

Paragraph Construction



Levels 4-6

General Guidelines

As you have learned in the past, 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," "Dogs," 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 or information about rainbows.
 - In the "Dogs" paragraph, the sentences about the library and Mrs. Jones 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?

Self-proofing

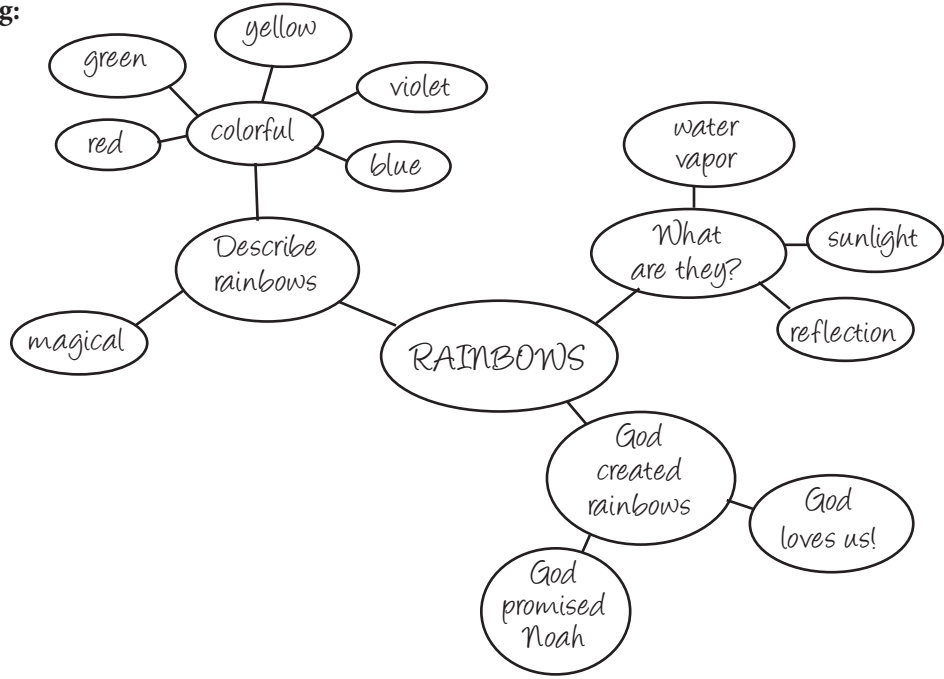
As you focus on writing paragraphs this week, and when you do longer projects that join paragraphs together, be sure to self proof your work before you submit it to your teacher.

- * Check each sentence. Does it relate directly to your topic sentence?
- * Check each sentence for completeness, concrete and specific words, and proper punctuation.
- * If you are writing more than one paragraph, are you joining them together so that your ideas flow logically for the reader?



Sample Paragraph #1

Prewriting:



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

Draft:

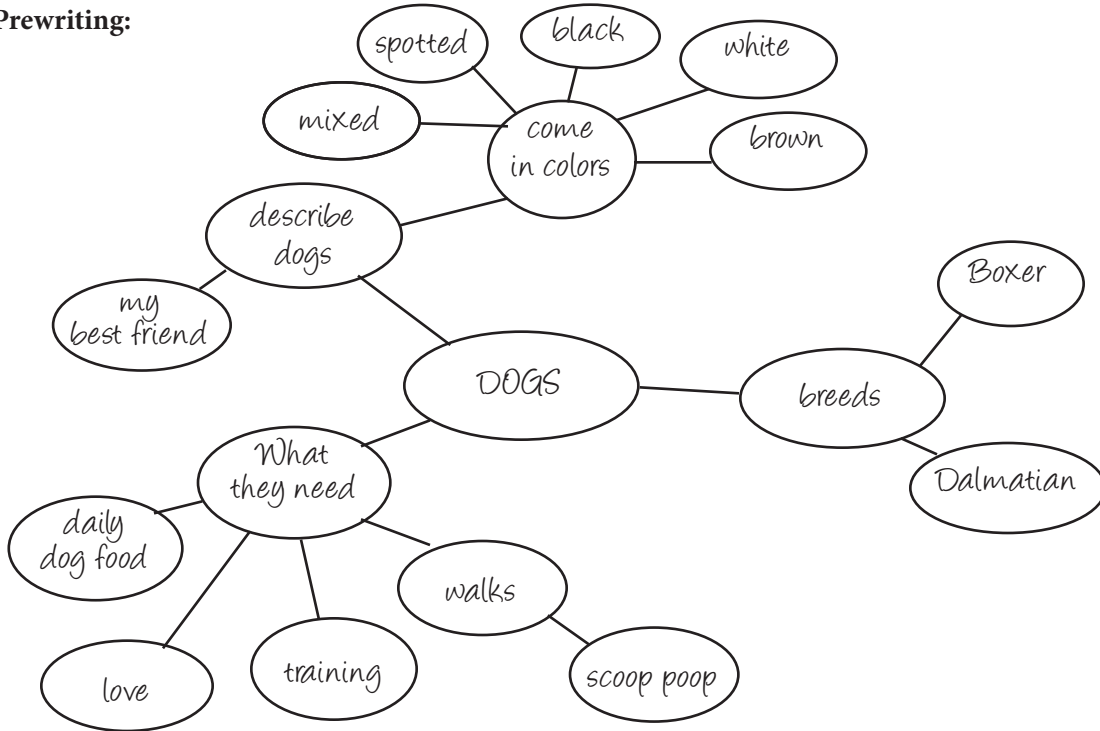
Header	date
Rainbows	
Rainbows are amazing to me. Many people think they are magical, but scientists	
tell us that they are really made of water! When there is water vapor in the air, each	
drop reflects sunlight, and the rainbow appears. After a rainstorm, when the clouds are	
clearing, is a great time to see a rainbow. God made the first rainbow to reassure Noah	
of His promise never again to flood the earth. God is so good! How amazing it is to me	
that God can make colors like red and blue 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
Dogs	
A dog can be a child's best friend! There are many breeds and colors to choose from.	
There are white, brown, tan, and black dogs, as well as spotted or mixed colors. A child	
must take care of his dog. He must feed it daily and take it for walks. He has to clean	
up after it, too. If he buys a puppy, there is a lot of training work to do! You can read	
books on training your puppy. There are some good ones at the library. If you ask the	
librarian, named Mrs. Jones, she can help you find one!	

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

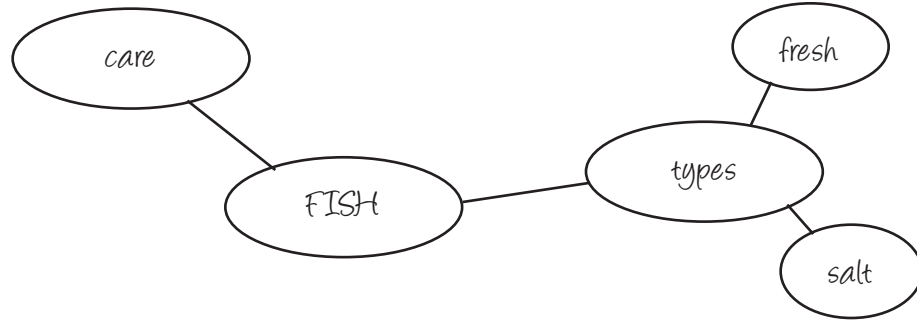


Sample Paragraph #3

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. There are fresh-water fish and salt-water fish. I	
have been keeping fresh-water fish for many years. Each day I feed them, and every	
month, 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.