

Activity Type

Reading and Writing Exercises: short answer questions, matching, writing sentences, paraphrasing

Focus

Basic paragraph structure

Aim

To review the four basic parts of an academic paragraph and practice writing topic sentences, supporting ideas, supporting details, and concluding sentences.

Preparation

Make one copy of the two-page worksheet for each student.

Level

Intermediate (B1)

Time

60 minutes

Introduction

In this paragraph structure worksheet, students review the four basic parts of an academic paragraph and practice writing topic sentences, supporting ideas, supporting details, and concluding sentences.

Procedure

Give each student a copy of the two-page worksheet.

Students begin by reading a paragraph to identify its basic structural components.

Exercise A - Answer key

a. 1 b. 2, 5, 8 c. 3, 4d. 11

Students then match sentence halves to reveal an explanation of each part of a paragraph.

Exercise B - Answer key

1. d A topic sentence expresses the main idea of the paragraph and all sentences in the paragraph support it.
2. a Supporting sentences help show that the main idea expressed in the topic sentence is true or valid.
3. b Details can include examples or explanations to help develop supporting ideas.
4. c A concluding sentence restates the main idea in different words and may also summarise the supporting ideas.

Next, students read a definition of a topic sentence.

Students then use prompts to write their own topic sentences that contain a topic and a controlling idea.

Exercise C - Possible answers

1. Eating healthy has a number of benefits.
2. Smoking should be banned in all public places.
3. Global warming has three main causes.

(continued on next page)

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Procedure continued

After that, students use the topic sentences provided to write a supporting idea sentence that is then developed further with either an example or an explanation.

Exercise D - Possible answers

1. Regular exercise has a number of important benefits. The first benefit is that it improves overall fitness. This means you are able to go through your day with more energy and focus.
2. Living in the city centre has three key advantages. The main advantage of living downtown is access to amenities. For instance, restaurants, bars, concert halls, and shopping malls are all usually within walking distance.
3. There are a number of important steps in making a good sandwich. Step one involves selecting the right bread and ingredients. It is usually best not to include too many ingredients and focus on freshness and quality.
4. There are three main characteristics that all successful language learners share. The most important quality good language learners have is high motivation. Being motivated means persevering with study and practice even when progress is slow.
5. University education should be made freely available to all citizens. The main reason for making higher education tuition free is that it promotes social equality. This means students from poorer families are not discouraged from pursuing a degree because of affordability.

Finally, students paraphrase topic sentences in their own words to make concluding sentences using the transition phrases: 'In conclusion', 'In summary', or 'To sum up'.

Exercise E - Possible answers

1. In conclusion, mammals and reptiles vary in more than one significant way.
2. In summary, the banning of fast food advertisements targeting children is necessary.
3. In conclusion, there are three reasons why cats are preferable house companions to dogs.
4. To sum up, four components make up the basic structure of a paragraph.

The Four Parts of a Paragraph

A. Read the paragraph below and answer the questions.

1. Dogs make better companions than cats. 2. The main reason why many people prefer dogs to cats is their loyalty. 3. They show this by being obedient and showing affection to their masters. 4. Cats, on the other hand, cannot be trained and treat their owners with indifference. 5. Secondly, dogs are more fun to spend time with. You can take your dog running, swimming at the beach or even play frisbee. 7. Conversely, cats like to do their own thing and are not inclined to join in play such as chasing a ball. 8. Finally, dogs help make your home more secure. 9. If an unknown person tries to enter your home or property, a dog will alert you with their bark or even attack the intruder. 10. A cat, on the other hand, will stay silent and let anyone enter your home. 11. To sum up, dogs are the best choice as a pet because they are loyal, fun and provide security.

- Which sentence expresses the main idea of the paragraph?
- Which sentences give reasons to support the main idea?
- Which sentences explain or give examples of the first reason?
- Which sentence repeats the main idea and summarises the supporting ideas?

B. Match the sentence halves together.

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| 1. A topic sentence expresses the main idea | a. the main idea expressed in the topic sentence is true or valid. |
| 2. Supporting sentences help show that | b. help develop supporting ideas. |
| 3. Details can include examples or explanations to | c. in different words and may also summarise the supporting ideas. |
| 4. A concluding sentence restates the main idea | d. of the paragraph and all sentences in the paragraph support it. |

C. Read the definition of a topic sentence. Then, use the prompts to write your own topic sentences that contain a topic and a controlling idea.

A topic sentence is usually the first sentence in a paragraph and expresses the main idea or central focus of the paragraph. It is made up of a topic and a controlling idea. The topic names the subject of the paragraph while the controlling idea gives the main idea about the topic.

Example: Topic: football Controlling idea: popular
 *Football is the most popular team sport in the world.*

1. Topic: eating healthy Controlling idea: benefits

2. Topic: smoking Controlling idea: banned

3. Topic: global warming Controlling idea: causes

D. For the following topic sentences, write one supporting idea sentence. Then, develop the supporting idea by writing another sentence that gives an example or an explanation.

Example: Thailand is an enjoyable country to visit.

One reason to go to Thailand is that it has a very good cuisine. For instance, dishes like tom yum kung are well-known for their fresh ingredients and strong spicy flavours.

1. Regular exercise has a number of important benefits.

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2. Living in the city centre has three key advantages.

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3. There are a number of important steps in making a good sandwich.

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4. There are three main characteristics that all successful language learners share.

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5. University education should be made freely available to all citizens.

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E. Paraphrase the topic sentences below in your own words to make concluding sentences using the transition phrases: 'In conclusion', 'In summary', or 'To sum up'.

Example: Spain is an enjoyable place to visit.

In summary, a country that offers holiday fun is Spain.

1. Mammals and reptiles have two important differences.

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2. Advertising fast food to children should be banned.

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3. Cats make better house pets than dogs for three simple reasons.

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4. An academic paragraph consists of four basic parts.

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