

# PARAGRAPH DEVELOPMENT



*Second Edition*

A GUIDE  
FOR STUDENTS  
OF ENGLISH

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# 1



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## THE TOPIC SENTENCE

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### Paragraph Unity

#### THE PARAGRAPH

In written form, English is divided into *paragraphs* to distinguish one main idea from other main ideas. The paragraph is the *basic unit of composition*.

*Remember this:*

1. *A paragraph is a group of sentences which develop one central idea.*
  2. *The central idea is usually stated in a topic sentence.*
  3. *Every sentence in the paragraph must help the development of the topic sentence.*
- 

## 8 PARAGRAPH DEVELOPMENT

### Choose a Topic

1. supermarkets
2. smoking
3. study habits
4. problems between generations
5. registration process at a university

### EXERCISE 1-4



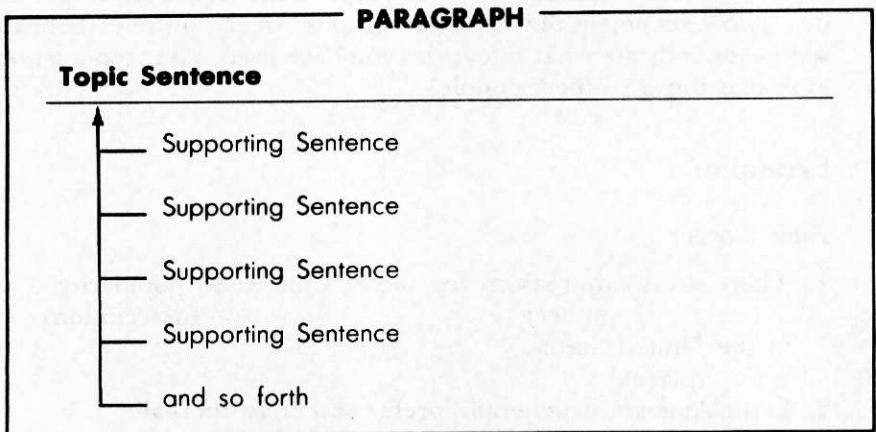
### Writing Topic Sentences

*Directions:* Working alone, formulate questions about the following topic based on the categories. Then write *three* separate topic sentences about the topic. When you have finished, compare your sentences with those of some of your classmates to decide whether you have limited the topic adequately.

*Topic:* Foreign students in the United States

## PARAGRAPH UNITY

Remember that besides the topic sentence, a paragraph includes several other sentences which in some way contribute to or *support* the idea in the topic sentence. In other words, all these sentences must be *related* to the topic and must therefore refer back to the topic sentence. Notice the arrows in the following diagram:





**Choose a Topic Sentence**

- A. Babies interacting daily with their parents.  
 B. Physical contact is an important factor in an infant's overall development.  
 C. Many children are not properly taken care of by their parents.

**Defend Your Choice**

1. I did not choose letter \_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
2. I did not choose letter \_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**EXERCISE 1-7****Supplying Appropriate Topic Sentences**

*Directions:* The topic sentences of each of the following paragraphs have been omitted. After a *careful* reading, write an appropriate topic sentence for each. Notice that the *general topics* of these paragraphs are the same as those in the previous exercise.

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_. When you have removed the hubcap from the wheel which has the flat, correctly place the jack to lift the car off the ground. Now you are ready to jack up the car high enough for the tire to clear the ground. After you have done that, carefully loosen the nuts that hold the tire and rim in place; the tool you use to do that is called a *lug wrench*. Remove the tire and put the spare tire in place. Now you are ready to put the nuts back on the wheel and tighten them as firmly as you can with the lug wrench. All that remains is to replace the hubcap, lower the car to the ground, give the nuts a final tightening, and remove the jack.
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_. The one most people are familiar with is the "desk dictionary," sometimes referred to as a *general-purpose dictionary*. Another kind is the *pronouncing dictionary*, which is concerned with a word's pronunciation more than with its meaning. A third type is the *bilingual dictionary*, which lists the words in one language and attempts

this animal. Concentrate on the physical characteristics which make this animal unique.

*Don't Forget:* Even in this kind of paragraph, the details you choose must support the topic sentence you have written.

### Phase 2: Writing the First Draft

*Directions:* Using the topic sentence you wrote in Phase 1, write the first draft of a paragraph in which you use *details* to support your topic sentence. When you have finished, read your paragraph to your classmates *but do not read the name of the person or animal you are describing*. If your paragraph contains enough detail, your classmates will be able to guess who or what you have described. If it does not contain enough detail and your classmates cannot identify the person or animal, they can suggest ways for you to improve your description.

### Phase 3: Making Your Language Accurate

*Directions:* After you have revised your paragraph based on your classmates' suggestions, you will want to check it for correct usage. Proofread the sentences to make sure that the **subjects** and **verbs** agree. After you have corrected any errors, recopy this draft and submit it to your teacher.

#### Describing a Person

##### SIZE

X is about \_\_\_\_\_" tall.  
approximately

X is tall,  
short  
of medium height  
thin  
slender  
a little on the heavy side  
average-sized

##### EYES, HAIR, AND SKIN

X has brown eyes.  
blue  
black  
gray  
green  
dark  
light

X is brown-eyed.  
blue-eyed  
and so forth



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# 3

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## ENUMERATION

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### Enumeration


Thus far, you have learned how to limit your subject in a clear, concise topic sentence and then to support it with examples, details, anecdotes, facts, and statistics. The next step is to arrange your supporting sentences in a logical and cohesive manner.

There are several ways in which this can be done. In this unit we will deal with what is probably the most common method of paragraph development in English: *enumeration*.

What is *enumeration*?

In this type of paragraph development, a writer starts with a *general class*, then proceeds to break it down by *listing* some or all of its *members or parts*. If we wanted to show a diagram of the enumerative process, our diagram might look something like this:

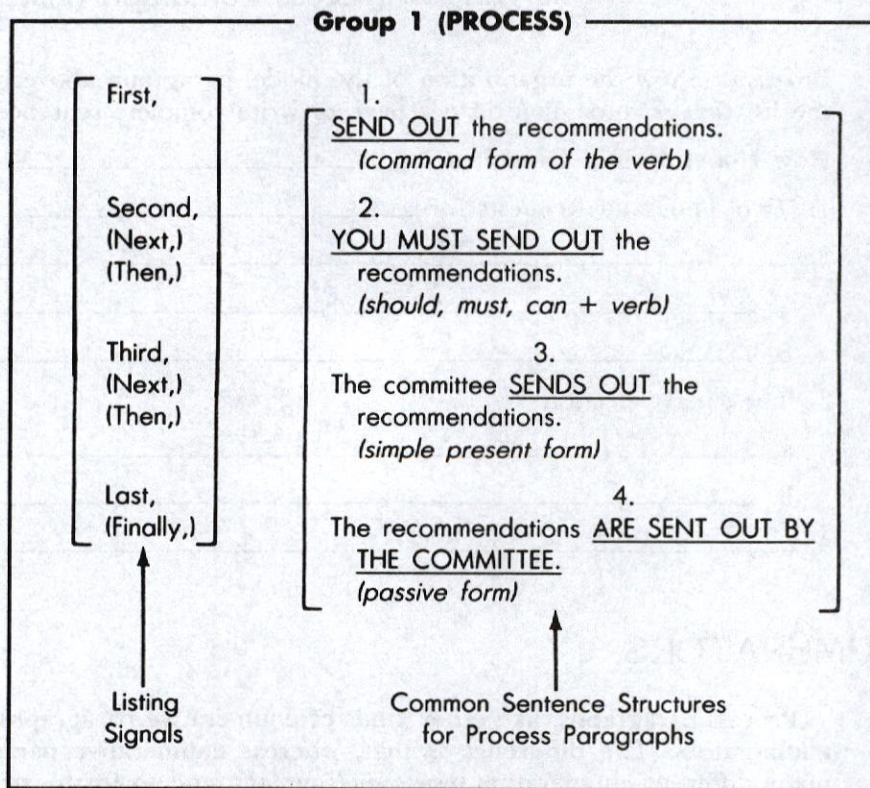


Now Ask Yourself 

1. Which of these enumerators appear in the paragraphs on finding a suitable apartment (page 13) and changing a flat tire (page 18)? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What about the model paragraph you just read (the Nobel Prize)?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What is the difference between a *step*, a *stage*, and a *phase*? \_\_\_\_\_

## LISTING SIGNALS

Process paragraphs often use listing signals. *Group 1* listing signals from the previous chapter (page 52) can be used, but the structures which follow them are usually different:



*Group 2* listing signals from the previous chapter (page 53) can also be used to develop process paragraphs:

## Culture Shock

1. The visitor has usually learned the language and is thus able to laugh at himself or herself.
2. Having passed through these stages of culture shock, the visitor may even eventually return home with regret at having lost his or her adopted home.
3. The process of reacting and adjusting to a new society, sometimes termed *culture shock*, has four distinct stages.
4. A hostile attitude is typical of the second stage, which develops at that point when the individual has to cope seriously with the day-to-day problems of housing, shopping, transportation, and so forth.
5. Final adjustment to a new culture occurs when the visitor is able to function without anxiety and to accept what he or she finds for what it is—another way of doing things.
6. During these initial encounters, every aspect of the new society seems fascinating.
7. The first period, or honeymoon stage, may last as long as several months.
8. The visitor develops a sense of humor about his or her problems on entering the third stage.
9. The visitor usually begins his or her stay in a hotel and meets sympathetic and gracious nationals.
10. The visitor soon finds that most people in the new society are indifferent to these problems, and so seeks out fellow countrymen to support him or her in criticism of the host country.

### EXERCISE 4-5


#### Guided Paragraph Writing: Process Information Transfer

*Directions:* Working alone, in pairs, or in small groups, study the following series of drawings that represents a process. Then, on a separate sheet of paper, recopy the paragraph, filling in all the blanks. Some blanks will require only one word; others will require more than one. Pay special attention to verbs in parentheses ( )—they must be put in the proper form.

#### Useful Definitions

butterfly—an adult insect with four wings, often brightly colored  
 caterpillar—the wormlike form of a butterfly in its first stage of development

ON Monday, Tuesday, etc.  
 ON July 6  
 ON July 6, 1955

 Now Ask Yourself

Which prepositions of time are used with the following:

1. Days of the week? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Months of the year? \_\_\_\_\_
3. An exact date? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Parts of the day? (two prepositions) \_\_\_\_\_
5. A specific year? \_\_\_\_\_
6. A particular hour of the day? \_\_\_\_\_

 EXERCISE 4-7

Controlled Writing: Tense Shift

*Directions:* Rewrite the model process paragraph on page 72 (Nobel Prize winners). This time, assume that the entire process occurred several months ago. In other words, describe it as though you were describing a real past event. The topic sentence has been provided for you.

Earlier this year, preparations were made once again to pick the new Nobel science laureates.

 EXERCISE 4-8

Unscrambling a Chronological Paragraph

*Directions:* Place the following scrambled sentences in their correct order; use the time line as your work space. Then, if your teacher wishes, copy the reconstructed paragraph on a separate sheet of paper.

1. First, I had to return some overdue books to the library.
2. After my early class, I had a quick cup of coffee with some friends in the cafeteria.
3. I got up at 6:30 A.M. as usual.

## EXERCISE 4-10



### Guided Paragraph Writing: Chronological Information Transfer

**Directions:** Working alone, in pairs, or in small groups, study the following time line. Then, on a separate sheet of paper, recopy the paragraph, filling in all the blanks. Some blanks will require only one word; others will require more than one. Pay special attention to verbs in parentheses ( )—they must be put in the proper form.

Before you begin, familiarize yourself with the meaning of the following terms:

to culminate

the Army

the Navy

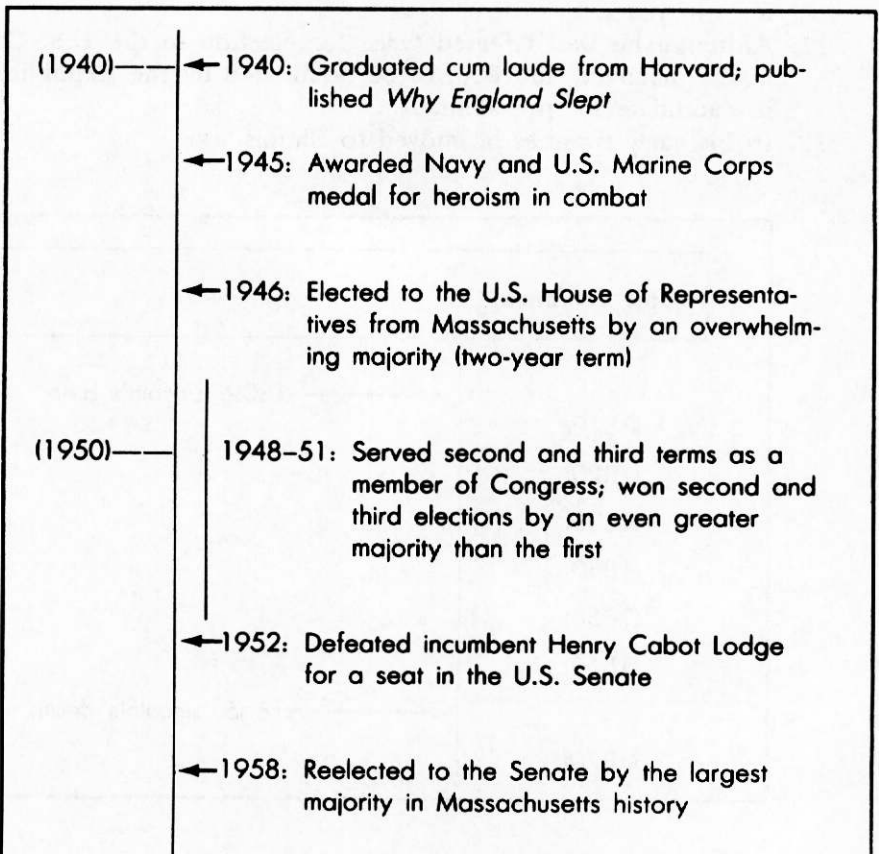
an overwhelming majority

cum laude

term

the Marine Corps

an incumbent







EXERCISE 5-6

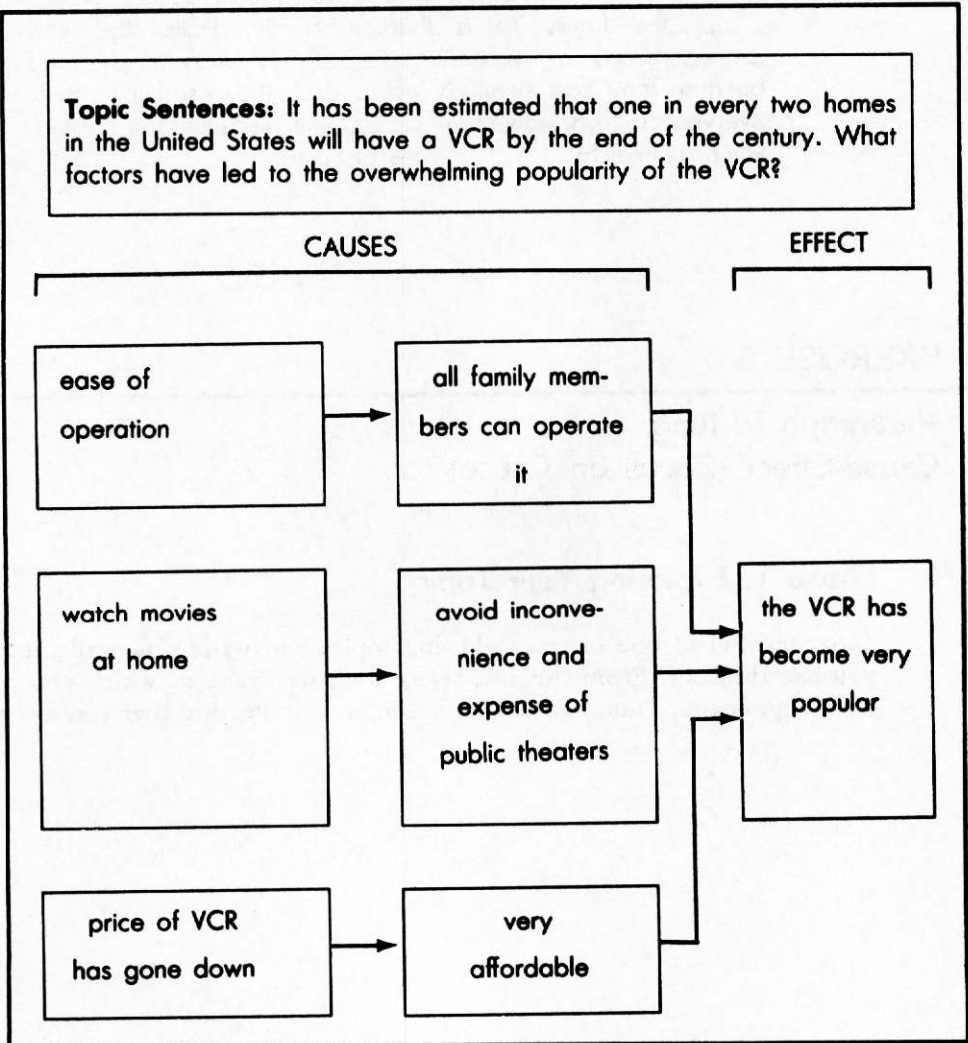
Paragraph Writing:  
Cause-Effect Information Transfer

*Directions:* Working alone, in pairs, or in small groups, study the cause-effect diagram. Then, on a separate sheet of paper, recopy the paragraph, filling in all the blanks. Some blanks will require only one word; others will require more than one. Before you begin, familiarize yourself with the meaning of the following terms:

a VCR  
represents  
factors  
overwhelming popularity

(a) button  
. . . , say, . . . .  
a video club

**Topic Sentences:** It has been estimated that one in every two homes in the United States will have a VCR by the end of the century. What factors have led to the overwhelming popularity of the VCR?



Another common usage error is writing **run-on sentences**. This involves writing two sentences as one and frequently occurs when the ideas in both sentences are closely related. Notice the examples of this type of error in the following sentences.

Abraham Lincoln is remembered for his sense of humor ~~John~~<sup>and</sup>  
Kennedy is, too.

There are two complete sentences written as one in the preceding example. It can be corrected either by putting a **period** after *humor* or by combining the two sentences by putting a **comma** after *humor* and adding the **conjunction** *and*.

Lincoln was assassinated on a Friday in the presence of his  
wife ~~Mrs. Kennedy~~ was with her husband on the Friday when  
he was killed.

There are two complete sentences written as one in this example. It can be corrected by using a **period** or a **semicolon** instead of a comma after *wife*.

Proofread your paragraph again to make sure that you have not written any **run-on sentences**. After you have corrected any errors, recopy this draft of your paragraph and submit it to your teacher.

## Contrast

Notice that in the following model paragraph, the author concentrates on the *differences* between extreme extroversion and extreme introversion. He has not denied, however, that most people are a combination of both of these; on the contrary, the expression *a scale* suggests precisely such a combination.

### Model Paragraph

<sup>1</sup>According to the Swiss psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung, every person's personality can be placed somewhere on a scale running from extreme *extroversion* (an outgoing personality) to extreme *introversion* (a withdrawn personality). <sup>2</sup>The typical extrovert is particularly fond of people and people-oriented activities: he or she is sociable, likes parties, has many friends, needs to have people to talk to, and does not like reading or studying alone. <sup>3</sup>The typical introvert, on the other hand, is a quiet, retiring sort of person, introspective, fond of books rather

The similarities found in this hypothetical conversation, however, will far outweigh the differences. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

This is important for you to know, particularly when you are reading. Otherwise, you might miss the fact that there are both similarities *and* differences, and that the similarities are *far more numerous and important*.

## EXERCISE 6-13

### Paragraph Writing: Comparison *and* Contrast

#### Phase 1: Exploring Your Topic

*Directions:* Select one of the following topics and write two lists—one of similarities and the other of differences. From these lists, select the three similarities and three differences which you consider most significant. Then, formulate your two topic sentences. Decide whether the similarities or the differences are more important; put the most important last (ascending order). If you are working with a partner or in groups, you may wish to show your split topic sentence to your classmates to see if it is appropriate for the comparisons and contrasts you plan to write about.

#### General Topic

The similarities and differences between you and another member of your family

#### Essay Question

Discuss the similarities and differences between (your native language) as it is spoken in (your country) and as it is spoken in another country or in another part of (your country). (You may wish to reread the model paragraph on American and British forms of English, page 145, before you begin.)

or in groups, show your draft to your classmates to see if you have added enough information to fully develop the points you have mentioned in your controlling idea. Revise this draft based on your classmates' suggestions.

### Phase 3: Making Your Language Accurate

*Directions:* After you have revised your work based on your classmates' suggestions, you will want to check it for usage. Proofread your paper for all of the common errors we have discussed thus far. In addition, make sure that all of the words are spelled correctly. When you have corrected any errors, recopy this version and submit it to your teacher.

## EXERCISE 8-5

### Composition Writing: Mixed Methods

#### Phase 1: Exploring Your Topic

*Directions:* Prepare a plan for a full composition based on one of the following topics. First, make a list of all the influences or characteristics (depending on which topic you choose) that you can think of. Then limit your discussion to the three which you feel are most significant. Plan an introduction which begins with general statements about your topic and ends with a specific statement of your controlling idea. Think of ways you might stress your controlling idea in your conclusion. You may wish to refer back to the model compositions in this unit for ideas. If you are working with a partner or in groups, you may wish to show your plan to your classmates to see if it is appropriate for the topic chosen.

#### General Topic

the characteristics you feel are shared by the people in your society

#### Essay Questions

Discuss the influences of another culture on the culture of (your society).

#### Phase 2: Writing the First Draft

*Directions:* Write the first draft of an essay in which you develop the points