**What should a paragraph do?** At the risk of being silly, consider this. What you look for in a partner, a reader looks for in a paragraph. You want a partner who is supportive, strong, and considerate to others. Similarly, a good paragraph will:

**Be Supportive**. Even in the most trying of times a good paragraph will find a way to support the thesis. It will declare its relationship to the thesis clearly, so that the whole world knows what the paragraph intends to do. In other words, a supportive paragraph's main idea clearly develops the argument of the thesis. Make the connections CLEAR.

**Be Strong**. A good paragraph isn't bloated with irrelevant evidence or redundant sentences. Nor is it a scrawny thing, begging to be fed. It's strong and buffed. You know that it's been worked on. In other words, a strong paragraph develops its main idea, using sufficient evidence.

**Be Considerate**. Good paragraphs consider their relationship to other paragraphs. A good paragraph never interrupts its fellow paragraphs to babble on about its own, irrelevant problems. A good paragraph waits its turn. It shows up when and where it's supposed to. It doesn't make a mess for other paragraphs to clean up. In other words, a considerate paragraph is a coherent paragraph. It makes sense within the text as a whole

**ACTIVITY: Interrogate your own work!**

When you've written a topic sentence, ask yourself the following questions—write a short (one sentence or so) answer. We’ll be looking at this on Monday/Tuesday in English.

• Does the topic sentence declare a single point of my argument? Because the reader expects that a paragraph will explore ONE idea in your paper, it's important that your topic sentence isn't too ambitious. Don’t tackle too much.

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• Does the topic sentence further my argument? Give your topic sentences the same "so what?" test that you gave your thesis sentence. If your topic sentence isn't interesting, your paragraph probably won't serve to further the argument.

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• Is the topic sentence relevant to my thesis? It might seem so to you, **but the relevance may not be so clear to your reader.** If you find that your topic sentence is taking you into new ground, stop writing and consider your options. You'll either need to rewrite your thesis to accommodate this new direction, or you will have to edit this paragraph from your final paper.

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• Is there a clear relationship between this topic sentence and the paragraph that came before?

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