

The Four Parts of a Paragraph

Activity Type

Interactive reading and writing exercises

Language Focus

Basic paragraph structure

Aim

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

Preparation

Send each student a copy of the interactive worksheet.

Level

Intermediate (B1)

Time

60 minutes

Introduction

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

Procedure

Send each student a copy of the interactive worksheet.

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

Exercise A - Answer key

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

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

Exercise B - Answer key

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

Next, students read a definition of a topic sentence.

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

Exercise C - Possible answers

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

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Procedure continued

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

Exercise D - Possible answers

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

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

Exercise E - Possible answers

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

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