Writing a Paragraph

Teach

Tell students that a paragraph is the basic unit of composition. A paragraph consists of a group of sentences that are related to one main idea.

Point out that a good paragraph includes the following elements:

- A topic sentence is usually the first sentence of a paragraph. It introduces the main idea and gives a general statement.

- Supporting sentences come after the topic sentence. They develop and support the topic sentence. These sentences give supporting details, facts, and examples related to the main idea.

- The closing sentence is the last sentence of a paragraph. It restates the paragraph's main idea using different words.

Explain to students that paragraphs are constructed to explain, define, classify, describe, sequence, compare and contrast, and evaluate. The purpose of the paragraph will help determine the topic sentence and supporting sentences to be included.

Practice

Model for students how to construct a good paragraph by writing an example on the board or on chart paper. Choose a topic sentence to develop. Point out how it is a general statement about one idea. Think out loud as you write facts, details, or examples that support the main idea. Ask students for ideas as you brainstorm a closing sentence that restates the topic sentence. Point out how the closing sentence forms a conclusion, or "wraps up," the paragraph.

Guide students to identify the purpose of your paragraph. Then invite them to discuss how each element helps communicate the main idea to readers.

Apply

Have students work independently to write a paragraph. Have them choose one of the topic sentences below or encourage them to come up with their own topic sentence.

- There are many things to do in our community.

- Owning a pet is a great responsibility.

- Soccer is a better spectator sport than baseball.

- A variety of foods make healthful afterschool snacks.

- Whales are mammals.

- Our field trip turned out to be a fascinating experience.

- The school fund-raiser was a huge success.

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Remind them to brainstorm several supporting details for the topic sentence they choose. Encourage students to use a graphic organizer, such as an idea web or a Venn diagram, to organize the details. Point out that the paragraph should end with a closing sentence.

Assess

Use the rubric on the following page to evaluate students on their understanding of writing a paragraph.

Listening and Speaking Connection: Have students revise and edit their paragraphs by sharing them in small groups. Ask the group to evaluate each paragraph by asking and answering these questions:

- *Does the topic sentence state the main idea in a general way?*
- *What is the main idea of the paragraph?*
- *What is the purpose of the paragraph? What will the reader learn from it?*
- *Do the supporting details accomplish this purpose? Why or why not?*
- *Have I stated my supporting details in an interesting way that readers will understand?*
- *Does the closing sentence restate the main idea in a new way? If not, how could it be improved?*

Writing a Paragraph

POINTS

Ideas	
States one main idea	
Clearly conveys purpose of the paragraph	
Gives supporting facts, details, and examples related to main idea	
Organization	
Begins with a topic sentence	
Lists details that tell more about the topic sentence	
Uses a closing sentence	
Voice	
Appropriate tone for the audience	
Word Choice	
Uses appropriate transition words	
Language specific to the topic	
Uses a varied choice of words	
Sentence Fluency	
Clear, concise sentences	
Conventions	
Correct grammar, usage, and spelling	
Correct punctuation and capitalization	
Presentation	
Paragraph is indented	
Neatness	