

EXERCISE**1****THE THREE PARTS OF THE PARAGRAPH**

Read the paragraph and answer the questions.

Paragraphs and essays are often categorized according to their purposes. One purpose is to explain a process. Writers use a process paragraph or essay to tell how to do something, for example, how to change a tire. Another purpose is to classify, and writers use classification paragraphs and essays to categorize things, for example, different kinds of insects or cars. A third purpose is to compare and contrast. Writers compare and contrast when they write about such things as choosing among jobs, movies, or investment strategies. Yet another purpose is to show cause and effect. Cause/effect paragraphs and essays analyze why things happen the way they do. A final and important purpose for writing is to give an opinion or argue a point of view. This purpose is the basis for much academic writing. Categorizing paragraphs and essays according to their purposes is a convenient and useful way of describing them.

1. Write the paragraph's topic sentence here. Circle the topic and underline the controlling idea.

2. Write one sentence here from the body of the paragraph.

Does it support or develop the main idea in the topic sentence?

3. Write the paragraph's concluding sentence here.

Does the concluding sentence summarize or relate to the topic sentence?

4. What is the primary purpose of this paragraph? (Circle one.)
 - a. To explain a process
 - b. To classify
 - c. To state an opinion
 - d. To discuss cause and effect

5. How many kinds of paragraphs are discussed in this paragraph?

List them here.

Unity and Coherence in Paragraphs

Unity and coherence are essential components of a good paragraph. They help your writing make sense and flow smoothly.

Unity

One characteristic of good writing is **unity**. Each paragraph you write, whether it stands alone or is part of a longer essay, should have unity. When a paragraph has unity, all of the sentences in it relate to the topic and develop the controlling idea. If a topic sentence states that a paragraph will be about how to prepare for a successful job interview, all sentences in the paragraph should talk about job interview preparation. Adding sentences about how to talk to your new boss once you are hired would destroy the paragraph's unity. Unity is important in all types of writing. In each unit in Blueprints 2, you will study techniques for planning and writing paragraphs and essays with unity.

EXERCISE

2

PARAGRAPH UNITY

Read each topic sentence. Draw a line through the sentence that does not support this topic sentence. On the blank line, explain your choice. The first one is done for you.

1. Topic sentence: The crow is a large black bird with some surprising characteristics.
 - a. Many crows actually seem to enjoy being with people.
 - b. Crows like to spend time communicating with one another and sometimes seem to have long and involved conversations.
 - c. ~~The raven is a relative of the crow, but the two are very different.~~
 - d. Crows also seem to feel sympathy when they see other injured birds.

Explanation: I chose C because it talks about ravens, but
the topic of the paragraph is not ravens. It's crows.

2. Topic sentence: Life in the interior of Alaska is quite challenging in the winter.
 - a. In the summer, the temperature outdoors averages a perfect 70 degrees Fahrenheit.
 - b. For most of the winter, interior roads are closed to all vehicles except snowmobiles.
 - c. Temperatures regularly dip to 40 or 50 degrees Fahrenheit below zero, making it impossible to go outside without special clothing.
 - d. Fresh fruits and vegetables are unavailable in the winter, even for a premium price, so maintaining a balanced diet is a challenge.

Explanation: _____

3. Topic sentence: To answer questions about the past, historians use different kinds of evidence.
 - a. They examine primary sources, or firsthand written accounts of people who lived in the past.
 - b. They use unwritten evidence—carvings, statues, ancient ruins, and the like—to piece together historical information.
 - c. In the face of evidence, historians must determine what is accurate and what is false or biased.
 - d. Historians also gather information from secondary sources, or accounts that have already been written about the historical events.

Explanation: _____

Coherence

Another important characteristic of good writing is **coherence**. Coherent writing flows smoothly and ideas are arranged logically. There are many different ways to make your writing coherent.

Strategies for Coherence

1. Make sure you arrange your ideas in a logical order. Sometimes this will be chronological order. (See Unit 3, pp. 57–83.)

Example:

Incorrect: There are several steps involved in baking an angel food cake.
After you sift the flour, add the sugar to it. First, sift the flour.

Correct: There are several steps involved in baking an angel food cake.
First, sift the flour. Then add the sugar to it.

2. Repeat key words, use appropriate pronouns, and use synonyms. (See Unit 6, pp. 147–149.)

Example:

I saw a very interesting **man** at **the supermarket** yesterday. **The supermarket** (repetition of key word) was a busy place, and everyone seemed to be in a hurry, except for **this customer** (synonym). There **he** (appropriate pronoun) stood, with a line of people behind him, blocking the produce aisle, gazing at the eggplants.



Transition Expressions

Use transition expressions to link your ideas together smoothly. Units 2, 3, 4, 5, and 7 each feature different transition expressions appropriate to that unit's essay type. Here is a small sampling:

Unit 3: You should put the egg in the water **first**. **Next**, heat the water until it boils.

Unit 5: A practice that has been around for almost three thousand years will certainly not disappear any time soon. **In fact**, the number of plastic surgery operations performed is growing steadily. **However**, before turning to the knife to alter physical appearance, it is important to ask the simple question, "Why?"

Unit 7: **Although it may be true** that there appear to be dry riverbeds on the planet Mars, this does not prove that water or life once existed there.

EXERCISE

3

ARRANGING IDEAS IN LOGICAL ORDER

In the following paragraph, the topic sentence and the concluding sentence are in the correct place. However, one or more of the supporting sentences is out of order. Make the paragraph coherent by rearranging the supporting sentences in the correct order.

COAL FORMATION

Topic Sentence: The coal we burn as fuel today began long ago as trees and other plants that grew beside water. (1) Movement of the rocks underneath then crushed some of the brown lignite coal even more and heated it, forming a hard black coal called *anthracite*. (2) Instead, they piled up, gradually forming a soft brown substance called *peat*, which was eventually buried. (3) When these plants died and fell to earth, they could not rot completely because the ground was too wet. (4) The peat was then crushed by its own weight and the weight of the rocks above it,

(continued)

(continued)

making it harder and turning it into *lignite*, or *brown coal*. **Concluding sentence:** This process of coal formation from living plants took place very slowly over millions of years.

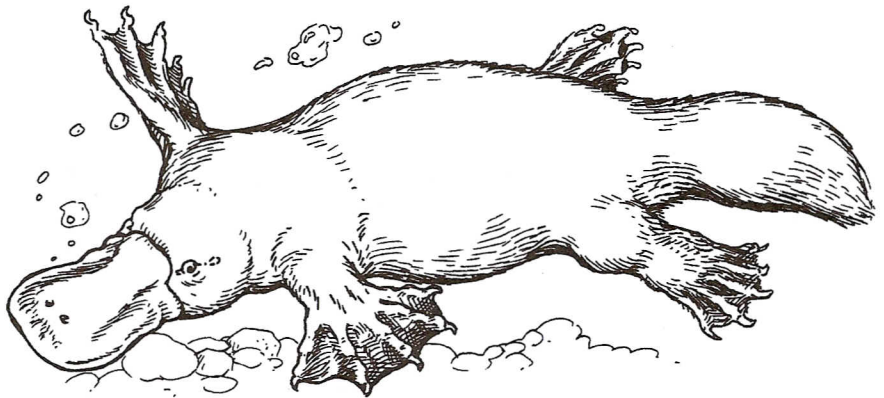
Adapted from N. Curtis, M. Allaby, *Planet Earth*
(New York: Kingfisher Books, 1993) p. 74.

EXERCISE

4

REPEATING KEY WORDS AND SYNONYMS; USING APPROPRIATE PRONOUNS

Read the paragraph. Underline the key words and synonyms in the topic sentence and throughout the paragraph. Correct any incorrect use of pronouns.



AN AMAZING ANIMAL

On the way back to our hotel one night during our vacation on the beautiful island of Tasmania, my husband and I encountered a very strange animal. This animal had four legs and a furry body. At first they thought it was a beaver, because we also had a long flat tail. Then, however, we noticed something odd about its head. Instead of a beaver's mouth, you had a bill, like that of a duck or some other bird. What a strange thing! When we got back to our room, we asked the desk clerk for information about this peculiar beast because we both thought you were seeing things! We were relieved to find out that a furry mammal with a duck-like bill is not just a figment of their imagination. Strange as it may seem, such an animal actually does exist. Do you know what she is?

EXERCISE**5****USING TRANSITION WORDS**

Circle the word or phrase that joins each pair of ideas coherently.

1. Angela loves chocolate; (however/for example), she really doesn't like ice cream.
2. (During/while) the movie, our power went out.
3. (Although/Not only) the West Nile virus has shown up in New York City, doctors are not too worried that it might move to other parts of New York.
4. In the last decade, much progress was made in the area of AIDS research; (nevertheless/in addition), there is still no cure for this deadly disease.
5. Hawaii has a moderate climate; (consequently/as), it never gets excessively hot or cold there.