

2 The Structure of a Paragraph

In this unit, you will learn ...

- the definition of a paragraph.
- the parts of a paragraph.
- how to identify and write topic sentences.

○ What is a paragraph?

As you learned in Unit 1, a paragraph is a group of sentences about a single *topic*. Together, the sentences of the paragraph explain the writer's *main idea* (most important idea) about the topic. In academic writing, a paragraph is often between five and ten sentences long, but it can be longer or shorter, depending on the topic. The first sentence of a paragraph is usually indented (moved in) a few spaces.

Understanding a paragraph

- I Read this paragraph. It is the beginning of an article about Switzerland in a student newspaper. Then answer the questions.

Switzerland—Something Interesting at Every Turn

By Ken Jones

If you dream of traveling to a country with beautiful mountains, delicious food, wonderful places to go sight-seeing, and polite people, you should visit Switzerland. If you look at the map, the first thing you notice is that Switzerland has many mountains, including some of the highest in Europe. Climbing or skiing down the mountains is great fun. Another thing you will notice is that Switzerland shares its borders with five different countries: France, Germany, Italy, Austria, and Lichtenstein. In fact, there are four official languages in Switzerland: German, French, Italian, and Romansch. All these groups of people make Swiss culture very interesting. Finally, Switzerland has many cities and interesting places to visit. Cities such as Bern have modern buildings like the Paul Klee Zentrum, yet the traditional alpine refuges in the mountains show that the country's old traditions are still alive. All the people, places, and things to see make Switzerland a great place for a holiday.

