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How to Write a Paragraph – A How to Guide Curriculum Map

The aim of these lessons is to help students write various types of paragraphs from grades five through to first year of secondary school.

The resource contains many work sheets which can be used individually by students or in groups. Many of these work sheets are most useful if completed by pairs of students. It is also advisable for students to discuss the ideas generated by the work sheets in larger groups.

Much of this resource is written from a student perspective, so that teachers may give students the pages which they need or students can use the lessons to write their compositions at home.

Topics Include:

Teacher Note: What is a Paragraph Overview

Lesson One: Exercises in Unity?

Lesson Two: Exercises in Topic Sentence

Lesson Three: Exercises in Coherence

Lesson Four: Exercises in Concluding Sentence

Lesson Five: Types of Paragraphs

- Exposition, Narration, Description

Lesson Six: Using the Writing Process

- Prewriting, Writing the First Draft, Editing and Revising, Writing the final copy



COHERENCE

Coherence is a smooth movement from one idea to the next in a paragraph. In order to achieve coherence a writer must pay attention to two things.

1. **arrangement of the ideas**
2. **logical connection between ideas**

Arrangement of Ideas:

When you build a house, you cannot put the roof on before the walls are built. Similarly, in a paragraph, you cannot skip around from one idea to the next without any sort of arrangement of these ideas; otherwise the reader may become lost or confused.

There are several ways to arrange ideas in a paragraph:

1. **chronological order:** This means that the ideas are presented in the same order that they occurred in time. We have all heard people tell stories when they omit an important event and then go back to put it in later; this can be very confusing. The writer has the advantage that he or she can revise the writing, make any changes before the copy is finished and ready for the reader. So the writer can put in any information which he or she has forgotten.
2. **physical order:** This means that the ideas, particularly in a description, are placed in some kind of order of space, such as left to right, top to bottom, or outside to inside.
3. **order of importance:** The writer can begin with the most important idea and lead to the least important idea. Or the writer can begin with the least important idea and lead to the most important idea. Order of importance can be very helpful when the writer is trying to convince the reader of a particular point of view.
4. **order of climax:** The writer can build suspense leading to a climax. This type of order is similar to the order of importance in that the climax (the most important idea) is put last.

Whatever order the writer chooses, it is important that the sentences in the paragraph be arranged in a logical sequence, so that one idea follows another.



COHERENCE (Continued)

Logical Connection between Ideas:

A train may have all the right cars which are put in the best order for pulling them. However, if the cars are not connected to each other, the train will not be able to move them.

There are words which we use in English called **transition** words. Transition words provide the connection between the sentences, just as the coupling on a train provides the connection between its cars.

The most obvious transition words list ideas in the order in which they appear. These are “number” words, such as:

- first
- secondly
- thirdly, etc.

These words are very obvious transitions and would be avoided by more experienced writers.

Transition words can express the order of arrangement chosen by the writer. Therefore, there can be transition words which mean each of the following:

- time
- physical order
- order of importance
- similar ideas
- different ideas
- conclusion

The chart on page 3 provides examples of transition words which can express each of these types of arrangement.



COHERENCE (Continued)

Chart: Examples of Transition Words

Type of Arrangement	Examples	
Time	then later during now presently	next before afterwards meanwhile eventually
Physical Order	to the right above under in the distance straight ahead	to the left below beside
Order of Importance	more importantly to some degree to a lesser extent	
Similar Ideas	in addition also and in the same way	similarly likewise moreover
Different Ideas	on the other hand on the contrary however nevertheless yet	but otherwise still
Conclusion	therefore so for this reason	thus hence

These are only some of the many transitions or connecting words available in English.



EXERCISES IN COHERENCE

A) In small groups decide what kind of order (chronological order, physical order, order of importance, order of climax) would work best for a paragraph on each of the following topics. Provide two good reasons for choosing each kind of order.

1. a story about a visit to a haunted house:

kind of order: _____

reasons: a) _____

b) _____

2. a description of the haunted house:

kind of order: _____

reasons: a) _____

b) _____

3. a paragraph persuading your parents to let you stay up later:

kind of order: _____

reasons: a) _____

b) _____

4. a paragraph about the causes of the American Revolution:

kind of order: _____

reasons: a) _____

b) _____



EXERCISES IN COHERENCE (Continued)

B) In small groups decide what kind of order (chronological order, physical order, order of importance, order of climax) would work best for a paragraph on each of the following topics. Provide two good reasons for choosing each kind of order.

1. a description of the layout of a Zoo you have visited:

kind of order: _____

reasons: a) _____

b) _____

2. an explanation of the events which occurred on the way to school:

kind of order: _____

reasons: a) _____

b) _____

3. a paragraph describing your best friend:

kind of order: _____

reasons: a) _____

b) _____

4. an explanation of how to make a peanut butter sandwich:

kind of order: _____

reasons: a) _____

b) _____



EXERCISES IN COHERENCE (Continued)

- C) The topic sentence for a paragraph is given below, followed by a number of details. Decide the order in which the details should appear in the paragraph. Then write the paragraph providing any necessary transition words.

TOPIC SENTENCE: On the bus next to me sat the strangest looking person I have ever seen.

DETAILS:

1. She carried a large shopping bag loaded with fireworks and another one with groceries.
2. She had long, red hair which stood up all over her head.
3. Her nails were painted purple and green.
4. She looked like she was over 100 years old.
5. She had a wart on her chin and the wart was covered with hairs.
6. She stared straight ahead and did not say a word.
7. Her orange and green floor-length dress had long sleeves, but it was ripped and tattered.
8. On her cheek, she had a tattoo of a rose and an airplane.
9. She kept on scratching her neck, as if she had fleas.
10. In her purse was a large clock which chimed the hour just after she sat down.
11. As she breathed in and out, she gasped for air.
12. She wore new white tennis shoes.
13. On her left hand were six or seven rings, but she wore no rings on her right hand.
14. Her cheeks were sunken and pale.
15. She wore purple eye shadow.

ORDER: Write the sentence number in sequence: _____

Write the paragraph on another sheet of paper.



EXERCISES IN COHERENCE (Continued)

- D) The topic sentence for a paragraph is given below, followed by a number of details. Decide the order in which the details should appear in the paragraph. Then write the paragraph providing any necessary transition words.

TOPIC SENTENCE: Sam is one of the best players on the baseball team.

DETAILS:

1. Sam is a good athlete.
2. Sam is very tall for his age.
3. Sam hit two home runs in the last game.
4. When the pitcher throws the ball, Sam has a good eye and can determine where the ball will go in relation to the plate.
5. Sam can run to first base faster than anyone on the team.
6. Sam can pitch, hit and catch very well.
7. Sam is a very good player at first base or short stop.
8. Sam can read the pitcher very well and knows when he should attempt to steal a base.
9. One day when our team was losing, Sam hit a grand-slam home-run, which allowed us to win the game.

ORDER: Write the sentence number in sequence: _____

Write the paragraph on another sheet of paper.



EXERCISES IN COHERENCE (Continued)

- E) The topic sentence for a paragraph is given below, followed by a number of details. Decide the order in which the details should appear in the paragraph. Then write the paragraph providing any necessary transition words.

TOPIC SENTENCE: My favorite place to visit is the beach.

DETAILS:

1. The water is very warm even in the early summer.
2. There is a bird museum at the beach.
3. The bird museum has pictures of birds that you can see along the shore and in the trees.
4. I enjoy looking for different kinds of birds.
5. There are carnival rides at the beach.
6. The beach is never crowded with people.
7. I like playing in the sand.
8. Sometimes crabs come out of their holes in the sand and play in the water.
9. I really like swimming in the waves and body surfing.
10. There are many shells at the beach, and I can make things from them.
11. Sometimes we have a barbecue at the beach and I really like the hamburgers my dad makes there.
12. Being outside in the sunshine gives me a good appetite at lunch time.
13. My older sister lets me bury her in the sand up to her neck.

ORDER: Write the sentence number in sequence. _____

Write the paragraph on another sheet of paper.



EXERCISES IN COHERENCE (Continued)

- F) The topic sentence for a paragraph is given below, followed by a number of details. Decide the order in which the details should appear in the paragraph. Then write the paragraph providing any necessary transition words.

TOPIC SENTENCE: Toronto is a city which combines both the old and the new.

DETAILS:

1. Toronto's skyscrapers made of metal, stone and glass dominate the skyline.
2. Casa Loma, built by Sir Henry Pellatt in the early part of this century, has 98 rooms and secret underground passages.
3. Skydome, the home of the Toronto Blue Jays, looks like a giant oyster with a huge shell which opens and closes.
4. Ontario Place covers almost 100 acres and houses modern buildings like the Cinesphere among quaint ethnic restaurants.
5. The Ontario Parliament Buildings in Queen's Park were built at the end of the nineteenth century.
6. The roof of the Parliament Buildings is made of green copper.
7. The C.N. Tower is the tallest free-standing structure in the world.

ORDER: Write the sentence number in sequence: _____

Write the paragraph on another sheet of paper.