

Paragraph Development

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The main idea of a paragraph is usually stated in a topic sentence. The other sentences of the paragraph follow in a logical order and provide specific details.

Example

Topic: *The Academic Support Center at Indian River State College*

Topic Sentence: *The Academic Support Center offers a wide range of assistance for Indian River State College students.*

Specific detail: *In the ASC, students can receive one-on-one tutoring assistance in math, science, reading, and English.*

Specific details: *Another service offered in the ASC is the Writing Center, where students can receive help with essays and research papers for any subject, including, for example, nursing, psychology, history, and philosophy.*

Every sentence in a paragraph must develop the topic sentence by providing *relevant* examples, facts, or details. If a sentence does not relate to the topic sentence, it does not belong in the paragraph.

Indian River State College offers many services to help students succeed in their academic endeavors. One of the most innovative and popular services is the Academic Support Center. In the ASC, students can receive one-on-one tutoring assistance in math, science, reading, and English. Another service offered in the ASC is the Writing Center, where students can receive help with essays and research papers for any subject, including, for example, nursing, psychology, history, and philosophy. The library, which is located in the same building as the ASC, also provides help for students writing research papers. Additionally, the ASC schedules a variety of workshops that complement subjects covered in students' English, math, and science classes.

All of the sentences but one in this paragraph relate to the topic sentence: "*One of the most innovative and popular services is the Academic Support Center.*" The sentence that does not belong is the fourth one: "*The library, which is located in the same building, also provides help for students writing research papers.*" This sentence provides no specific details about the ASC.

Practice Exercise

Directions: On a separate sheet of paper, write the number of the topic sentence for questions 1 and 2.

1. 1. Because of livelier balls and aluminum bats, even an average softball player now can hit towering home runs. 2. Technology has had a great impact on recreational sports. 3. Today's cheapest tennis racquets, for example, are far better than the most expensive models on the market just five years ago.
4. Graphite golf clubs, once available only to top professional golfers, can be purchased for reasonable prices from discount department stores.
2. 1. Some of my friends enjoy the entertainment provided by the monthly Friday Festival in downtown Fort Pierce. 2. It is nice that Fort Pierce is taking steps to enliven and beautify the downtown area. 3. In addition to events such as the Friday Festival, restaurants and nightclubs offer entertainment that attracts visitors to the downtown area. 4. Many local civic organizations have contributed to the downtown area's attractiveness by donating cleanup efforts, flowering plants, and attractive lighting.

Directions: Choose the sentence that best fills the blank in the paragraph on questions 3 and 4.

3. If you are going to attend a University of Florida football game, the following suggestions might be useful. _____ . Most of the Gators' games are sold out. If rain is predicted for the day of the game, take a hat and raincoat. Leave for the stadium early because traffic in Gainesville is heavy on football weekends. It isn't wise to cheer for whomever the Gators are playing.
- A. Make sure you get your tickets well in advance.
B. You may want to consider taking an umbrella.
C. Seats are hard to find if you have never been to the stadium before.
D. Leave early to avoid traffic jams.
4. It's easy to get to the Mets' stadium from Indian River State College. First, go west on Virginia Avenue until it merges with Okeechobee Road. Then take Okeechobee Road west until you reach the I-95 interchange. Take I-95 south to the St. Lucie West exit and go east on St. Lucie West Boulevard.
_____. Then take a right when you see the stadium on your right.
- A. Do not speed on I-95 because it is well patrolled.
B. Traffic may be heavy along I-95.
C. You will be able to see the stadium lights just before you reach the exit.
D. Turn left at the first intersection after you cross the overpass.

Directions: Choose the sentence that best fills in the blank on questions 5 and 6.

5. _____ . Water had gotten into the telephone lines, leaving their phone dead. Huge limbs blocked their driveway and street. The roof from someone's utility shed had blown off and blocked their front door.
- A. Hurricanes occur frequently in the fall.
 - B. The South Florida coast was experiencing severe weather.
 - C. Many people had evacuated their homes.
 - D. A hurricane temporarily left our neighbors stranded.
6. _____ . It was the largest city between St. Louis and San Francisco because of its gold and silver mines. The mines' riches also attracted businessmen, entertainers, lawmen, and outlaws. In the 1890s, the mines became flooded, and people gradually moved away. Still known for its interesting history, Tombstone is preserved today as a national historic site.
- A. Tombstone is a historic community in southern Arizona.
 - B. Many tourists visit Tombstone, Arizona, every year.
 - C. Tombstone, Arizona, is best known for the gunfight at the OK Corral.
 - D. Apache Indians often raided settlers around Tombstone, Arizona.

Directions: Choose the answer that best develops the topic sentence for questions 7 and 8.

7. Before traveling through the desert, people should make certain that their cars are prepared.
- A. Temperatures in the desert can reach a scorching 125 degrees during the day and plunge to near freezing at night. It's a good idea to keep drinking water in the car.
 - B. Although they are sometimes located many miles from the nearest community, trading posts often provide gasoline as well as souvenirs. Some even have restaurants.
 - C. Radiators and hoses should be in good condition, and the gas tank should be filled. Good tires are also important.
 - D. Auto trips through the desert can be very interesting. Travelers often see a variety of wildlife along the highways.
8. The Chinese were the first people to make silk thread and cloth from the cocoons of silkworms.
- A. For many years, no one else knew how to make silk. Since silk was a profitable business, the Chinese wanted to keep the secret to themselves.
 - B. They were also the first people to make fireworks. The Chinese have made an important contribution to the American Fourth of July celebrations.
 - C. Raising silkworms requires great skill and patience. They must be raised in very precise temperatures and protected from other insects.
 - D. Silk is the strongest of all natural fibers. A thread of silk is stronger than the same size thread of steel.

Directions: choose the sentence that does not belong in questions 9 and 10.

9. 1. Bronco has been the traditional cowboy term for a bad-tempered or untamed horse. 2. The word bronco means "rough" or "wild" in Spanish. 3. Many cowboy words have Spanish origins. 4. People in the East sometimes call any western horse a bronco.

- A. Sentence 1 B. Sentence 2 C. Sentence 3 D. Sentence 4

10. 1. Baseball must be the only game where a team doesn't control the ball to score. 2. Scoring in football, soccer, and basketball requires control of the ball. 3. Baseball is also one of the slowest moving sports. 4. Only when on the field and playing defense does a baseball player handle the ball.

- A. Sentence 1 B. Sentence 2 C. Sentence 3 D. Sentence 4

Directions: Choose the best order of the sentences in the following paragraph.

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- A. Delivering her speech for the fifth time that week, the candidate appeared tired as she approached the podium. However, within moments of addressing her audience, she became obviously impassioned by her topic. Her voice exuded excitement, and she gestured dramatically to emphasize each point she was attempting to make. The audience soon became enthralled by her enthusiasm for the new income tax proposal. Even members of the press who were reporting on the event appeared impressed by her fervor.
- B. Even members of the press who were reporting on the event appeared impressed by her fervor. Delivering her speech for the fifth time that week, the candidate appeared tired as she approached the podium. However, within moments of addressing her audience, she became obviously impassioned by her topic. Her voice exuded excitement, and she gestured dramatically to emphasize each point she was attempting to make. The audience soon became enthralled by her enthusiasm for the new income tax proposal.
- C. Delivering her speech for the fifth time that week, the candidate appeared tired as she approached the podium. However, within moments of addressing her audience, she became obviously impassioned by her topic. Even members of the press who were reporting on the event appeared impressed by her fervor. Her voice exuded excitement, and she gestured dramatically to emphasize each point she was attempting to make. The audience soon became enthralled by her enthusiasm for the new income tax proposal.
- D. Delivering her speech for the fifth time that week, the candidate appeared tired as she approached the podium. Her voice exuded excitement, and she gestured dramatically to emphasize each point she was attempting to make. However, within moments of addressing her audience, she became obviously impassioned by her topic. The audience soon became enthralled by her enthusiasm for the new income tax proposal. Even members of the press who were reporting on the event appeared impressed by her fervor.