

## CHAPTER FIVE



# Paragraph Essentials

Why do we write paragraphs? Actually, effective paragraphing serves two purposes: breaking ideas into manageable, logical parts for the writer, and holding the audience's attention while leading the readers from detail to detail. Most people recognize a paragraph when they see one, but they might have a difficult time trying to define *paragraph*. The definition is controlled by three elements:

1. The purpose in writing
2. The audience
3. The topic

In general, a paragraph is a group of sentences that work together to achieve the writer's purpose. More specifically, though, each paragraph is different from every other. While one paragraph might be written in order to persuade college freshmen that a study skills course is important to their success in college, another might be written to inform high school teachers of changes in their health insurance policy. Each of these paragraphs must be adequate, so the writer must ask himself or herself, "For my audience, what information about the topic will fulfill my purpose in writing?" In other words, a paragraph is a group of related sentences that *adequately* achieve the writer's purpose.

A paragraph can be a separate piece of writing that stands alone, or it can be part of a longer piece of writing such as an essay. Paragraph length varies, again depending upon the purpose, audience, and topic. You might have seen one-sentence paragraphs in newspaper articles or twelve-sentence paragraphs in long essays. To begin, you can practice with paragraphs of at least five sentences, but remember that the five-sentence paragraph is not a magic formula. It simply gives you a place to start. As you gain more writing experience, you will be able to vary the length according to your writing needs.

Remember to indent the first word in a paragraph:

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Most paragraphs have certain essential elements: topic sentences, general and specific statements, organization, unity, and coherence.

### TOPIC SENTENCES

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After limiting a topic and determining your purpose in writing for your audience, you are ready to write the *topic sentence* for your paragraph. **The topic sentence states the main idea of the paragraph and expresses the writer's purpose.**

The topic sentence is much like a contract with your audience. The contract tells the readers what you are going to deliver. If you fail to deliver what you have promised in the topic sentence, the audience is no longer obligated to read the paragraph. The topic sentence must do the following:

- Limit the topic (You are writing a paragraph, not a book!)
- Control the topic by making a judgment or giving a specific impression

If the topic sentence limits and controls the topic, the audience will know what to expect in the paragraph, and the writer's purpose will be clear to both the writer and the audience. Here are some topic sentences:

1. Robin's first and only DWI was a costly lesson.  
*limits:* first and only DWI  
*controls:* costly lesson
2. My history class has two groups of students: motivated and lazy.  
*limits:* two groups of students in history class  
*controls:* motivated and lazy
3. A certain customs official at the Los Angeles airport knows how to make a traveler feels like a criminal.  
*limits:* certain customs official at Los Angeles airport  
*controls:* traveler feels like a criminal
4. Lessons in karate turned out to be valuable.  
*limits:* lessons in karate  
*controls:* valuable
5. Married Victorian women were often incapable of self-preservation.  
*limits:* married Victorian women  
*controls:* often incapable of self-preservation

After reading the topic sentences, the audience will want to know more, such as why or how. For example, they will want to know how Robin's DM proved costly.

Look at the following examples of topic sentences in which the topics are too broad or not controlled:

1. People are subjected to cruel environments. (What environments? The topic is too broad.)
2. I walked into a local bar. (So what? Why should it be important to the audience? The topic is not controlled because no judgment or specific impression has been stated.)
3. Being a parent has been great. (How has it been great? *Great* is a broad and vague term.)
4. It was her last year in high school. (What about her last year in high school? The topic is not controlled because no judgment or specific impression has been stated.)

If the topic sentence is not limited or is not controlled, you will not be able to accomplish your purpose in writing.



**EXERCISE 1** ► Underline the limiting part of each topic sentence. Circle the controlling part of each sentence.

**Example:** Meditating for an hour each day is a (good way) to cope with stress.

1. My best friend's home reveals her unusual personality.
2. Waxing crosscountry skis is a simple yet challenging procedure.

3. My most embarrassing moment occurred when I was in the first grade.
4. Television movies made in the 1970s have two characteristics that make them boring.
5. Although an exciting sport, boxing is destructive.
6. Organizing a research report is a dynamic process rather than a static one.
7. My first solo flight was a joyful experience.
8. When I first caught a glimpse of the old house, I knew my visit would be an interesting one.
9. The college library needs a larger collection of general interest periodicals.
10. The president of the company was ruined by his desire for power.



**EXERCISE 2** ► Put a *C* in the blank if the topic sentence is complete with a limited and controlled topic. If the topic sentence is not limited or controlled, rewrite it in the spaces.

**Example:**   *C*   Keeping a journal has had two positive effects on my writing.

\_\_\_\_\_ I graduated from high school in 1986.  
    *My high school graduation was a stressful event in my life.*    

\_\_\_\_\_ 1. My friendship with Debra began with a humorous incident.  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ 2. Lake Placid is in the Adirondack Mountains.  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ 3. Cocaine is one of several drugs.  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ 4. In three easy steps, anyone can learn to draw.  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ 5. "Blue moon" refers to the second full moon in a calendar month.  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ 6. On nine occasions the stock market crashed by twenty-five percent or more as measured by the Dow Jones Industrials.  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ 7. Carlos changed my attitude.  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ 8. The enrollment procedure at a large university can be stressful.

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\_\_\_ 9. Making the perfect apple pie is an art.

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\_\_\_ 10. The advantages of driving a small car far outweigh the disadvantages.

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Keep in mind that a topic sentence is not a title. The topic sentence must always be a complete sentence. A title is usually a word or a phrase. Look at the following examples:

1. Title: Studying in a Group  
Topic Sentence: Studying in a group has one advantage for me.
2. Title: The Stress of Working and Going to College  
Topic Sentence: Working and going to college can produce too much stress.
3. Title: The Simplest Word-Processing Program  
Topic Sentence: I have discovered the simplest word-processing program to learn.



**EXERCISE 3** ► Write *T* in the blank for title or *TS* in the blank for topic sentence.

**Example:**   *T*   The expense of day care for two children.

- \_\_\_ 1. The popularity of fast-food restaurants.
- \_\_\_ 2. My worst vacation experience.
- \_\_\_ 3. Buying a refrigerator at a garage sale was a good investment.
- \_\_\_ 4. The disadvantages of living in a dormitory.
- \_\_\_ 5. Monday is the day of the week I most dread.
- \_\_\_ 6. The thesaurus is a valuable tool for creative writers.
- \_\_\_ 7. How to winterize a car.
- \_\_\_ 8. *The Fifth of July*: a play evoking intense emotions.
- \_\_\_ 9. Violence against teenagers in today's movies.
- \_\_\_ 10. Three reasons speech is a valuable class.

Do not begin the topic sentence with “I am going to write about . . .” or “This paragraph will be about . . .” If the reader is reading your paragraph, he or she is already aware that you have written about something and that your paragraph will be about a certain topic.

The topic sentence is usually the first sentence in the paragraph. Sometimes you will see a topic sentence in the middle or at the end of a paragraph. Occasionally, the topic sentence is implied rather than directly stated. For your purposes in this course, however, it is probably best to make the topic sentence the first sen-

tence in your paragraph so that you can focus on one idea at a time. As you become a more advanced writer, you will want to try the other variations.

Look at the following example of focused freewriting and how the writer has used it to select details for a paragraph:

The first time I read anything I had written aloud, I was petrified — scared to death! I felt like I was floating above myself — hovering near the ceiling of the classroom — not a part of what was going on. I was like another person watching myself. The “me” who was reading was a stranger I could barely recognize. It was in Wanda Duncan’s creative writing class. I missed the first semester class and went right into the second. I didn’t really know what the hell I was doing — I kept quiet and paid attention and tried to blend into the back wall — didn’t work I guess. She called on me the last night of class — I thought I had gotten away with never saying a word and I guess I felt kinda smug or something but she did call on me. At first I wanted to run from the room — and I’ll never understand what made me stay (I’m probably a ham at heart) but I did and began to read a short story I had written and made an A on. A story about a young girl and her grandfather’s death. I was not too sure it was a good story really. But turned it in anyway. And here I’m going to read it. My voice sounded hollow and much too loud. (Probably because I was really on the ceiling and the sound drifted up to me!) By the time I got to the second page I could feel sweat running down my side from my armpit to my waist. And I thought my nose was going to drip and there wasn’t anything I could do about it because my hands were glued to the paper. I was just about to laugh at myself from my spectator position on the ceiling when I started to come back down. On page six I was suddenly back in my own body — and I was panicked. I had to keep pressing my toe against the table leg to keep from passing out (oh, I probably wouldn’t have really passed out — I’ve never fainted in my life — but I think I came close). When I finished the story — a good three or four days later, it seemed, my throat was dry and I couldn’t move. All my sweat had turned cold and I felt like I had the worst case of flu ever in the history of mankind (womankind). But I did it. I don’t even remember walking to my car, driving home that night. I do remember that I had to scream in my car because I was so happy. And so relieved to be out of there. I won’t ever forget it. Thanks, Wanda, I guess ....

The writer has already determined that her main purpose is to inform a general audience. With that purpose and audience in mind, look at the following list of pertinent details from the focused freewriting:

The first time I read anything aloud I was scared to death.

Floating above myself, hovering near ceiling

Another person watching myself

Wanda Duncan’s creative writing class

I missed first semester, took second

I tried to hide and be quiet

I was smug, I guess

She called on me

I wanted to run

Don't know what made me stay

Read a story about a young girl and her grandfather's death

Hollow, loud voice

My voice drifted up to me

Sweat running down my sides

Hands glued to the paper

I came down from spectator's position on ceiling

I got panicked and thought I would faint

Seemed to last 3-4 days

When I finished, I felt like I had the flu

Don't remember driving home

Screamed in my car because I was so happy and relieved

After studying the list, the writer wrote notes after two details, then decided to omit those two:

I was smug, I guess (a different topic)

My voice drifted up to me (repetitious)

Then she determined the focus of the rest of the details: they point out how afraid she was to read aloud for the first time. Consequently, her topic sentence could be formed.

**Topic Sentence:** My first experience in reading my own work aloud was frightening.

*limits:* my first experience in reading my own work aloud

*controls:* frightening

The writer has completed the first step in developing and controlling the topic for the paragraph. As she moves along in the writing process, she might delete some details from the list or add others. Remember that writing and organizing are dynamic processes, not static ones.



**EXERCISE 4** ► Determine whether each of the following topic sentences is effective or not. Ask yourself whether each one is limited, controls the topic, and is complete. Put E in the blank if the topic sentence is effective. If the topic sentence is not effective, first explain why it is ineffective; then rewrite it.

**Example:** \_\_\_ Bronze and white chrysanthemums grew along the path.

Explain: *Does not control the topic* \_\_\_\_\_

Rewrite: *The bronze and white chrysanthemums were obviously grown by a talented gardener.*

E He learned one good lesson while living in public housing.

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

Rewrite: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ 1. I am a single parent who takes night classes.

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

Rewrite: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ 2. Some women are talented enough to combine political activism and a job.

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

Rewrite: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ 3. His friends are obsessed with instant fame.

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

Rewrite: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ 4. Desperate in their search for freedom from oppression.

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

Rewrite: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ 5. Lung cancer is often fatal.

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

Rewrite: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ 6. It is no easy task to keep up with two-year-old twins!

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

Rewrite: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ 7. Crossing the frozen lake at dawn.

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

Rewrite: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ 8. The moonflower, a rare jungle bloom.

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

Rewrite: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. To reassure students that grades are no reflection of their personal worth is an excellent way for a teacher to begin discussing test results.

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

Rewrite: \_\_\_\_\_

- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. October is National Seafood Month.

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

Rewrite: \_\_\_\_\_

### ***PRACTICE WRITING: Topic Sentences***

Write topic sentences by following these steps:

1. Do some prewriting for four or five topics of your choice.
2. Make a list of details from your prewriting, a separate list for each topic.
3. Mark out any details in your lists that do not seem to go along with the rest. Then choose the main idea in each list.
4. Write a topic sentence for each list.

#### **Possible Topics**

a person I admire a great deal  
 a memorable childhood experience  
 the best vacation I ever had  
 a fear I have  
 a challenge I am faced with

## **GENERAL AND SPECIFIC STATEMENTS**

Once you have your topic sentence written, you must choose the *general* and *specific statements* to complete your paragraph. Your main goal is to write a paragraph with clarity.

A general statement is made up of terms that refer to groups of things; a specific statement is made up of terms that refer to particular things. Look at the following examples of general and specific terms:

#### **General Terms**

wealth  
 furniture  
 people  
 animals

#### **Specific Terms**

money, stocks and bonds, land  
 desk, table, chairs  
 Abraham Lincoln, Uncle Ray  
 dog, cat

A general statement is similar to the view you see through a camera lens that is out of focus: you can see the picture, but it is hazy. A specific statement is the view you see when the camera is focused: you can see the picture clearly. Both general and specific statements are necessary in a paragraph. General statements alone will leave your readers with no clear picture, so you must add specifics.

As you think about *general* and *specific*, it will occur to you that a word is not always general or always specific. Indeed, *general* and *specific* are relative terms. You must consider what a term is compared to in order to decide how specific it is. For example, to say you see “something” in the distance is a general statement. As you move closer, you might say you see a “person,” a more specific term in comparison to “something.” Then, as you move even closer, you might say you see “a man on a bicycle.” Now you are using a more specific term than “person.” Eventually, you might say you see “Joe pedaling a red bicycle as fast as he can.” Now you are using the most specific terminology.

The levels of general and specific terms begin with the most general and second most general and move in sequence to specific, more specific, and most specific. Look at these examples:

Level 1 (most general): food

Level 2 (second most general): dessert

Level 3 (specific): cake

Level 4 (more specific): chocolate cake

Level 5 (most specific): a two-layer chocolate cake with white icing

Level 1 (second most general): flower

Level 2 (specific): daisy

Level 3 (more specific): Gloriosa daisy

Level 4 (most specific): sunny yellow Gloriosa daisy

Level 1 (most general): problem

Level 2 (second most general): fear

Level 3 (specific): fear of flying

Level 4 (most specific): fear of flying in small planes in turbulent weather

Several different levels of general and specific statements are possible. You do not have to examine every level to determine which statements will add pertinent information to your paragraph. However, you should always consider what combination of general and specific statements will clearly explain your topic and keep your audience interested. Usually you will need a few general statements and several specific ones.

Sometimes a writer will not support the topic sentence with specific details; instead, he or she will restate the topic sentence, perhaps several times, in different words. When he makes this mistake, the paragraph never goes anywhere. Consequently, the readers are disappointed because the topic sentence contract is not fulfilled. Following is an example of a paragraph in which the topic sentence is restated, so the paragraph has no real support:

Enrolling in college for the first time is a trying experience. Trying to enroll leaves a student perplexed. It is a day that is memorable because the student is left flustered and bewildered. He or she doesn't know what is going on. The student will always remember the event as a confusing time in college life.

Here is the paragraph rewritten with general and specific supporting statements:

Enrolling in college for the first time is a trying experience. A student is unfamiliar with the layout of the campus and often does not know where to go for counseling, advising, or payment of fees. Even if the student knows which courses to take, the courses may be closed or cancelled. Then he or she has to devise another schedule — preferably, with help of an advisor. The student has many questions in mind: Should I apply for financial aid? Will all of my credits transfer to another school? Where are the cafeteria and the bookstore? What do all those computer numbers mean on the printout I have just been handed? Would I have been better off enrolling online or, perhaps, by phone? If the student is lucky enough to get these numerous, nagging questions answered, he or she is still left with the feeling that something is missing. Upon arriving at home, the exhausted individual realizes what it is: he or she forgot to pay the fees during the confusing enrollment process. The student has to return to the school and eventually complete this trying experience.

Now the paragraph has three general statements:

1. A student is unfamiliar with the layout of the campus.
2. The student has many questions in mind.
3. The student is left with the feeling that something is missing.

The other information in the paragraph includes different levels of specific statements to support the general statements. Some of the specific terms include the following:

counseling, advising, or payment of fees  
 courses may be closed or cancelled  
 devise another schedule  
 help of an advisor  
 financial aid  
 credits transfer  
 cafeteria and bookstore  
 computer numbers on the printout  
 student forgot to pay fees  
 return to school

The writer has achieved an effective blend of general and specific statements.



**EXERCISE 1** ► Identify the general statements as *GS* and the specific statements as *SS* in each set of sentences.

**Example:** GS The young boy hurt himself.

SS Bobby scraped his knee.

- \_\_\_ 1. Some students know how to do research.  
 \_\_\_ Some students know how to research periodicals.
- \_\_\_ 2. He did as well as he possibly could in the game.  
 \_\_\_ He hit the baseball so hard it flew over the fence.
- \_\_\_ 3. She likes to eat a great deal of food at every meal.  
 \_\_\_ Kimoko likes to consume a hamburger, fries, apple pie, and two soft drinks for lunch.
- \_\_\_ 4. The traveler's emergency kit includes two quarts of oil, one pint of powersteering fluid, one quart of transmission fluid, and two pints of brake fluid.  
 \_\_\_ The kit is helpful in an emergency.
- \_\_\_ 5. Although the spider monkey is not as graceful as the gibbon, it can move rapidly through the rain forests of South America.  
 \_\_\_ The spider monkey and the gibbon have some differences that we can easily recognize.



**EXERCISE 2** ► Arrange each set of terms according to levels. Work from general to specific.

**Example:** food

broccoli  
vegetable  
green vegetable

Level 1: *food*

Level 2: *vegetable*

Level 3: *green vegetable*

Level 4: *broccoli*

1. junior college  
school  
college  
Oklahoma City Junior College

Level 1:

Level 2:

Level 3:

Level 4:

2. small dog  
something  
animal  
my pet Josh  
cocker spaniel

Level 1:

Level 2:

Level 3:

Level 4:

Level 5:

3. fictional characters  
Dracula  
monsters

Level 1:

Level 2:

Level 3:



**EXERCISE 3** ► For each term below, make a brainstorming list. Then arrange your terms in levels of generality. You might need to add other terms to make your levels clear.

**Example:** entertainment

*movies*

*Level 1: movies*

*popcorn*

*Level 2: old movies*

*old movies*

*Level 3: classics*

*Friday the 13th*

*Level 4: Gone with the Wind*

*Gone with the Wind*

1. music
2. science
3. sports
4. computers



**EXERCISE 4** ▶ Each topic sentence below is followed by additional sentences. Mark each as *S* for supporting sentence or *R* as unnecessary restatement of the topic sentence.

**Example:** The firefly's spark is a complex mating signal that brightens the summer evening.

  S   Fireflies are not flies at all, but beetles.

  S   The embryos inside the eggs begin to glow three weeks after the eggs are deposited in moist soil.

  R   The firefly blinks to send mating signals during the summer months.

1. A person can get a sense of accomplishment from building his own canoe.

\_\_\_ The larger and higher-ceilinged the work space is, the better a person can work.

\_\_\_ Someone who builds his own canoe will feel proud of himself.

\_\_\_ He will need a circular saw and a planer.

2. Herbalism is a reality in most people's lives although they do not realize it.

\_\_\_ The mustard in the pantry and many spices on the kitchen shelf come from herbs.

\_\_\_ Most people are unaware of the role of herbs in their lives.

\_\_\_ Many vegetables in a garden salad are herbs.

3. Many parents who homeschool their children emphasize the idea that learning is not separate from living.

\_\_\_ Several parents have decided that homeschooling their children is good.

\_\_\_ The children and parents may visit a recycling plant or take an old appliance apart.

\_\_\_ On a spring evening, they may sit on a blanket in the yard and talk about constellations and set up a telescope for viewing them.

\_\_\_ If the news on television is a war in another part of the world, they may look at World Wide Web information on geography or religions.

4. *Middlemarch* by George Eliot has one intriguing character.

\_\_\_ Dorothea Brooke is an ardent and idealistic young woman.

\_\_\_ She has a disastrous honeymoon and an unhappy marriage.

\_\_\_ The main character is most interesting.

5. The budget for the next fiscal year must be increased for our business to be successful.

\_\_\_ The new budget must be larger if we want to do well.

\_\_\_ We need at least three new staff members in the accounting department.

\_\_\_ Our inventory should be increased by thirty percent.



**EXERCISE 5** ▶ Below are five topic sentences. Add one general statement and three specific statements for each one.

**Example:** May is a hectic month for my sister.

GS: *My sister is very busy in May.*

SS: *Her twin daughters have a birthday in May.*

SS: *She begins her gardening projects on May 1st.*

SS: *Her mother- and father-in-law visit for two weeks in May.*

1. It is almost too difficult to stop smoking.  
GS: \_\_\_\_\_  
SS: \_\_\_\_\_  
SS: \_\_\_\_\_  
SS: \_\_\_\_\_
2. I learned to balance my budget the hard way.  
GS: \_\_\_\_\_  
SS: \_\_\_\_\_  
SS: \_\_\_\_\_  
SS: \_\_\_\_\_
3. My calculus instructor is the most effective teacher I have ever had.  
GS: \_\_\_\_\_  
SS: \_\_\_\_\_  
SS: \_\_\_\_\_  
SS: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Exercising three times a week has definite advantages.  
GS: \_\_\_\_\_  
SS: \_\_\_\_\_  
SS: \_\_\_\_\_  
SS: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Making pizza from scratch is not a difficult process.  
GS: \_\_\_\_\_  
SS: \_\_\_\_\_  
SS: \_\_\_\_\_  
SS: \_\_\_\_\_

***PRACTICE WRITING: General and Specific Statements***

Using your lists of details and topic sentences from Practice Writing in the section on topic sentences, list both general and specific statements you can use in each paragraph.

## ORGANIZATION

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Now that your paragraph is taking shape with a topic sentence and general and specific statements, how will you organize the information? You have three basic choices: *time order*, *space order*, and *order of importance*.

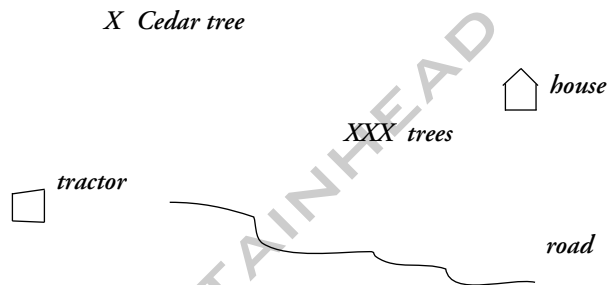
### Time Order

Time order is used to give information in chronological order, past to present or present to past. Time order is used for telling a story, narrating an event, or tracing the steps in a process. In the following paragraph, the writer narrates an event that made a lasting impression on him, an event that unfolds for the reader in time order:

I was amazed to discover that skiing has a magical quality. My worrying about the cost of the trip, the loss of sleep on the sleeper bus, and the tedious journey to the resort were over. The first day of actual skiing had finally arrived. After a thirty-minute journey to the first decent blue slope on a lift as cold as the Arctic temperatures surrounding me, I was ready to go down the mountain amid snow flurries and the colorful panorama of stylish ski clothes on other brave souls. I began the descent through crystal clear air. I was exhilarated! The pine trees rushed by, and I heard no sound except the squeak of the powder under my skis, smelled nothing except the pungent odor of the pines, felt no sensation other than the feeling of total freedom. And, when I reached the bottom of the slope, this incredible rush of magic was balanced with one more feeling: the sadness that I could not do this every day of my life.

### Space Order

Space order is used to describe a person, place, or thing. When you use space order, you have to determine your physical point of view first. Will you describe from left to right, top to bottom, front to back? It might help you to draw a simple diagram to keep you on the right track. You can mark your starting point and continue in the order you think will be most effective. Look at the following example:



The writer gives the following description using space order to emphasize vivid physical details. The space order in this paragraph moves from foreground to background:

When I saw the old farm, it reminded me of a pleasant childhood. The dirt road leading up to the farm was rutted and sprinkled with red rocks and an occasional weed. As I walked toward the house, I was greeted by an abandoned tractor in the middle of the front yard. I recalled riding from the yard to the house with my dad and pretending that I was driving. The red tractor had rusted to a dull copper reminder of the work that had been done here every spring. Weeds had grown around the tractor tires and formed a cushion for the old machine. As I passed the tractor, I could smell the scent of the cedar trees in front of the house. The breeze moved the branches slightly as if they were waving a demure hello. The farmhouse was small — and white at one time many years ago. Its front door was ajar and its windows broken, but it had a certain dignity and a firm foundation. When I walked to the solitary cedar tree in the back yard, I suddenly remembered sitting in its lowest branch and imagining what my life would be. The tree now looked smaller than I remembered it, but it looked just as friendly and inviting. So I climbed onto the lowest branch and let my memories overcome me.

## Order of Importance

Order of importance is used to go from the least important idea to the most important, or to go from the most important idea to the least important. Here is an example of a paragraph that a student wrote in response to an article on the shrinking vocabulary of young people. The paragraph moves from the least important, being wary of advertising slogans, to the most important, developing a true appreciation for the power of words.

Young people can increase their vocabularies in several ways. One way a teenager can build his vocabulary is to be wary of slogans developed by the advertising industry. By definition, slogans are catchwords or catch phrases — not living language. Another good way for someone to learn more words, as well as the fluent use of them, is to hear the spoken word. For example, a person could attend poetry readings, speeches at local colleges, and local drama performances. He could even audition to be in a play himself. A teenager who wants to build his storehouse of language can read, read, read. Local newspapers and small, independent bookstores provide some wonderful sources. "Bigger is better" is not always the best policy — or the best slogan! Something else a teenager can do is talk directly to others rather than relying too much on the use of e-mail. Most people like to see the faces and hear the voices of their friends when important conversations are taking place. When Ambra says she will go out with Jordan, he would probably like to see her eyes and, he hopes, her smile. And, finally, everyone must find a way to develop a true appreciation for the power of words. Language can remain dull, limited, and misused, or it can be accurate, clear, interesting, and exhilarating. Then the vocabulary of the average fourteen-year-old will not continue to dwindle by thousands of words each decade.

Often a paragraph will require more than one method of organization, but usually one method is dominant. For example, the paragraph describing the old farm primarily uses space order, but it also uses time order with phrases such as, "as I walked," "when I walked," and "now."



**EXERCISE 1** ► Arrange the sentences below in time order by numbering them. The first sentence has been numbered for you.

**Topic Sentence:** Russ begins each day with his usual routine.

- \_\_\_ Clean and fresh, he eats a breakfast that consists of chocolate milk and dry toast.
- 1 He jumps into the shower at 5:45 a.m.
- \_\_\_ Breakfast gives him the energy to go into the garage and lift weights for fifteen minutes.
- \_\_\_ By 7:00 a.m. he is ready to leave for work.
- \_\_\_ After this brisk workout, he reads the morning paper.



**EXERCISE 2** ► Arrange the sentences below by space order by numbering them. The first sentence has been numbered for you.

**Topic Sentence:** An organized study awaits me when I come home.

- \_\_\_ On the rest of the west wall are several pictures and diplomas.
- \_\_\_ The west window throws light onto the computer and printer on the north side of the room.

- 1 When I open the door, I see the hundreds of books in the bookcase lining the long south wall and part of the west wall.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The east side of the room has a small table and a comfortable chair where I can relax when I am tired.



**EXERCISE 3** ► Arrange the sentences below in order of importance, going from least important to most important. The first sentence has been numbered for you.

**Topic Sentence:** Maria needs to relax when she completes the report she is writing.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Then a professional massage, facial, and manicure would make her feel rejuvenated.
- 1 She needs to spend some time catching up on missed sleep.
- \_\_\_\_\_ That cruise she promised herself would really give her a reward she deserves.
- \_\_\_\_\_ In addition, some time spent shopping and visiting with her friends would be fun.



**EXERCISE 4** ► For each topic sentence listed, suggest which order of details could be used to write a paragraph: time order, space order, or order of importance. Then explain why you made each choice. Why would that order be most effective?

**Example:** My boss's personality is quite unusual.

Order: *Order of importance*

Explain: *Could go from the least to the most unusual detail and emphasize the most unusual*

1. I tried unsuccessfully to cope with my father's death.

Order: \_\_\_\_\_

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Her first day in an algebra class was a pleasant surprise.

Order: \_\_\_\_\_

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Tired and hungry, the family finally arrived in a land of freedom.

Order: \_\_\_\_\_

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

4. An antique store is my favorite place to shop.

Order: \_\_\_\_\_

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

5. The summer day overwhelmed me with its beauty.

Order: \_\_\_\_\_

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

6. I try to remember one important philosophy when I run out of money.

Order: \_\_\_\_\_

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7. She was a person of rare intelligence.

Order: \_\_\_\_\_

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8. The Pizza Parlor is their home away from home.

Order: \_\_\_\_\_

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### ***PRACTICE WRITING: Organization***

Using the general and specific statements from Practice Writing in that section of this chapter, decide which order to use for each topic. Then write the statements in that order.

## **UNITY**

A *unified* paragraph is one that works as a unit. The paragraph focuses on and develops the idea presented in the topic sentence. In other words, every sentence in the paragraph must work to achieve your purpose in writing for your particular audience. Look at the paragraph written from the earlier discussion of topic sentences:

My first experience in reading my own work aloud was frightening. I was enrolled in a second semester creative writing course, although I had not had the first semester course. For the entire semester, I had tried to be invisible by staying as hidden as possible in the classroom. But, at the end of the semester, the teacher called on me to read a short story I had written about a young girl and her grandfather's death. As I nervously began to read, I had the sensation that I was floating above myself, hovering near the ceiling. I felt as if I were another person watching myself. My voice sounded loud and hollow. Sweat ran down the sides of my body, and my hands held the paper as if glued there. Finally, as I was still reading, I came down from my spectator's position near the ceiling and reentered my body. Then I was really panicked! Being an observer had been much easier to cope with. I thought I would faint. However, I finished the story — it seemed to take three or four days — and felt cold and clammy. If I had not known better, I would have thought I had the flu. At last the class was over, and I drove home although I don't remember the drive. What I do remember is screaming in my car, screaming because I was relieved, screaming because I was happy with my accomplishment, but, mostly, screaming because I could finally let go of my fear.

The writer uses primarily time order; the writer also uses space order when discussing her descent from the ceiling. The paragraph is unified because each of the sentences relates to the idea presented in the topic sentence.

Here is a paragraph that lacks unity because it strays from the topic:

Drinking coffee is a bad habit I can't seem to break. Every morning I drink at least three cups before I can feel awake enough to shower or go to school. I never use sugar or milk because I want my coffee undiluted, strong enough to stand up without a cup. When I tried to quit "cold turkey," I made it for seven hours. The craving for caffeine is as bad as the craving for nicotine in cigarette smokers. In my opinion, all those methods to get people to quit smoking are just gimmicks. The second time I tried to quit drinking coffee, I was a little more successful, at least for a while. I tried drinking only one cup in the morning and one cup after dinner. Unfortunately, I drank at least five colas a day to quench my need for caffeine, so I gained three pounds. Then I was so depressed about my weight gain that I started drinking coffee again. I just can't quit.

The two sentences that do not belong in the paragraph are the ones that discuss smoking rather than the bad habit of drinking coffee.

Occasionally, a writer will drift from the topic toward the end of the paragraph. Look at this example:

Doctors caution patients to change their diets in order to lower their cholesterol levels, but some patients do not make changes easily. Reducing blood cholesterol contributes to reducing coronary heart disease, according to most physicians. They counsel their patients to avoid eating animal products such as organ meats and egg yolks. A person who has eaten scrambled eggs for breakfast all his life can find eating only egg whites a bit bland. Will it matter to him if his cholesterol level is above the desirable range of 200? A person who loves liver and onions is usually not quite as satisfied with a broiled chicken breast. Some people believe that diet has little effect on cholesterol levels and that lowering those levels will not lengthen someone's life. In fact, some doctors believe that there is little firm scientific evidence of the effectiveness of a low-cholesterol diet.

*new  
topic*

In the last two sentences, the paragraph begins to drift into another topic. Instead of focusing on the difficulty patients have in changing their diets, the paragraph ends with a new topic: information that might contradict doctors' advice.



**EXERCISE 1** ▶ Delete or rewrite information that interferes with the unity of the following paragraphs.

1. Jami is not much of a cook. When she was growing up, her mother used to tell her and brother Jamal to "get out of the way" as she prepared dinner. Jami got the message that the kitchen was not a hospitable place. When other young ladies were learning to bake or grill, Jami was stuck on "defrost" and "reheat." In her own kitchen today, she stocks the refrigerator and cabinets with anything easy to prepare and, preferably, microwavable. When she grocery shops, she looks for those magic words "fast," "easy," "five minutes," and "precooked." She has an oven she never uses and crisper drawers in her fridge that remain empty—not a fresh carrot or bunch of broccoli in sight. Even washing lettuce for a salad seems like an overwhelming task to her. Besides cooking, she also hates cleaning her apartment. No one has ever seen her vacuum the carpet or dust the furniture.
2. Writing a script gives a writer a wonderful opportunity to play God. In the case of a feature film script, the writer begins with 130 blank pages and ends up with a new, intriguing world. Characters will have to come into existence who can make the viewer laugh, cry, or think about something in a new way. What happens to these characters is up to the writer. Will Janet and Roger get married after Roger divorces

Sharon? Will the space team make it to Saturn? Will the killer murder yet another victim? Will the slime creature strike again? Some scripts sell for \$80,000. The world the writer creates is entirely up to his imagination.

3. My family's favorite humorous story is about my younger son's curiosity. I had taken Chad and his older brother, Brad, to see the movie *A Christmas Story* about a mischievous boy who wanted a Red Rider BB gun for Christmas. In the movie, the boy's friends "double dog dared" him to stick his tongue on the school flag pole while the temperature was freezing. The boy was unable to get free from the pole and was stuck there all day. On the way home from the movie, Chad questioned me intensely about this episode. "Mom, your tongue wouldn't really stick like that, would it?" he asked. I recall telling him that of course it would, just like ice sticks to someone's fingers when they are wet. "But you'd be able to get loose, wouldn't you?" he questioned further. I told him I didn't actually try it, and, without the slightest thought that he would actually try it, I said, "Why don't you try it?" Two weeks later, the boys were outside when Brad came running into the kitchen saying, "Mama! Mama! Chad's tongue is stuck on the gate and he can't get it off!" His dad went to the rescue; taking Chad's head with both hands, Dad gave one forceful jerk that ripped Chad's tongue from the post. The procedure left the top layer of Chad's tongue on the frozen post, and he was in terrible pain for days. Brad knew better than to pull such a silly stunt. Although this event happened when Chad was seven years old, even now at the age of nineteen, he professes that Mom told him to do it.

### ***PRACTICE WRITING: Unity***

Look at your ordered lists of general and specific statements from Practice Writing in the section on organization. Mark through any sentences that would disrupt the unity of your paragraphs.

## **COHERENCE**

*Coherence* is essential to an effective paragraph. In a coherent paragraph, all the sentences are logically related to one another, and the connections and transitions between sentences are clear to your audience. One way in which to achieve coherence is by ordering the sentences of a paragraph in the most effective way (see the section on organization). Two other methods of achieving coherence include using transitional words and phrases, and repetition of key words.

### **Using Transitions to Achieve Coherence**

Transitional words and phrases show the connections between sentences. The following chart lists transitions and the relationships they signal.

#### **TRANSITIONAL WORDS AND PHRASES FOR COHERENCE**

<b>Relationship</b>	<b>Transition</b>
Addition	and, in addition, first, too, again, moreover, furthermore, equally important, also, last
Comparison	as, likewise, similarly, at the same time, in the same way, also, too, in comparison
Contrast	but, yet, than, even though, though, although, whereas, while, in contrast, on the other hand, instead, rather, nevertheless, on the contrary
Emphasis	indeed, in fact, certainly, of course, to be sure
Example	for example, for instance, namely, to illustrate, specifically, such as

Location	here, there, above, below, to the right, to the left, beyond, next to, in front of, behind
Result	as a result, therefore, thus, consequently, then
Summary	in conclusion, to sum up, in brief, in short, finally
Time	and then, after, since, when, before, while, as, soon, first, second, third, next, meanwhile, later, then, immediately, afterward, now, earlier, finally

You should use transitions carefully. Be sure each one clearly shows the relationship between ideas. And do not overuse them. Using an inappropriate transition, or too many of them, can be more ineffective than using none at all.

Look at the use of transitions in the following paragraph:

Selecting the most attractive frame for a poster is not as simple as it sounds. For example, the first thing to consider is where the poster will hang. Will it be alone on a large wall or grouped with other posters or pictures? If the poster is going to be surrounded by empty wall space, then it will need a frame that emphasizes its importance. If the poster is going to be surrounded by other pictures next to it, it will need a frame that catches the viewer's eye. Equally important, the frame has to be the right texture and color. A poster with delicate, pale colors should not be overburdened by an ornate, dark wood frame. And a poster with bright, vibrant colors should not have a frame that looks too delicate. In addition, the color of the frame should bring out one of the less noticeable colors in the poster such as a background blue from the sky or a soft pink from the inside petal of a flower. Certainly choosing the right frame is not simple, but it is rewarding once the poster is hanging on the wall to be appreciated by all who see it.



### EXERCISE 1 ► Add appropriate transitional words to the paragraphs below

1. The arid zones of southern Africa are set ablaze in spring with wild flowers. Usually the landscape here is harsh, the ground covered with large rocks \_\_\_\_\_ straggly, hardy scrub. \_\_\_\_\_, in the spring the picture changes. \_\_\_\_\_, for a few weeks, even the rocks seem to grow flowers. Daisies in hues of orange, red, blue, yellow, and white appear everywhere. \_\_\_\_\_, the ground is strewn with purple Cape cowslip and a delicate irislike flower with white blooms. Succulents \_\_\_\_\_ help to decorate the scene with their pink, purple, and tangerine flowers. \_\_\_\_\_, it is a beautiful sight that lasts only a short while.
2. When Jed finally gets up in the morning, his ritual begins. \_\_\_\_\_, he nudges the dog, who sighs, rousing himself and dropping off the bed to the floor with a thud. \_\_\_\_\_, Jed digs his toes into the soft bedroom carpet \_\_\_\_\_ he stretches to the ceiling. He stumbles into the kitchen where the cold floor \_\_\_\_\_ the harsh light abruptly capture his attention. He pours a glass of milk, \_\_\_\_\_ it is not his favorite drink. Scrunching his face, he drinks the milk quickly and rushes to the bathroom to brush his teeth. \_\_\_\_\_, he takes a hot bath and dresses. He is ready to face the day.

### Using Repetition to Achieve Coherence

Repetition of key terms is another way to ensure coherence in your paragraphs. Important words or phrases, along with their synonyms (words with similar meanings), can be repeated. Although an effective paragraph should have variety, repetition of key words keeps your audience from losing sight of your topic and focus. Here is a paragraph with the repeated key terms underlined:

One of the all-time irritating foods, chili peppers spice up our lives with heat. With one bite, we have burning mouths. Our brains respond to pepper pain by trying to flush away the irritant with saliva and sweat and by speeding up the digestive process. So why do we continue to eat the pungent red peppers? A few of us probably consume them because they are rich in vitamin C. However, heat, not health, is what most of us have in mind when eating a pepper-packed meal. We like the spicy pods because, when our bodies feel the heat from eating them, an interesting process takes place. Although we may not be aware of it, our brains secrete endorphins, which block pain and may even bring pleasure.

The repeated words “pepper,” “peppers,” “irritant,” “heat,” “spicy,” and the synonyms “burning” and “pods” remind the audience of the paragraph’s topic and focus.



**EXERCISE 2** ► Add repeated key words to the following paragraph.

Selecting the right Christmas gift is not always easy. I spend at least two months fretting and searching for the best \_\_\_\_\_ for two of my friends. Marge, a sales representative for a large drug company, makes plenty of money and spends it on anything she wants. What can I \_\_\_\_\_ for her? After attending several arts festivals and rummaging the stacks in the used and antique bookstores, I am ready to give up. But then I think of the perfect \_\_\_\_\_ for the hardworking woman who doesn’t need a \_\_\_\_\_ : a \_\_\_\_\_ certificate for a massage. Next is Laura, a student working on a bachelor’s degree in nursing. Unlike Marge, she must spend her money on both living and school expenses. Surely this decision will be an \_\_\_\_\_ one for me. Boy, am I wrong! I can’t decide whether to give her something personal or something she can use for her studies. When we are together, I notice everything she is wearing and everything she says—waiting for a clue to make my task \_\_\_\_\_. When I visit her the day before a midterm test, I finally make a discovery. Her books and papers are spread on the sofa, and her neck is craned as she tries to read the notebook in her lap. So I decide to buy her a lap desk and a book light to make her studying more tolerable. At last the guessing is over, and the \_\_\_\_\_ are purchased. But it wasn’t an \_\_\_\_\_ task.

**PRACTICE WRITING: Coherence**

Add appropriate transitional words to the paragraphs you have been working on in this chapter. Then check the paragraphs for repetition of key terms, and add any that will make the paragraphs more unified.



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## CHAPTER SIX



# Methods of Development

Methods of paragraph development are used alone or in combination to achieve the purpose in writing and effectively communicate with an audience. Although one method may dominate, rarely does a paragraph rely on only one method of development. Common methods of paragraph development are narration, description, process, comparison and contrast, definition, and examples.

### NARRATION

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Everyone likes a story. *Narration* means to tell a story or to relate a series of events.

#### ***Guidelines for Writing a Narrative Paragraph***

- Have your purpose in writing clearly in mind.
- With your writing purpose in mind, select only the details that contribute to the story line.
- Make a point with your story. An effective narrative paragraph can make the audience laugh, take action, understand something more thoroughly, or respond in many other ways. Which response are you trying to evoke?
- Write in time order. Tell what happened first, next, and so on, until you get to the end of the story. A working outline can help you keep events in order.
- End the paragraph by emphasizing the point of the story.
- Use transitional words and phrases.

Here is an example of a narrative paragraph by student Cindy Riedl:

The words “car trouble” cause me to tense every muscle in my body, but the thought of car trouble in triplicate, occurring all at one time, is enough to propel me into a state of high anxiety. Once upon a disastrous evening, I made a right turn on red onto a busy street, cocking my head to detect the source of a strange whirring noise. In the same panic-stricken moment, I realized both that my own vehicle was making the horrendous sound and that my forward motion had completely ceased. “Quick! Think! Pull the hazard button!” I thought. And, upon doing so, the button fell off into my hand; the only things that blinked were my eyes as I glimpsed in the rearview mirror an overpowered killing machine manned by a teenager who was about to cause our vehicles to mate. By the push of my guardian angel,

my vehicle jolted forward with just enough oomph to take refuge in a convenience store parking lot. Frantically, I embarked on a telephone manhunt to track down my husband. Four hundred and twenty-six quarters later (give or take a few), my shoulders fell in total disgust as he informed me that he, too, was stranded, his old rust-colored tank tiring out after years of dependable service. Ah, but I did not fret. I knew two more automotive wonders adorned our driveway, and I knew he would soon rescue me. One miserably long hour later, my knight in shining enamel appeared in the largest vehicle in our fleet, a huge white conversion van with twenty-two different blind spots--a van that I had never driven, nor had ever intended to drive. My husband decided to try to make it home in my crippled minivan and disappeared into the sunset, leaving me alone with the King Kong van. Perhaps now I should mention that I am 4'11" tall and I was seven months pregnant on the evening of this occurrence. Consequently, my body would not fold in half so that I could reach the lever in order to pull the seat closer to the steering wheel. Thus, I spilled myself out of the grumbling giant to make the necessary adjustments, but I forgot that I needed to descend two steps instead of one and nearly slammed myself into the concrete pavement. Finally, seat pulled forward, brake and gas pedals within reach, I prepared to adjust the rearview mirror. Just as I cupped my hand around the black frame of the mirror, the entire assembly disintegrated in my palm, leaving me to maneuver 6,000 pounds of unfamiliar machinery with my sweating left hand clinging to the steering wheel and my shaking right hand supporting the rearview mirror at a variety of futile angles. Somehow, probably with more help from my angel, I made it home safely. At the moment, all four of our vehicles are in excellent running condition, and two auto parts stores and one mechanic are extremely happy. As for me, however, every squeak or rattle causes me anxiety, and I seem to be paying especially close attention to car commercials.

The writer uses narration and focuses on the most important details of her experience. The point of her narrative is to make the audience better understand that car trouble causes her much anxiety and to do so with humor. Therefore, the audience can laugh while identifying with her experience. She uses time order and several transitions like *and*, *consequently*, *thus*, *finally*, *however*.

Although Cindy Riedl's paragraph is written with a humorous tone, a narrative paragraph may have a serious tone, of course. No matter what tone your paragraph has, it should never be self-pitying or preachy. Instead, rely on those sincere feelings that others can read about with pleasure or interest.



**EXERCISE 1** ► Read the following list of sentences. Omit any details that do not relate to the purpose in writing: to make the audience understand the feelings of a young boy during a hurricane. Put the remaining details in time order.

**Topic Sentence:** David's experience during a hurricane made him realize no physical efforts can stop destruction.

- \_\_\_ Sightings of a powerful hurricane had been forecasted on the morning news.
- \_\_\_ When David got home, he dashed inside to find his little sister and mother watching the news.
- \_\_\_ His family was living on the island of Oahu when this unexpected event took place.
- \_\_\_ They rushed to prepare for the terrifying event.

\_\_\_ They had purchased so many batteries, matches and flashlights that they could not possibly use them all.

\_\_\_ They would need such items as lanterns and candles.

\_\_\_ They were packed away in the attic.

\_\_\_ Between the lawn mower, toys, picnic table and lawn furniture, it was a tight fit.

\_\_\_ David's mother brought every moveable object from the backyard into a small, partially walled-in area under the carport.

\_\_\_ With the arrival of nightfall, the rain fell in heavy torrents.

\_\_\_ Not expecting the power to go out so quickly, they frantically searched to find the flashlights and candles.

\_\_\_ Huge trees, torn from their roots, now rested on the pavement.

\_\_\_ Where garages and sheds once stood now only remains of tin and wood were scattered across neighbors' lawn.

\_\_\_ They finally made it into the kitchen.

\_\_\_ The only place they felt safe was under the kitchen table with a huge blanket over their heads.

\_\_\_ Violent water had crushed beach houses and sent boats hurling into one another on the docks.

\_\_\_ Finally, the nightmare was over, and the sky returned to its natural hues of blue.

\_\_\_ After searching for an hour, they gave up on finding all the required things and decided it was time to go shopping.

\_\_\_ That night they all cuddled up together in the arms of David's mother.

\_\_\_ David woke at noon the next day and went outside.

\_\_\_ David's mother had always wanted a coffee table made from the trunk of a banyan tree, and hundreds of their branches lay in the yard.

\_\_\_ They arrived at the store just before closing time.

\_\_\_ They found the stores full of people and the supplies depleted.

\_\_\_ They went to two more stores.

\_\_\_ Strong winds had destroyed much of the island.



**EXERCISE 2** ► Now put the sentences in Exercise 1 into paragraph form; add appropriate transitional words and phrases.

### *PRACTICE WRITING: Narrative Paragraph*

Write a narrative paragraph.

#### **Possible Topics**

a conflict with a friend or family member  
a change of attitude toward someone  
someone's advice I used to my benefit  
a job interview  
a first date  
a first job  
a time I showed compassion to someone  
a time someone showed compassion to me  
a time when I felt like an outsider  
a terrifying incident  
a joyful incident  
an embarrassing incident  
a humorous incident

## **DESCRIPTION**

---

A *descriptive* paragraph tells what a person, place, or thing looks like.

### **Guidelines for Writing a Descriptive Paragraph**

- Have your purpose in writing clearly in mind.
- Create a dominant impression by using specific details. Which details will your audience need to know? What dominant impression will your audience remember after reading the paragraph?
- Include details that relate to the senses of sight, touch, smell, hearing, and taste. Try to appeal to at least some of these sensory images in your paragraph. Try not to rely exclusively on visual details.
- Use space order. Select a starting point and then describe the object or person from left to right, top to bottom, front to back, and so on. A working outline can help you.
- End the paragraph by emphasizing the dominant impression of the description.
- Use transitional words and phrases to achieve unity.

Here is a descriptive paragraph written by a student:

Marcus is not at all what he seems when someone first meets him. As I walked onto the construction site during my first job pouring concrete, I saw a man who had the appearance of an outlaw. He sported a black cowboy hat that was cocked back on his head, and he was wearing a grimy black leather jacket. His front teeth were missing, perhaps knocked out in a barroom brawl. His cold gray eyes and pockmarked face sent a cold chill up my spine. Like most outlaws, this one was big and barrel chested, and he weighed over two hundred pounds. As I got to know Marcus, however, I realized my first impression had been all wrong. A person's looks can be a deceiving factor when we meet someone. Marcus's personality turned out to be different from what his outward appearance led me to believe. In reality, he is a loving person, truly loved by his family and friends. He writes passionate poetry to his wife. For his family he lovingly prepares huge meals that would make anyone's mouth water. He hugs his friends, women and men, when greeting them or saying his goodbyes. And he knows how to say, "I love you." Marcus's outlaw appearance covers a sensitive human being.

The writer creates a dominant impression of Marcus's gentle and sensitive personality by contrasting it to his outlaw appearance. He uses space order to describe Marcus; he begins with the hat, then works down to the jacket. Next, he moves back up to Marcus's teeth and continues up to his eyes. Last, he gives the overall appearance of Marcus's size. The space order the writer has chosen gives the audience the feeling of giving Marcus the "once over." Also, the writer uses several transitions to give the paragraph coherence: *when, and, as*.

Here is a descriptive paragraph by professional writer Annie Dillard from *Teaching a Stone to Talk*:

When you are inside the jungle, away from the river, the trees vault out of sight. It is hard to remember to look up the long trunks and see the fans, strips, fronds, and sprays of glossy leaves. Inside the jungle you are more likely to notice the snarls of climbers and creepers round the trees' boles, the flowering bromelads and epiphytes in every bough's crook, and the fantastic silk-cotton tree trunks thirty or forty feet across, trunks buttressed in flanges of wood whose curves can make three high walls of a room—a shady loamy-aired room where you would gladly live, or die. Butterflies, iridescent blue, striped, or clear-winged, thread the jungle paths at eye level. And at your feet is a swath of ants bearing triangular bits of green leaf. The ants with their leaves look like a wide fleet of sailing dinghies—but they don't quit. In either direction they wobble over the jungle floor as far as the eye can see. I followed them off the path as far as I dared, and never saw an end to ants or to those luffing chips of green they bore.



**EXERCISE 1** ▶ Read the following list of sentences. Omit any details that do not contribute to the dominant impression of the paragraph: the breathtaking sight of the lake. Put the details in space order.

**Topic Sentence:** From a canoe, Ottertrack Lake is a breathtaking sight.

- \_\_\_ Aspens spire to the sky from the lake's east edge.
- \_\_\_ Their gold, green, and red leaves are reflected in the lake's surface.
- \_\_\_ The canoe is an old one.



### ***PRACTICE WRITING: Descriptive Paragraph***

Write a descriptive paragraph.

#### **Possible Topics**

a person I admire (parent, sibling, minister, teacher, actor, musician, politician, etc.)  
the personality traits that make someone I know special  
a group of people: a crowd waiting in line, people at a party, people eating in the cafeteria, etc.  
a favorite place: room, theater, vacation spot, local night spot, garden, etc.  
an unusual piece of art  
a memorable meal  
an interesting animal

## **PROCESS**

A *process* paragraph explains how to do something or shows how something works. A process paragraph can give step-by-step directions. For example, it could give the steps in developing film. or a process paragraph can give information about how something is or was done. For example, it could explain how earthquakes take place.

### ***Guidelines for Writing a Process Paragraph***

- Have your purpose in writing clearly in mind.
- Give all the steps or stages in the process. Since your purpose is to instruct or inform, be sure you have not overlooked any steps or stages.
- Include any special information. Do you need to list materials or equipment needed to perform the process? Will your audience need any warnings about performing the process?
- Eliminate irrelevant points.
- Write in time order. Give the first step or stage, then the second, and so on. A working outline can help you check your organization of the paragraph.
- End the paragraph by saying something about the results of completing the process.
- Use transitional words and phrases to achieve unity.
- Avoid use of second person

### **Avoid use of Second Person**

**Incorrect:** First, make a personal daily activity schedule.  
(The subject is *you* understood. The writer is actually saying, "You make a personal daily activity schedule.")

**Incorrect:** First, you should make a personal daily activity schedule.  
(The writer is still using *you*.)

**Correct (Use of Third Person):** First, one should make a personal daily activity schedule.

**Correct (Use of Third Person):** First, students should make personal daily activity schedules.

Here is a process paragraph that gives step-by-step instructions:

The process of planning a time to study is vital for serious college students. First, students should make personal daily activity schedules. They should allow time for sleep, meals, personal chores, job, classes, leisure activities, family activities, and any other category they need. For example, if Latasha tends to sleep nine hours but marks only eight, her schedule will be inadequate. Next, students should schedule a realistic number of study hours. By doubling the number of weekly hours spent in class, students will probably have an adequate number. For instance, if Mark spends fifteen hours in class, he should schedule at least thirty study hours. Last, students should schedule practical study times. So, if Jake knows he cannot wake up early, he should not try to study at 5:00 a.m. In addition, students should schedule breaks in study time, perhaps a 10-minute break every hour. A manageable and successful college experience awaits those students who plan a time to study.

Notice the writer's use of the transitional words *first*, *next*, and *last*. Following is a process paragraph from the essay "The Spider and the Wasp" written by zoologist Alexander Petrunkevitch. The paragraph gives information about how something is done.

After paralyzing the tarantula, the wasp cleans herself by dragging her body along the ground and rubbing her feet, sucks a drop of blood oozing from the wound in the spider's abdomen, then grabs a leg of the flabby, helpless animal in her jaws and drags it down to the bottom of the grave. She stays there for many minutes, sometimes for several hours, and what she does all that time in the dark we do not know. Eventually she lays her egg and attaches it to the side of the spider's abdomen with a sticky secretion. Then she emerges, fills the grave with soil carried bit by bit in her jaws, and finally tramples the ground all around to hide any trace of the grave from prowlers. Then she flies away, leaving her descendant safely started in life.

Notice the use of the transitional words *after*, *then*, *eventually*, and *finally*.



**EXERCISE 1** ► Read the following list of sentences. Omit any that are irrelevant to the process being explained, which is following the right steps in a therapeutic juice fast. Then put the details in time order.

**Topic Sentence:** A therapeutic juice fast can make a person feel healthier if he follows the right steps.

- \_\_\_ For a three-day fast, he should make a type of lemonade.
- \_\_\_ He should stop using alcohol.
- \_\_\_ In addition, he may have as much water and peppermint tea as he likes.
- \_\_\_ One must prepare for the fast.
- \_\_\_ He should stop using tobacco.



### *PRACTICE WRITING: Process Paragraph*

Write a process paragraph.

#### **Possible Topics**

Step-by-Step Directions:

- how to change a bad habit
- how to relieve stress
- how to plan an exercise program
- how to install something
- how to prepare a certain food
- how to select a doctor or dentist
- how to select a professor
- how to listen and take notes in class
- how to have fun on a limited budget

Information:

- how something scientific works or is done
- how something in nature works or occurs
- how two people or groups interact with each other
- how a certain ritual or ceremony is conducted in my religion
- how a certain historical event occurred

## **COMPARISON AND CONTRAST**

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In a narrow sense, a *comparison* shows how two or more things are similar, and a *contrast* shows how they are different. The need for comparison and contrast is common in this complex world. For example, you look at two brands of laundry detergent before buying one. You look at several articles of clothing in your closet before you get dressed for the day. You review the campaign statements of two candidates running for governor to determine whom you will vote for. To make sense of all the information you are inundated with every day, you must sort out facts, figures, and experiences by putting the data side by side.

In writing a comparison and contrast paragraph, you use both of these related processes to look at a two-part topic. First, you must make sure that the two subjects have enough in common to be comparable. However, you must also make sure that the two subjects are not so broad that you could not possibly cover all the comparable points. For example, a paragraph looking at the spellings of *lovable* and *loveable* would probably have only one or two sentences because the topic is too narrow. On the other hand, a comparison and contrast of the United States and Africa would be much too broad.

The two methods of organizing information in a comparison and contrast paragraph are *point-by-point* and *block*. The point-by-point method lets you move back and forth between the two subjects; the block method lets you discuss one subject completely before moving on to the other.

### **Point-by-Point Method**

With the point-by-point method, you compare and contrast the two subjects, first on point one, then on point two, then point three, and so on. Here is a working outline for a paragraph comparing and contrasting sunscreens:

**Topic Sentence:** *Ultimate* is a better sunscreen than *Blocker* because of its more effective ingredients, its better water resistance, and its lower cost.

Point 1: Ingredients

- A. *Ultimate*
- B. *Blocker*

Point 2: Water resistance

- A. *Ultimate*
- B. *Blocker*

Point 3: Cost

- A. *Ultimate*
- B. *Blocker*

When using the point-by-point method, you should present the same subject first in discussing each point. Also, you should give an equal or nearly equal amount of information for each subject. Here is a paragraph on sunscreens that demonstrates the point-by-point method:

Ultimate is a better sunscreen than Blocker because of its more effective ingredients, its better water resistance, and its lower cost. Ultimate is the best sunscreen for people who want a safe sunscreen that will filter both of the sun's ultraviolet rays, UVA and UVB radiation. It contains only two chemicals, both of which are approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration as safe and effective. In addition, it contains no PABA, a chemical to which some people are allergic. Similarly, Blocker filters both UVA and UVB radiation and contains only two chemicals, both approved by the FDA. However, Blocker does contain PABA. While safe ingredients are of concern to most sunscreen users, water resistance is also important. Ultimate is waterproof for at least eighty minutes and through three swims. In contrast, Blocker is waterproof for only sixty minutes and through two swims. Of course, cost is another consideration for most consumers. Ultimate costs only \$1.50 per ounce while Blocker costs \$2.13 per ounce. When considering sunscreens, the smart consumer will choose Ultimate over Blocker because of its outstanding qualities.

## Block Method

With the block method of organizing a comparison and contrast paragraph, you present all the information about the first topic, then all the information about the second topic. Here is a working outline.

**Topic Sentence:** *Ultimate* is a better sunscreen than *Blocker* because of its more effective ingredients, its better water resistance, and its lower cost.

Topic 1: *Ultimate*

- A. Ingredients (point 1)
- B. Water resistance (point 2)
- C. Cost (point 3)

Topic 2: *Blocker*

- A. Ingredients
- B. Water resistance
- C. Cost

Be sure to give an equal or nearly equal amount of information for each topic. Here is the paragraph:

Ultimate is a better sunscreen than Blocker because of its more effective ingredients, its better water resistance, and its lower cost. Ultimate is the best sunscreen for people who want a safe sunscreen that will filter both of the sun's ultraviolet rays, UVA and UVB radiation. It contains only two chemicals, both of which are approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration as safe and effective. In addition, it contains no PABA, a chemical to

which some people are allergic. Because water resistance is also important to most sun-screen users, Ultimate is a good choice: it is waterproof for at least eighty minutes and through three swims. And, best of all, Ultimate costs only \$1.50 per ounce. In comparison, Blocker filters both UVA and UVB radiation and contains only two chemicals, both approved by the FDA; however, Blocker does contain PABA. As for water resistance, Blocker is waterproof for only sixty minutes and through only two swims. Lastly, instead of giving the consumer a bonus of an inexpensive price, Blocker requires the buyer to pay \$2.13 an ounce. When considering sunscreens, the smart consumer will choose Ultimate over Blocker because of its outstanding qualities.

### Transitions Used in Comparison and Contrast

Notice the transitional words and phrases used in both paragraphs. Following are some common transitions you can use in a comparison and contrast paragraph:

***To signal comparison:***

also  
too  
similarly  
both  
not only . . . but also  
in the same way (manner)  
like  
have in common  
furthermore  
equally

***To signal contrast:***

however  
in contrast  
on the contrary  
on the other hand  
although  
but  
instead of  
unlike  
while  
different from

### Guidelines for Writing a Comparison and Contrast Paragraph

- Cover all the points that can be compared or contrasted.
- Eliminate any points that are unnecessary to your discussion.
- Use either point-by-point or block method of organization. A working outline can help you.
- End the paragraph by either emphasizing your main point or summarizing the points you have made.
- Use transitional words and phrases to ensure a smooth flow from subject to subject or from point to point.



**EXERCISE 1** ► Read the following list of sentences. Omit any details that do not support the main point of the paragraph: the benefits of homeopathy over standard medicine. Determine the main points. Then put the sentences either in point-by-point order or block order.

**Topic Sentence:** While medical doctors tried to repress my symptoms with no success, my homeopathic counselor helped me to be truly healed.

- \_\_\_ The homeopathic counselor uses medicines made from natural substances: animal, vegetable, and mineral.
- \_\_\_ I was feeling tired most of the time, as well as somewhat depressed.
- \_\_\_ One doctor suggested I get more sleep.
- \_\_\_ The homeopath explained to me that the body is always striving to keep itself healthy, or in balance.
- \_\_\_ Both of the medical doctors at first seemed to think that my symptoms of exhaustion were manifestations of a disease.
- \_\_\_ The homeopath gave me a strict diet to follow.
- \_\_\_ The diet included fresh fruits and vegetables, fish, chicken, and whole grains.
- \_\_\_ Neither doctor said anything about the harmony or balance required between both parts of the body, physical and mental.
- \_\_\_ The homeopath gave me a natural remedy to take daily over several months.
- \_\_\_ I was tested for several weeks so that they could determine what medications to give me to suppress my symptoms.
- \_\_\_ The homeopath heals the whole person using a holistic approach; he believes the mind and body are interdependent and treats them together.
- \_\_\_ The medical doctor prescribes a treatment for a disease.
- \_\_\_ The medical doctors wanted to give me an anti-depressant drug.
- \_\_\_ They did not ask about my diet or make any dietary recommendations.
- \_\_\_ We are always surrounded by germs, and our bodies wage battle with these invading forces.

Now put the sentences in Exercise 1 into paragraph form; add appropriate transitional words and phrases.

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**PRACTICE WRITING: Comparison and Contrast Paragraph**

Write a comparison and contrast paragraph.

**Possible Topics**

- two places
- two people
- two jobs or professions
- two lifestyles
- two products
- two activities
- two approaches to a subject
- my expectations of and the reality about something or someone
- the ideal and the real (for example, the perfect friend and the real friend)
- my attitudes about myself, another person, a place, or an event—then and now

**DEFINITION**

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Most people think of a dictionary when they think of definitions. However, the term *definition* can have a wider application. Sometimes a definition can be given in one sentence, but frequently it requires a longer piece of writing such as a paragraph, an essay, or perhaps a book. These longer definitions are called *extended definitions*. For our purposes, we will look at the extended definition paragraph. An extended definition takes a detailed, analytical look at what something or someone is.

The purpose of a definition paragraph can be to clarify a vague or misunderstood term, for example, *obscenity*. Another purpose can be to explain an idea or concept, such as *freedom*. Since ideas and concepts are abstract, they cannot be perceived by the five senses; consequently, they often need detailed definitions to make their meanings clear to an audience. Another purpose in defining can be to make an audience familiar with an unfamiliar word, perhaps a technical term such as *diode*, which is an electronic device. Yet another purpose can be to entertain the audience by presenting interesting or uncommon information.

Depending upon your topic, you can use various methods of developing your paragraph:

- Describe the parts of what you are defining.
- Compare and contrast to distinguish between related terms or ideas.
- Explain a process.
- Give examples.

- Use narration. Tell an interesting story.
- Give some familiar synonyms (words with similar meanings).
- Give the history of the term.
- Use negation; in other words, explain what the term is not.
- Avoid quoting the dictionary. A dictionary definition can be dull. So, if you incorporate part of it in your paragraph, you should rewrite it, add to it, or make it more interesting in some way.

Here is a student paragraph defining *perfectionist*:

A perfectionist is a person who refuses to accept any standard short of perfect and experiences self and others as never quite good enough. A young woman who suffers with an eating disorder like anorexia is an example of someone who expects perfection of self. A person who is never satisfied with a mate may be an example of someone who expects perfection of another. The perfectionist believes that life is broken and must be fixed rather than believing that life is simply to be experienced. In some cases, the pursuit of perfection can be dangerous to one's health. The type A personality, for whom perfectionism is a way of life, may end up with heart disease. Another characteristic of the perfectionist is the confusing of approval with love. If a student's goal is to make 100% on an exam and he makes a 90%, he feels disapproval of himself and, therefore, unloved. He convinces himself that he is not good enough. In his world, the idea that he did his best does not console him because the perfectionist believes he must be flawless in every way.

Sentence 1 gives part of a standard dictionary definition and expands upon it, making it more interesting. Sentence 2 and 3 give examples. Sentence 4 adds description of another part (another characteristic of the perfectionist); in addition, sentence 4 uses negation (explains what the perfectionist does not believe). Sentences 5 and 6 give another example. Sentence 7 adds description of another part (characteristic), and sentences 8, 9 and 10 give an example. Sentence 10 also gives a synonym for *perfect*, which is *flawless*.

### Guidelines for Writing a Definition Paragraph

- Have your purpose in writing clearly in mind.
- Use the methods that will most effectively produce a complete and clear definition.
- Eliminate any vague or confusing information; always keep your audience in mind.
- Use order of importance, time order, space order, or any combination of organizational methods. Use a working outline to help you.
- Use appropriate transitional words and phrases.



**EXERCISE 1** ► Read the following list of sentences. The main purpose of the paragraph is to define *ingenuity*, an abstract term, and, at the same time, to entertain the audience with an amusing story. Omit any unnecessary details. Then organize the sentences.

**Topic Sentence:** *Ingenuity* is the ability to use imagination and cleverness in making one's dreams come true.



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***PRACTICE WRITING: Definition Paragraph***

Write a definition paragraph.

**Possible Topics**

ambition  
success  
happiness  
courage  
freedom  
heroism  
beauty  
democracy  
curiosity  
masculinity  
femininity  
a current slang expression  
a term from a field of study that interests you  
a term from a hobby  
a term from a sport  
a term from an art form  
a scientific or technical term

**EXAMPLE**

A paragraph developed by examples can make a concept or idea clearer, more interesting, or more convincing.

**Guidelines for Writing a Paragraph Developed by Example**

- Have your purpose in writing clearly in mind.
- In general terms, introduce the concept or idea to be explained.
- Then use specific, well-chosen examples in order to make the concept or idea meaningful. You may use several short examples or one long, detailed example.
- Use specific, vivid details.
- The examples are usually given in order of importance.
- End the paragraph by reemphasizing the concept or idea.

Use transitional words and phrases to achieve unity, especially *for example*, *as an example*, *for instance*, *to illustrate*, and *thus*.

Here is a student's paragraph developed by example:

Quail hunting is an experience that not only gives me a feeling of fulfillment but also enhances my sense of wonder about life. When I know I will be hunting, I can barely contain my anticipation of all the joys awaiting me. For example, I often walk several miles during the hunt, so the exercise I gain is valuable. In fact, I sleep the night after a hunt in a state of pleasant physical exhaustion. In addition, hunting allows me to be able to watch my bird dog Lindy work. Her enthusiasm and expertise are inspirational to me, especially when she comes to a point; I know that a covey of birds will rise and I will hear the sound of their wings in flight. My heart pounds harder, and I breathe faster when I hear that sound. Of course, I relish the chance to be outdoors. Nature seems to welcome me as I see deer, rabbits, and wild turkeys or as I smell the distinctive air of autumn when the willow and cottonwood leaves are falling. And how could I forget the comradery I experience with my hunting companions? These are friends I have known all my life. We are fortunate and grateful to share this awe-inspiring experience together.

The writer has used four examples (exercise, the dog, nature, and comradery) to make the idea in his topic sentence clearer, more interesting, and more convincing. Notice his use of the transitional words *for example*, *in fact*, *in addition*, and *of course*. His examples are arranged from least to most important.



**EXERCISE 1** ▶ Read the following list of sentences. Omit any that do not develop the paragraph by use of specific, well-chosen examples. Then put the details in order.

**Topic Sentence:** I want to experience and enjoy life with all of its wonders.

- \_\_\_ I intend to meet people from other cultures and try to understand their customs and beliefs.
- \_\_\_ If I ever make enough money, I am going to travel nonstop.
- \_\_\_ I would love my life to have a thrill a minute, but I know that experience is rare.
- \_\_\_ I will go everywhere from Panama to Paris.
- \_\_\_ I would like to try skydiving.
- \_\_\_ I will settle for a thrill a day.
- \_\_\_ I want to search the world over for the biggest roller coasters and ride them all.
- \_\_\_ I would like to have dozens of interesting stories to tell my grandchildren.
- \_\_\_ I want to shop on Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills, even if I do not buy anything.
- \_\_\_ I want to sail a boat on the ocean and feel the wind in my face.



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## CHAPTER SEVEN



# First and Second Drafts of the Paragraph

## FIRST DRAFT

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The writing stage of the writing process includes making as many drafts of your paragraph as necessary. Very rarely can a writer write one draft and be satisfied that he or she has accomplished the purpose in writing.

### Guidelines for Writing First Draft Paragraphs

- Write while your ideas are fresh in your mind. Procrastination will make your ideas more difficult to reassemble.
- Remember that no part of your first draft has to be permanent. You can always change what you have written.
- Write on one side of the paper only. Leave wide margins on both the left and right so you can add information or make notes to yourself later. Skip every other line for the same reason.
- Stop occasionally to read what you have written. Then, if you need to delete something, put a line through it. Do not mark out the material completely because you might decide to reinsert the information later or use it somewhere else.
- Although you might stop occasionally, do not spend time worrying about individual words. If you cannot think of the word you want, write down a word close to the one you want, circle it, and keep writing. You can change the word later. Likewise, if you write a sentence that is not exactly what you wanted to say, put a mark in the margin so that you can come back to the sentence later rather than interrupting the flow of your ideas.
- Do not try to be too neat. After all, your first draft is supposed to be a rough draft. Sloppy penmanship is fine as long as you can read what you have written.
- Relax and work at a comfortable pace. You do not need to be nervous; try not to rush through the first draft. Think about what you are saying—perhaps even saying it aloud to yourself—and continue with what you should say next.



## COMPUTER HELP

### *Writing the First Draft*

1. Create a NEW DOCUMENT.
2. Instead of circling a questionable word, phrase, or sentence, put an asterisk or question mark by it until you are ready to revise.
3. When you are finished composing the draft, SAVE it with a FILE name you will recognize later (for example, narrpar1 for narrative paragraph draft 1). Then put the FILE in the appropriate FOLDER.
4. Before you print a copy of the draft, you may want to do the following so that you can make revisions more easily:
  - A. Triple space.
  - B. Change the margin width to two inches rather than the usual one inch.
  - C. If you are writing more than one paragraph, insert a page break after each paragraph.
5. Save this reformatted text under a different FILE name. Then make a backup version.
6. Print out the reformatted text.

Look at the first draft of a paragraph written by a student:

When I was eight years old and experienced effects of frostbite, I learned a harsh lesson about nature. My parents had taken my sister and me to Yosemite National Park to camp out and play in the snow. The first morning I ~~got up at sunrise from a tent pitched outside next to our truck. I dressed quickly since it was a bit chilly outside. The rest of my family was up and moving around.~~ My sister and I headed down to the river nearby while my parents were preparing breakfast. There were patches of snow and a thin sheet of ice across the water. Linda and I played in the snow and started to break the ice. I expertly threw jagged pieces of ice into the water to shatter the thin glaze that I could not reach. Although my mittens became soaked with the frigid water, I continued to play as the cold temperature of the air began to creep through the wool. My hands were getting cold, but I was too busy having fun to notice. I became aware that my fingers had taken on an intense, searing pain. It was then I started back to the campsite. I had not walked very far when both of my hands went numb. A wave of nausea from the pain hit me, and I began to cry. I had bragged to Linda earlier that boys don't cry. She was older and, in my eyes, the one who got everything she wanted. I was only a few hundred feet away from camp, but it seemed like a few hundred miles. After what felt like hours, I made it to camp, tears streaming down my face. My mother asked me, "What's the matter?" "My hands hurt and I feel sick," I whimpered. Immediately, she jerked the mittens off my hands, which were now ice cold to the touch, with an eerie white color to my fingers. Holding my hands over the heater, she began to massage them back to life. In a few minutes, I lay down as my head reeled from the onset of pain. Slowly, pain gave way to feeling, and my head began to clear. My hands returned to normal. To this day, the painful effect of frostbite lingers in my hands; they are very sensitive to the cold.

After writing the first draft, you are ready to revise it. Revision is part of the rewriting stage of the writing process. *Revise* comes from a Latin word meaning "to look back." And that is exactly what you do when you revise. You look back and reconsider what you have written. Revision is more than something you do when your first draft is completed; revision is a thinking and rethinking process that happens while you are writing the first draft, while you have time between writing drafts, or any time you think of a way to make the organization or development of your writing more effective.

### Guidelines for Revising First Draft Paragraphs

- Set your paper aside for some time so that you can be more objective when you look at it later. Allow twenty-four hours to go by if you can. If not, set the paper aside for at least several hours.
- When you come back to your paragraph, do not try to revise everything in it, or you will become frustrated and fatigued.
- Write the second draft after you have used the checklist that follows.



#### CHECKLIST: Revising First Draft Paragraphs

1. Does the paragraph fulfill your purpose in writing?
2. Does the paragraph contain the information pertinent for your particular audience?
3. Does the topic sentence limit and control the topic?
4. Do the other sentences support the topic sentence?
5. Is the paragraph organized in an effective way?

Here is the second draft of the student's paragraph:

When I was eight years old and experienced the effects of frostbite, I learned a harsh lesson about nature. My parents had taken my sister and me to Yosemite National Park to camp out and play in the snow. The first morning, my sister and I headed down to the river nearby while my parents were preparing breakfast. There were patches of snow and a thin sheet of ice across the water. Linda and I played in the snow and started to break the ice. I expertly threw jagged pieces of ice into the water to shatter the thin glaze that I could not reach. Although my mittens became soaked with the frigid water, I continued to play as the cold temperature of the air began to creep through the wool. My hands were getting cold, but I was too busy having fun to notice. I became aware that my fingers had



#### COMPUTER HELP

##### *Revising the First Draft*

Revising the First Draft

1. Write suggestions for revision in the margins or between lines of the draft you have printed out.
2. Use the checklist that follows.
3. You can emphasize an idea so that you can stay focused (for example, a topic sentence of a paragraph or the thesis statement of an essay). **SELECT** and highlight the sentence while you consider the organization of a paragraph.
4. Insert or delete any information as needed.
5. **CUT** a highlighted passage by using **CUT** from Edit on the MENU BAR. If you want to use the passage somewhere else, you can **PASTE** it into a different place. You can even **PASTE** the passage at the end of your document if you are not quite sure where to use it at this time.
6. You can also **SELECT** and highlight any passages you need to **COPY** and **PASTE** (or **MOVE**). Use **COPY** from Edit on the MENU BAR, then **PASTE**. In this way, you can try a new arrangement without losing your original. When you are sure where the passage works most effectively, you can delete the one you are not going to use.

taken on an intense, searing pain. It was then I started back to the campsite. I had not walked very far when both of my hands went numb. A wave of nausea from the pain hit me, and I began to cry. I was only a few hundred feet away from camp, but it seemed like a few hundred miles. After what felt like hours, I made it to camp, tears streaming down my face. My mother asked me, "What's the matter?" "My hands hurt and I feel sick," I whimpered. Immediately, she jerked the mittens off my hands, which were now ice cold to the touch, with an eerie white color to my fingers. Holding my hands over the heater, she began to massage them back to life. In a few minutes, I lay down as my head reeled from the onset of pain. Slowly, pain gave way to feeling, and my head began to clear. My hands returned to normal. To this day, the painful effect of frostbite lingers in my hands; they are very sensitive to the cold. And my lesson about nature is one I will never forget.

The writer has checked his circled word, omitted some questionable sentences, and added a final sentence.

## SECOND DRAFT

When you are finished with the second draft of the paragraph, you can revise it.

### Guidelines for Revising Second Draft Paragraphs

- Look at the development of the paragraph. Use the checklist that follows.
- If necessary, make notes in the margins while you read the paragraph again.
- Write the next draft, incorporating any changes you need to make.



### CHECKLIST: *Revising Second Draft Paragraphs*

1. Does the paragraph have enough support? Does it include specific details?
2. Is the paragraph unified? Does every sentence work to achieve your purpose in writing for your audience?
3. Is the paragraph coherent? Does it include transitions and repetition of key words?
4. Does anything need to be added to make the paragraph complete?
5. Does anything need to be deleted?
6. Is anything repeated too often?



## COMPUTER HELP

### *Revising Additional Drafts*

1. Use the SAVE AS feature to name your drafts in sequence (for example, narrpar1, narrpar2, etc.)
2. Use the checklist that follows.
3. Insert or delete any information as needed.

Here is the student paragraph after the writer revised the second draft:

When I was eight years old and experienced the effects of frostbite, I learned a harsh lesson about nature. My parents had taken my sister and me to Yosemite National Park to camp out and play in the snow. The first morning, my sister and I headed to the river nearby while my parents were preparing breakfast. At the river, there were patches of snow and a thin sheet of ice across the water. We decided to break the ice, so I expertly threw jagged pieces of ice into the water. Although my mittens became soaked with the frigid water, I continued to play as the cold temperature of the air began to creep through the wool. My hands were getting cold, but I was too busy having fun to notice. Suddenly, I became aware that my fingers had taken on an intense, searing pain. It was then I started back to the campsite. I had not walked very far when both of my hands went numb. A wave of nausea from the pain hit me, and I began to cry. I was only a few hundred feet away from camp, but it seemed like a few hundred miles. Finally, after what felt like hours, I made it to camp, tears streaming down my face. My mother asked me, “What’s the matter?” “My hands hurt and I feel sick,” I whimpered. Immediately, she jerked the mittens off my hands, which were now ice cold to the touch, with an eerie white color to my fingers. Holding my hands over the heater, she began to massage them back to life. In a few minutes, I lay down as my head reeled from the onset of pain. Slowly, pain gave way to feeling, and my head began to clear. Soon my hands returned to normal. However, to this day, the painful effect of frostbite lingers in my hands; they are very sensitive to the cold. And my lesson about nature is one I will never forget.

The writer has omitted some unnecessary information and added transitions: *so, suddenly, finally, soon*.

Of course, you might need to write three or more drafts until your paragraph is effective and complete. Each writing situation, each topic, each purpose in writing, and each audience will require different numbers and kinds of revisions. After you have made the revision, it is a good idea to read your paper aloud to someone who is willing to listen and who will be a fairly objective listener. Then, if something you have written does not make sense or sounds awkward, your listener can tell you so. If nothing else, read the paper aloud to yourself. Words read aloud sound different than words read silently. Consequently, you can often hear something that does not sound quite right. You can use the “read aloud” test two or three or more times during the writing process: when you are revising, when you are editing (to be discussed in the following chapters), or when your paper is completed—anytime you need a sounding board.

### **PRACTICE WRITING:** *Revising*

Use the guidelines and checklists in the chapters to revise the first and second drafts of paragraphs you have written.