a simplified version of a 'normal' paragraph's structure.

You don't tend to notice this in your textbooks/ on the website because they don't use paragraphs – topic subjects are highlighted by headings, sentences are kept short, and information is presented in bulleted lists. Real history books, however, use paragraphs, so you need to know what to look for...

1. Study the following paragraph about Hitler's foreign policy. Identify in it:

- the topic and the key point being made;
- ideas which explain/develop the point;
- factual information cited for further exposition/development of the point;
- factual information cited to prove the point.

"A key aim of Hitler's foreign policy was to destroy Soviet Russia, which he saw as a mortal threat to Germany. Hitler had a deep hatred of communism, which he regarded as part of a Jewish conspiracy to weaken national race consciousness, as well as a direct threat to his fascist regime. These ideas were central to Nazi ideology and appeared in *Mein Kampf*, where he described Russian Bolshevism as a "menace ... which perpetually hangs over Germany", and Russia as a place for German colonisation and *lebensraum*. From 1933, Nazi propaganda painted the USSR as Germany's greatest enemy, and in 1939, despite signing the Nazi-Soviet Pact, he still saw war with the USSR as inevitable. In this respect Operation Barbarossa, the invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, was the fulfilment of his foreign policy."

TOP TIP 1: this skill – when you can identify the topic point, ideas and facts in a paragraph – is when researching history gets fun!

When you are sure you have grasped the basic issues (from your textbook or the website) you can now:

- look out a book/ chapter/ article/ webpage that looks useful;
- scan-read down the paragraphs' topic sentences to find a paragraph that is 'on topic';
- when you have found one, skim-read it for interesting ideas/ facts you don't know already.

2. Study the [Sources on Hitler's Aims](#) on the website. Each is a paragraph from a respected history book.

For each, identify:

- the topic and the key point being made;
- ideas which explain/develop the point;
- factual information cited for further exposition/development of the point;
- factual information cited to prove the point.

Then make a note of any ideas and facts you found interesting.

- **TOP TIP 2: this skill is VITAL for the 'Interpretations' questions in your GCSE exam.**