

### Writing good paragraphs

- 1) Each body paragraph should be based on **one main point** which supports your opinion and should consist of as many supporting sentences as possible, which prove your point.
- 2) One of the major difficulties students have is developing their points of discussion in detail. Often their supporting sentences express ideas in a general or vague way. In each paragraph you should **focus on one point** of discussion and develop it in **clear, specific detail**. The easiest way to add detail to paragraphs is to describe a specific example you know well, which could be based on a personal experience or a news event.
- 3) One of the reasons why students write too generally is because they try to deal with too many major points. If you are only allowed to write 200 words you can't deal with all aspects of a subject, so don't try to. Simply **choose two (or three) idea(s) you are knowledgeable about and focus on developing them**.
- 4) The second reason why students often express themselves vaguely is because they overuse vocabulary which has a **general meaning**, for example *good, bad, large, interesting, friendly*, without explaining how or why what they are describing or expressing an opinion on is good, bad, large, interesting etc.

Look at the following letter for an example of a piece of writing which is both vaguely expressed and lacks detailed content.

**Task: Letter (300 words), Life in an English-speaking country**

*You have recently moved to an English-speaking country to work for nine months. Write a letter to an English-speaking friend about your first impressions and experiences. You could deal with things like food, language, customs, or cultural differences, etc. (Textproduktion exam, Staatsexamen, Unterrichtsfach, Herbst 2009)*

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5th August 2009

Dear Sandra

Hi, how are you? I've been in London for 3 weeks now and I'm slowly getting used to all the differences between Britain and Germany. The people I work with are very friendly but sometimes I don't understand the funny accent they use.

One of the customs I've noticed is that English people like to go the pub after work. They arrive in the pub at 6pm and stay there until it closes. The English like to drink a lot and I've been out with my colleagues a few times.

You can also buy food at pubs. I tried some once but it wasn't very nice. In general, the stereotype about British food being bad is true. Apparently though, Indian food is a lot tastier but I haven't tried it yet.

The weather also conforms to the typical image we Germans have of Britain. It rains most days and it is a lot colder than in Bavaria.

Yesterday was a bank holiday, which is like the religious holidays we get in Bavaria. The weather wasn't very nice, so I went to a museum, which was really interesting. There are lots of things to see and do in London. I don't know if I'll have time to do everything I want while I'm here but I'll try. I've been to a few tourist attractions like Tower Bridge and Buckingham Palace, which are both quite impressive and old but I haven't seen the Queen so far.

Anyway, hope you are well. Give my best wishes to your parents

Maria

**Task: Choose one of the general topics Maria deals with in the paragraphs of her letter. Write a topic sentence on that aspect of British life and develop it into a detailed and specifically expressed paragraph, which could be used in a letter which would fulfil the task from the *Staatsexamen* paper appropriately.**

If you would like to choose an aspect of British life to write about which Maria doesn't mention, feel free to do so.

If you don't know much about Britain but more about another English-speaking country, write about an aspect of life there which made an impression on you.