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Introduction

Knowing how to write a clear and well-organised paragraph will go a long way toward the success of any future writing that students will do. When students realise that longer pieces of writing are written one paragraph at a time, they will feel empowered as capable and effective writers.

This book will enable you to take the essential unit of good writing, the paragraph, and teach it to your students in its many forms. This book may also be useful for older students needing revision in the basics of paragraph construction and essay writing.

Getting Started

In the *Getting Started* section, you will find pages to introduce the basic concepts of paragraph writing. Included are prewriting activities such as brainstorming and getting ideas.

Essential Parts

Next, you will find a section on the essential parts of a paragraph, which includes main ideas, topic sentences, supporting and body sentences, transitions, and conclusions.

Kinds of Paragraphs

This section covers seven different kinds of paragraph writing: narrative, expository, descriptive, comparison, contrast, opinion and definitive.

Paragraphs in Action

After students have gained competence in developing ideas and understanding the parts and kinds of paragraphs, they will have the opportunity to practise what they have learnt so far with the activities in this section. The paragraph starters in this section can be used in many different ways and whenever you wish. They will make good story starters as well.

Getting Your Act Together

In this section, students will combine all they have learnt as they are introduced to essay and letter writing, relating each to paragraph writing.

Paragraph Tools

This section contains a paragraph plan and a checklist to enable students to check their own paragraphs.

Time for Some Fun

Finally, it's time for some fun. This section will reward your diligent students while reinforcing what has been learnt.

When your students have completed the activities in this book, they will be well on their way to being creative, capable writers with an understanding of that very important writing unit—the paragraph.



What Can I Write About?

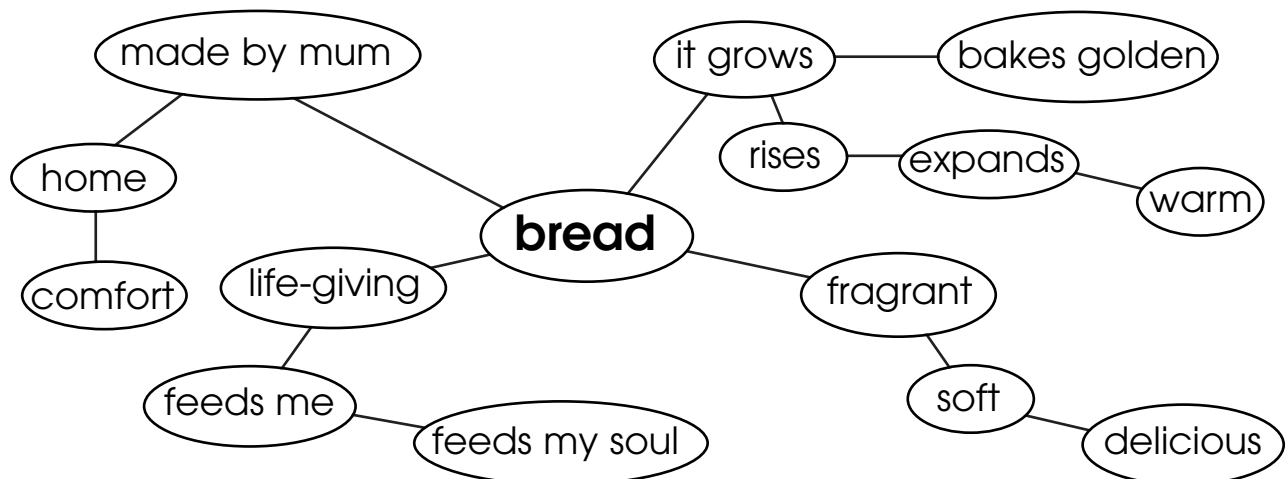
In order to get started, there are two things you will need. You will need lots of ideas, and you will need a way to organise and connect your ideas.

Here are some suggestions for getting ideas:

- Keep an idea notebook. Get a little notebook that you can carry around with you wherever you go. Most professional writers do this, and for good reason. When ideas come to you, and they will when you have a place to record them, write them in your notebook. Also, write lists of subjects you would like to know more about, things you are curious about, things you wonder about, anything you hear about that seems strange or funny or fascinating, your opinions, your feelings, and anything else that interests you.
- Do a lot of reading. Read books, of course, but also read magazines, newspapers, billboards, cereal boxes, shirts, menus, book reviews, letters, etc. You will get many ideas from reading.
- You can also get ideas from movies, music, school, conversations, encyclopedias, dictionaries, relatives, friends, and by simply paying attention to the things around you.

Keep notebooks and files for your ideas, and when you are stuck for a writing topic, you can find one very quickly.

Once you have a topic, you will need to find a way to make it 'grow' into a paragraph. Here is one way. It's called clustering. Here is an example of a student's clustering around the topic 'bread.'



Notice that there is no set pattern for how her clusters grow. Ideas can be connected in any way. Here is the paragraph she wrote after she clustered:

Bread is my favourite food. Its warm, fragrant welcome brings me home. It is love from my mum as she slices a piece for me. It's soft and delicious and gives me life. I like to see how it grows in the pan and then bakes until golden. Bread is my favourite food. It feeds me while it feeds my soul.

Choose a topic of your own. Write the topic in the centre of your page, circle it, and then cluster around it until you have enough details to write about it.



Brainstorm!

Another method for organising your ideas, and even for getting new ones, is to *brainstorm*. You can brainstorm by yourself, with a friend, with the entire class, with a parent, etc. Brainstorming has rules that need to be followed.

1. Write down every idea that is spoken or thought.
2. Do not judge any ideas. Don't say things like, "That would never work," "What kind of an idea is that?" or "That's silly."
3. Let all the ideas flow. They don't have to make sense, and they don't need to be connected to or related to any other ideas. They just have to be ideas.
4. When you think you have run out of ideas, pause, take a deep breath, and get ready to write some more. There are many pauses in brainstorming, so be sure you really are finished before you stop.
5. When you're sure you have enough ideas and no more are coming, take a look at what you have. Circle those you like the best and look at them again. You will know when you like one idea or combination of ideas the best.

A student wanted to write something about photography, but he wasn't sure what to say. Here is the list he brainstormed with a friend:

camera, lens, light, dark, shadow, flash, black and white, colour, fast shutter, fast action, blurred action, stopped action, sports, shooting fast, the right moment, click, motor drive, driving, clicking, film, money, developing, out of focus, try, work hard

After brainstorming, he decided that he wanted to write about being a sports photographer and all the challenges that sports photographers must overcome in order to get good shots.

Brainstorm for a topic. After you choose your topic, cluster or brainstorm again to decide what you want to say about your topic. After you have clustered or brainstormed and feel like you are ready to write, write a paragraph about your topic, including all the specific details.

Extension: Brainstorm with the class on a topic. Write all the ideas on the board. Then have each student write a paragraph from the brainstormed list. When finished, compare paragraphs. In what ways are the paragraphs similar, and in what ways are they different?

Have students take the paragraph they wrote and make it into a story or an essay with three or four paragraphs.



You'll Need These

Once you have good ideas and a topic, you're ready to write a paragraph. Your paragraph will need the following parts:

A Beginning

The first sentence of a paragraph is the *topic sentence*. It tells what the paragraph will be about. Every topic sentence needs a specific subject and a specific feeling or attitude. Read the following example.

It's really important to me to have hair.

Hair is the subject; *really important to me* is the feeling or attitude.

A Middle

The sentences that follow the topic sentence are called the *body sentences* or *supporting sentences*. They tell more about the topic by adding more details. Each detail in the body sentences should make the topic more interesting or help explain what you mean. Each of these sentences also needs to be about the topic sentence and should support it. Here are some body sentences to support the topic sentence above.

Sure, we can get along without it—my Uncle Barry is proof of this (he just slaps some sunscreen on his bare skull and he's all set)—but I would still prefer to have hair for many reasons. First of all, I think I would look pretty silly without hair; I have seen myself in a bathing cap. Second of all, I like to play with my hair when I'm bored. I can braid it, twist it, tie it in a bow under my chin, or check for split ends. I also like that it goes wherever I go.

An Ending

The last sentence of your paragraph is the *closing* or *concluding sentence*. In this sentence, you need to remind the reader of what the topic is about and what it means. This is a way for you to tie it all together. Here is a good closing sentence for the paragraph above:

To me, it's just really important to have hair, and I wonder what Uncle Barry does when he gets bored.

Here is a paragraph that begins with a topic sentence and one body sentence. Finish the paragraph on another piece of paper by adding between two and six more body sentences and a concluding sentence. Be prepared to share your paragraph in class.

I'd really like it if the only thing to drink in the world was chocolate milk. First of all, it is my favourite thing to drink, so I would be happy about that.

Extension: Share the finished paragraphs in class. Did everyone say the same things? Did anyone have something unusual to say? Did anyone who hates or is allergic to chocolate milk have to write a paragraph? Was his or her paragraph as convincing as the others?



Got Any Wise Ideas?

Each of your paragraphs should tell the reader about just one idea. If you have more than one idea, you will need to omit some of them or write more paragraphs. Each of the boxes below contains a set of ideas for a paragraph. Your job is to create a topic sentence that tells what the paragraph will be about and write it on the line at the top of each box. The first one has been completed as an

<p>1. <u>Dessert is the best part of dinner.</u> Chocolate cake is so yummy. Ice cream is always a great dessert. I really like biscuits, too.</p>	<p>5. _____ They have rollercoasters, and those are fun. Vendors sell things like fairy floss and hot dogs there. It has brightly coloured lights and happy music.</p>
<p>2. _____ Participating in sports helps us to be healthy. We learn teamwork when we play sports. Sports can also help our brains to work better.</p>	<p>6. _____ I would be able to call and ask a question about my homework. I could answer the telephone when my friends call. I could call 000 if there was an emergency.</p>
<p>3. _____ Rubber cars would just bounce off of each other. Metal cars crush, and people get hurt. Rubber cars would not need to be waxed.</p>	<p>7. _____ We would not be able to eat and would need others to feed us. We would not be able to brush our hair or our teeth. If we had no elbows, we would not be able to talk on the telephone.</p>
<p>4. _____ It tastes good. It has tomato sauce, cheese and bread, and those are good for us. We can put lots of vegetables on it, too.</p>	<p>8. _____ They are affectionate animals. They can be trained to help people. They can help protect families.</p>

For Younger Students: Provide the following list of topic sentences to match with the idea boxes:

- We should all participate in a sport.
- Cars should be made of rubber instead of metal.
- Pizza is the perfect food.
- I want to go to an amusement park this weekend.
- I should have my own telephone.
- We would be in big trouble without elbows.
- Dogs make good pets.