

From Paragraph to Essay

The Structure of a Paragraph

What is a paragraph?

As you learned in the last EIS Page, 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.

Understanding a paragraph

Class activity:

1 Read this paragraph. It is the beginning of an article about Indonesia in a student newspaper. Then answer the questions.

Indonesia - Something Interesting at Every Turn

By Ken Jones

If you dream of traveling to a country with beautiful tropical islands, wonderful food, beautiful places to go sightseeing, and very friendly people, you should visit Indonesia. If you look at the map, the first thing you notice is that Indonesia is made up of islands - more than 17,000 of them. Traveling between islands by boat is great fun. Just like the many islands, there are also many different groups of people living in Indonesia. In fact, there are around 300 different ethnic groups! Most Indonesians are Malay, but others are Javanese, Balinese, Chinese, or Indian. All these groups together make Indonesian culture very interesting. Finally, Indonesia has many cities and historical sights to see. Jakarta, the capital city, is fast becoming a modern centre of commerce, yet the ancient temples on the island of Bali show that the country's old traditions are still alive. All the people, places, and things to see definitely make Indonesia a great place for a vacation.

a. What is the topic of the paragraph?
b. What is the main idea about the topic?
c. What ideas help explain the main idea?

Paragraph organisation

What makes a paragraph? Notes for teachers to share with students in class.

A paragraph has three basic parts:

- The topic sentence. This is the main idea of the paragraph. It is usually the first sentence of the paragraph, and it is the most general sentence of the paragraph.
- The supporting sentences. These are sentences that talk about or explain the topic sentence. They are more detailed ideas that follow the topic sentence.
- The concluding sentence. This may be found as the last sentence of a paragraph. It can finish a paragraph by repeating the main idea or just giving a final comment about the topic.

Class activity:

2 Go back to the paragraph about Indonesia and circle the topic sentence, put one line under the supporting sentences, and put two lines under the concluding sentence.

3 Put a tick next to the group of sentences that make a good paragraph. Why are the other groups of sentences not good paragraphs?

a

My best friend has many different hobbies, such as skiing, cooking, and playing the piano, and she is very good at all of these activities. For example, she has played the piano for ten years and has won in three piano competitions. She also likes to spend time traveling, and she has been to many different countries in the world. She grew up speaking Spanish and English, but now she can also speak French and Italian. I like my best friend very much.

b

Classes in literature are useful no matter what job you intend to have when you finish university. Books are about life. People who study literature learn the skill of reading carefully and understanding characters, situations, and relationships. This kind of understanding can be useful to teachers and business people alike. Literature classes also require a lot of writing, so they help students develop the skill of clear communication. Of course, a professional writer needs to have this skill, but it is an equally important skill for an engineer. Finally, reading literature helps develop an understanding of many different points of view. Reading a novel by a Russian author, for example, will help a reader learn more about Russian culture. For anyone whose job may bring them into contact with Russian colleagues, this insight can help encourage better cross-cultural understanding. Studying literature is studying life, so it is relevant to almost any job you can think of.

c

One good way to learn another language is to live in a country where that language is used. When you live in another country, the language is around you all the time, so you can learn to listen to and speak it more easily.

The topic and the main idea

Notes for teachers to share with students in class.

The topic sentence ...

- usually comes first in a paragraph.
- gives the writer's main idea or opinion about the topic and helps the reader understand what the paragraph is going to talk about.

Class activity:

4 Circle the topic of the sentence. Underline the main idea about the topic.

a. Bangladesh is a very interesting country to visit.
b. Dogs make excellent pets.
c. A really good place to study is the library at my school.
d. Learning a second language creates job opportunities.
e. Football is my favourite sport because it is exciting to watch.
f. One of the most valuable tools for students is the computer.
g. My sister and I have very different personalities.
h. Winter is the best time to travel in my country.
i. My hometown is a friendly place to live.

Class activity:

5 For each of these paragraphs, choose the sentence from the list below that would make the best topic sentence.

a. When Karan wanted to enter a good university, he studied hard to pass the examination. The first time he took the exam, he did not do well, and he felt very discouraged. But he knew he wanted to study at that university, so he studied more. The next year, he tried taking the exam again. The second time, he did very well, and now he is studying medicine. I believe Karan is a good role model for me, and he has taught me that never giving up is the best way to succeed.

1. One of my closest friends, named Karan, is a person I can trust.
2. My friend Karan is a very successful student.
3. I admire my friend Karan because he doesn't give up.

b. Many children begin learning to play football when they are very young. You often can see them playing at school or in the streets around their houses. In high school, students may play football on a team and compete in tournaments. If a player is very good, he might go on to play for a professional team. People in my country love to watch football on television and also go to the games whenever they can. Many people have a favourite team or player, and everyone loves to talk about matches and competitions. Football is really like a national sport in my country.

1. I love to play football, and I hope I can become a professional player one day.
2. There are many popular sports in my country, but the most popular sport is football.
3. Football is a difficult sport to learn to play well.

Class activity:

6 Write a topic sentence for three of these topics.

a. a favourite place to relax
b. a grandparent
c. a pet I have known
d. a favourite food to eat
e. playing a musical instrument

topic:
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.....
topic:
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topic:
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Review

Homework:

7 These sentences are mixed up parts of one paragraph. Number the parts in order: 1. topic sentence, 2. supporting sentences, and 3. concluding sentence.

What should I study at university?

a. It wasn't an easy decision, but for the reasons listed above, I have decided to study journalism.
b. It can be difficult to choose a subject to study in college because there are so many choices, but by considering my skills and interests, I have decided to study journalism.
c. I have always enjoyed writing, so it is sensible to choose a major that involves writing. When I begin working, I would like to have the opportunity to travel, and travel is often an important part of a journalist's job. Finally, I am also interested in photography, and pictures are very important in journalism.

8 Use words or phrases in the box to complete the sentences.

concluding sentence indented paragraph supporting sentences topic sentence

a. The is usually the first sentence in a It gives the and the
b. The first sentence of a paragraph should be
c. The come after the topic sentence, and they explain the topic sentence.
d. The comes at the end of a paragraph.

the next Monday issue - The Development of a Paragraph

ANSWER KEY TO THE LAST EIS PAGE ACTIVITIES (DATED OCTOBER 20, 2014)

Puzzle Key:

- narrow
- broad
- brainstorm
- list
- mapping
- relevant
- freewriting
- fluency
- accuracy

E Key:

- (1) e (2) c (3) a (4) f (5) m (6) n (7) g (8) j (9) h (10) i (11) k (12) d (13) b (14) l

A Key:

- (1) luckier (2) better (3) healthier (4) likely (5) complex (6) little (7) interested (8) rich/wealthy (9) well-off (10) intelligent

C KEY:

- (a) noun (b) adj. (c) verb (d) adv. (a) noun (b) adj. (c) verb (d) adv. (a) noun (b) adj. (c) verb (d) adv.

D KEY:

- (1) Although he was poor and weak, he stood by his friend who was in danger and who had none else to help him (2) The reason why I went to his house was that he was ill and I didn't see him at school. (3) As I am ill and the doctor has advised me complete rest, I cannot take part in the game you have fixed for tomorrow. (4) The boy who you have entrusted with the work is clever and knows how to do it, so I'm sure he will succeed. (5) As I liked the proposal, I supported it, but it was rejected by the majority of the members that were present.

A Unscramble

Unscramble the following NOUNS.

LA U M E B L R _____
R O F L E W _____
A I O L S T H P _____
E R A H C E T _____
Y A D I L R A T S _____ (two words)

B Can You Count Nouns?

Uncountable

Countable

What kind of NOUNS are the following ?

a) I think these eggs are from our new **chickens**.
b) Would you like some **chicken** for dinner ?

a) What is your highest level of **education** ?
b) Although she is a girl, she wanted a good **education**.

a) Plant beverages include tea, coffee, wine and others.
b) Six **teas** please.

C Match the words of Column A with that of B

| | A | B |
|----|------------|---|
| SL | Unit Noun | Selected Collocations |
| 1 | a bit of | a) cardboard, iron , paper |
| 2 | a chunk of | b) cake, toast, chalk, land, wood, advice |
| 3 | a grain of | c) clay, coal, soil, butter, fat |
| 4 | an item of | d) corn, dust, salt, sand |
| 5 | a lump of | e) clothing, equipment, news |
| 6 | a piece of | f) chocolate, concrete, gold |
| 7 | a sheet of | g) cake, wood, fun, luck |

D Reading Comprehension Test

CHALLENGES

Are you ready?

The Day I Rescued Albert Einstein's Compass.

Part 2

We walked down the hill from the house towards a lane of giant blue spruces that edged the lake. "Is there always so much birdsong here, Theo ?" my new friend asked. "It is 'wunderbar', wonderful, to have the air filled with such music."

This was another thing we had in common! I was delighted that he was interested in birds. I was a keen bird-watcher, and my parents had given me a very fine pair of binoculars for my last birthday. "It's spring," I said, "and the birds are laying their eggs in the nests they have built in the blue spruces. They're happy. Do you have birds where you live ?"

"No, no, not now." He smiled, rather sadly, I thought. "Not now. I live in the city. But when I was a boy and went sailing on a lake near my home, there were birds everywhere."

Just then our pier came into view. We could see our bright green boat with its jaunty green-and-white-striped sail rocking gently on the water.

"What have you named your boat ?" Herr Einstein asked. "Fleet Felix," I answered proudly. Herr Professor Einstein approved. "I like that."

We put on the orange life jackets I kept in a giant tin drum by the end of the pier. Then I stepped into the boat. My crew of one untied the rope, coiled it up, and came aboard. He took over the tiller, and I held the sheet.

We were off! There was an easy breeze. We followed the shoreline. The clouds were pink cotton puffs, and the sky was as blue as my mother's eyes. I decided that it was a perfect time to ask my question. I'd been thinking about it ever since I walked into the living room. I took a deep breath.

"Yes?" asked Herr Professor Einstein. Of course he would know I was going to ask a question. He was the most famous man alive! I asked my question slowly. "Why did you want to be a physicist ?"

He didn't answer my question. Instead, he put his hand into his pocket. "It has fallen through a hole in the lining!" And he threw back his great head and laughed and laughed. What ? The greatest man alive had a hole in his pocket! I was glad it made him laugh, but I didn't quite understand. "Excuse me, Herr Professor, but what has fallen through a hole in your pocket ?" I asked politely.

"The answer to your question. That is what has fallen through the hole! Himmel! Heavens! I think it is somewhere under the pocket now . . . one minute, one minute, I must tear the lining . . . a little more . . . a little more . . . There! Now I shall fish it out, only it won't be a fish but . . ."

By this time, I was laughing, too. He drew out his hand. Between his fingers was a compass!

"I'll tell you a story," said my friend softly.

I looked up at the sky. Two red-tailed hawks were riding the warm air currents - the thermals. Fleet Felix was catching the breeze perfectly.

1. Quote a phrase that proves Einstein was a nature lover.
2. "He smiled rather sadly." Why ?
3. Give one example of a simile and a metaphor.
4. What probably Einstein means when he says "The answer to your question. That is what has fallen through the hole!" ?