



PARAGRAPHING EXERCISE - Some Possible ANSWERS

The following are some possible ways to organize the paragraphs; of course, there isn't only ONE correct way to write a paragraph, and you and/or your learners may come up with different, but just as valid, ways to organize these paragraphs.

I have provided comments on the "hook" in the topic sentence, as well as which sentence is the conclusion. I have also explained why one of the sentences is an "orphan".

I use this exercise as a way of introducing Paragraphing and as a summative exercise to test if learners have understood what I've been teaching. By having an intermediate or advanced class arrange these paragraphs, I can see if they understand the logic of paragraphing, and are able to recognize transition phrases which were used to link sentences together.

I've **highlighted** words in each sentence that are linked to one or more sentences in the paragraph.



TOPIC 1: Canadian Contrasts

1. **Canada** is a **country** of surprising contrasts.

Comment [CM1]: Using the word "surprising" is a hook.

2. For one, it is the second biggest **country** in the world, but most of it is **uninhabited**, with geography ranging from **rainforests** to **deserts**.

Comment [CM2]: Transition phrase that lets the reader know you are going to make more than one point.

3. Secondly, while much of the **country** is **indeed rural**, its cities are bustling **metropolises**.

Comment [CM3]: Introducing your next major point.

4. Actually, it might be surprising to learn that thirty percent of **rural Canadians** are illiterate, while in **urban centres**, **Canada** has one of the world's highest percentages of post-secondary graduates.

Comment [CM4]: Transition phrase that indicates you will explain in more detail. Repeat "surprise" to refer to topic sentence.

o **CONCLUSION:**

5. Despite being a country of **contrasts**, Canada's citizens are **united** by their shared values of tolerance and multiculturalism.

Comment [CM5]: CONCLUSION: repeats the idea of the topic sentence, then adds a contrast - the words "contrast" vs. "united", and then uses 2 shared values to repeat the "doubles" structure.

o **DOES NOT BELONG:** It has people of every race, creed, and colour. (not a **contrast/dichotomy**)



TOPIC 2: Meditation is Simple!

1. **Meditation** doesn't have to be either **religious** or **complicated**.
2. It is true that traditional **meditative** techniques have come to us from a variety of **religions** such as **Buddhism** and **Hinduism**.
3. However, for many people, the purpose of **meditation** is simply to **quiet the mind** and **relax the body**.
4. **Gardening, walking in nature, and sketching** are three activities that can **soothe** the **mind** and **reduce stress**.

○ CONCLUSION:

5. Therefore, any **quiet activity** that focuses the **mind away from worry** is actually a form of **meditation**, **even if it isn't part of a religious ritual**.

- **DOES NOT BELONG:** Some monks in Tibet spend their whole lives in meditation. (it's about meditation in Tibet, but **not about how simple meditation is**)

Comment [CM6]: Topic Sentence – this may be a controversial idea about meditation because many people associate meditation with religion, and most people think it's complicated, so that's a HOOK.

Comment [CM7]: quiet activity link to the quiet activities mentioned in the previous sentence

Comment [CM8]: CONCLUSION: links to the topic sentence. The words "meditation" links to "meditation" and "religious" to "religious".



TOPIC 3: How Children Benefit from Competitive Sports

1. Competitive team sports are an important part of every child's education.

Comment [CM9]: It may be a controversial idea today that competition is *good*, so this is the HOOK.

2. Because the grown-up world is very competitive, participating in sports is a good way to prepare for adulthood.

Comment [CM10]: transition phrase that shows the relationship between Sentence #2 & Sentence #1.

3. For example, adults compete for admission to university, for jobs, and even for spouses.

4. Children who play on a team experience the triumphs and sorrows of competition, but they also learn to cooperate because when their team succeeds, they succeed.

Comment [CM11]: explains how the adult competitive world relates to children's competitions

o **CONCLUSION:**

1. Most importantly, though, children learn that winning is temporary, and losing doesn't kill them.

Comment [CM12]: the words "importantly" and "learn" link directly back to the topic sentence, but this conclusion add what the lesson actually IS.

o **DOES NOT BELONG:** The Olympics are an example of world-wide competitive sports. (nothing about children or preparing for adulthood)



TOPIC 4: The Surprising Things I Learned from a Gardener

1. I learned a lot more than just gardening from my years of indentured labour with one of our
2. When I was thirteen, my mother **forced** me to volunteer as an **apprentice** to an elderly British neighbour who was an avid **gardener**.
3. He made me re-pot his **plants**, pinch off dead **leaves**, cut back leggy **stems**, and water and fertilize all of the **plants** in his small **greenhouse**.
4. **I hated the work, but eventually, I saw** that repotting **plants** helped them grow bigger, pinching dead **leaves** kept them healthy, and cutting **stems** back forced more **blooms**.

Comment [CM13]: Topic sentence. I use the emotionally-loaded words "indentured labour" as a hook. The CONTRAST between "indentured" and "learned a lot" is also a hook.

Comment [CM14]: transition phrase that reflects back to the negativity of the topic sentence but is a bridge to what's coming.

Comment [CM15]: here "saw" is a synonym for "understood" which is the same as "learned"

○ **CONCLUSION:**

1. In the end, I realized I had **learned** a lot more from the old man than **plant** care: I also **learned** to respect his knowledge, drink tea like a lady, and stop being afraid of old age.

Comment [CM16]: This makes it EASY to identify the conclusion; as do the words "therefore" and "thus".

- **DOES NOT BELONG:** I also worked in my mother's garden, pulling weeds and watering the tomatoes and flowers. (**nothing about the neighbour**)



TOPIC 5: It's Good to Explore Differences of Opinions!

1. **Opinions** are like clothes: it's good to change them from time to time.
2. When you first meet people with **different opinions**, though, it can be a bit **frightening**.
3. However, if you are open minded, you may eventually **reevaluate your own opinions** and even **change** them.
4. When a reporter once **challenged** Gandhi that what he was saying was the **opposite** of what he had said in the past, he responded, "Well, I hope I've learned something since then."

Comment [CM17]: This topic sentence contains the main idea (opinions are good to change; plus a HOOK – comparing changing opinions to changing clothes – if we never change them, they can begin to STINK!)

o **CONCLUSION:**

1. If a wise man like Gandhi thinks it's good to change opinions, we can surely overcome our own resistance to change.

Comment [CM18]: This sentence connects to the sentence before, and also refers back to the topic sentence: full circle!

- o **DOES NOT BELONG:** Most people have an opinion on every subject, from A to Z. (too general – **nothing about changing or having different opinions from others**)