

Paragraph Construction



Levels 1-3

General Guidelines

Paragraphs have three main parts: the **topic sentence**, the **body**, and the **conclusion**. In the samples on the following pages, the first paragraph is properly done, while the second two paragraphs have mistakes. Please refer to these sample paragraphs as you learn your lesson today.

Let's start with some guidelines that will help you write strong paragraphs:

Topic Sentence

- * The topic sentence is indented when it is the first sentence.
- * Like all sentences, topic sentences begin with a capital letter and end with proper punctuation.
- * The topic sentence tells the reader what the paragraph is going to be about. Look at the sample paragraphs ("Rainbows," "Doggies," and "Fish") and point out or underline the topic sentence in each one.

Body of the Paragraph

- * The body should include only strong sentences.
- * All sentences should relate to the topic introduced in the first sentence. Look at our sample paragraphs:
 - In the "Rainbows" paragraph, all sentences are interesting thoughts about rainbows.
 - In the "Doggies" paragraph, the sentences about Mrs. Jones and the piano lessons do not relate to the topic sentence.
- * Each sentence should begin with a capital letter and end with proper punctuation.

Conclusion

- * Restate the topic sentence, only "with a twist." See our sample, "Rainbows," for an example of this type of ending. Here, the student returns to the theme of amazement, while adding the role of God into the sentence.
- * Tell the reader what you have said or proven in the paragraph. For instance, "So we see that, though rainbows may look magical, they are only a mixture of sun and water."
- * Finish the part of the story contained in the paragraph: "When night fell, the princess went to sleep happily."

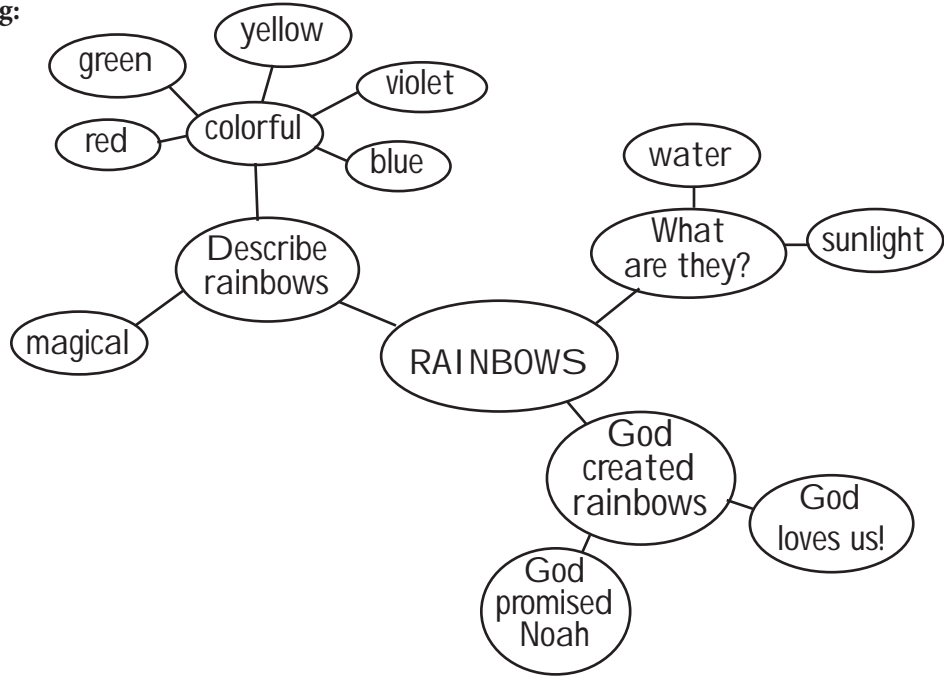
Unity

- * This can be hard to understand, but it's the sense that all the sentences in the paragraph are talking about one thing.
- * Look at our sample paragraphs. Which one has the strongest unity? What makes it strong?
- * Which is the most disunited? Why?
- * Can you edit or rearrange the weaker paragraphs according to the guidelines above so that they become stronger, better paragraphs?



Sample Paragraph #1

Prewriting:



Notice that some of the ideas that the student recorded in his prewriting do not appear in his paragraph.

Draft:

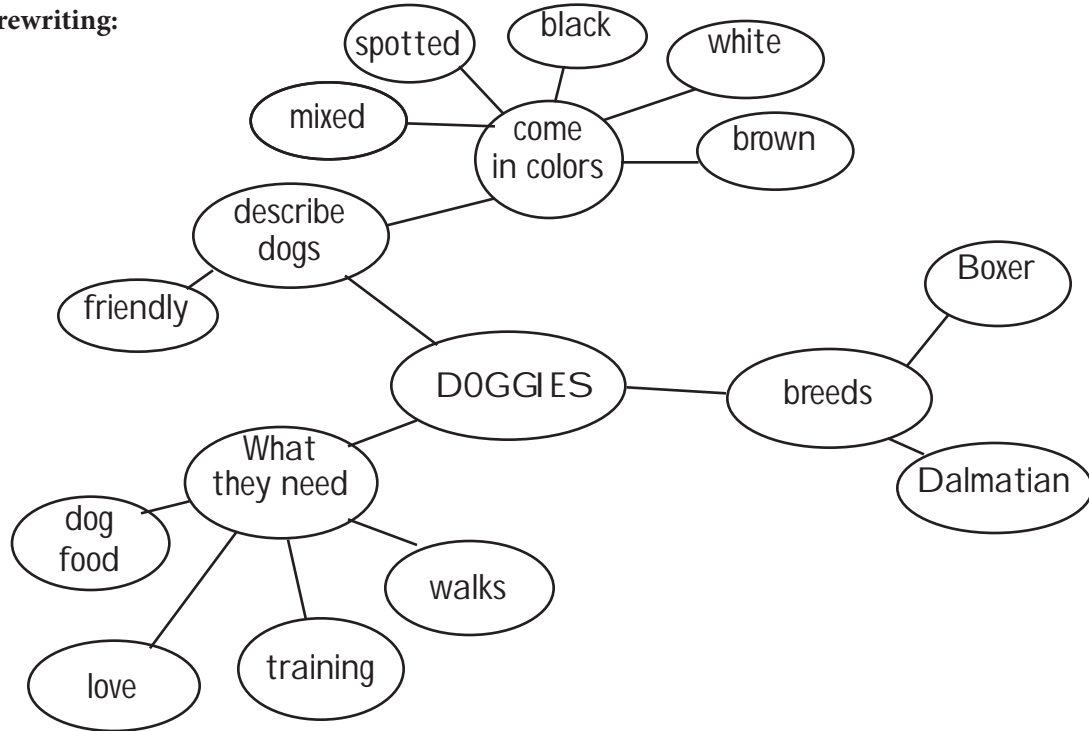
Header	date
Rainbows	
Rainbows are amazing! Many people think they are magical. Scientists	
say that they are really made of water hanging in the air and sunlight	
shining through it. You can see a rainbow right after a rainstorm, when	
the clouds are clearing. God made the first rainbow for Noah. Even	
if rainbows are just water, I am still glad that God made them. They show	
us God's love and are always so beautiful and cheerful. How amazing it is	
that God can make colors like red and violet out of water and sunlight!	

This is a fine paragraph! It has a good topic sentence that tells the reader just what to expect. It has interesting and informative sentences in its body. Finally, it ends with a concluding sentence that ties back to the beginning.



Sample Paragraph #2

Prewriting:



Draft:

Header	date
Doggies	
Doggies are a child's best friends! Doggies come in all kinds of breeds	
(like Dalmatians and Boxers) and colors. There are white, brown, tan, and	
black dogs. There are also spotted or mixed colors. Dogs need lots of care	
from people. My dog is named Bruno. Every day, I walk and feed Bruno	
and give him lots of love. Last week, we ran out of dog food and had to	
take a quick trip to the store. There I saw Mrs. Jones. She said my piano	
lessons start on Tuesday! I love taking lessons with Mrs. Jones!	

In this paragraph, the student begins well, but at the end he forgets to keep all his sentences related to the topic sentence.

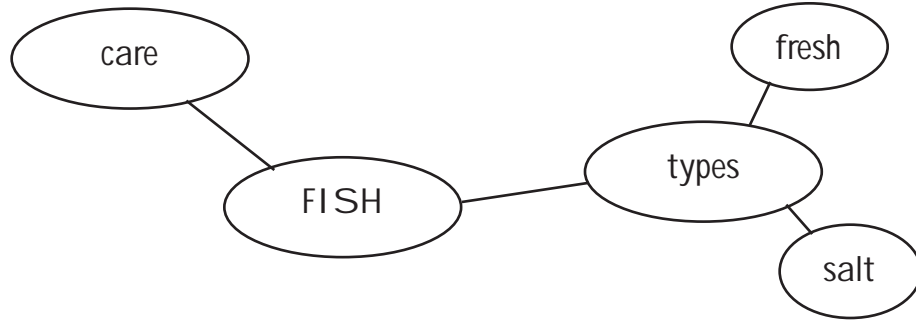


Sample Paragraph #3

Prewriting:

Notice that this student did not spend much time on his prewriting.

The student knows a lot about his topic, so he assumes that he doesn't need to do a thorough job of prewriting and organizing his ideas.



Draft:

Header	date
Fish	
Fish come in all kinds of types. Mostly, there are fresh-water fish and	
salt-water fish. I have been keeping fish for years. I have to feed them	
each day and, every so often, their filter has to be cleaned. Fish are	
interesting pets, and they are peaceful to watch. I like to keep the fish	
tank light on at night and fall asleep watching them.	

This paragraph has several problems. It has no real topic sentence that introduces the reader to the content of the paragraph. Furthermore, the paragraph lacks unity. Sentences seem to be thrown together without any unity or organization. Finally, there is no conclusion.