

For the first few weeks, you will work on writing a solid paragraph.

August 20:

A paragraph focuses on one topic and often includes a sentence with the main idea. We often call this the introductory sentence. Sometimes authors put the main idea sentence at the end of the paragraph instead. Your goal today is to identify the topic of the paragraph and the main idea sentence.

First you will **read** the paragraph carefully and then ask yourself what is the topic of this paragraph? Write it down.

Once you find the topic, you are ready to find the main idea. The main idea is the point of the paragraph. It is the **most important** thought about the topic.

To figure out the main idea, ask yourself this question: What is being said about the person, thing, or idea (the topic)?

The author can locate the main idea in different places within a paragraph. The main idea is usually a sentence and is often the first sentence, but it can be found anywhere. The writer then uses the rest of the paragraph to support the main idea.

Today you will complete the next three pages and check your answers. Be honest as you are self-evaluating. Great students learn from their errors. When you get an answer wrong, do not just write the correct answer in its place, but mark it wrong. You should then return to the directions and read them again before you select your answer. You will need to show me the completed work so put a post-it tab on the next page so it is easy for you to find.

Main Ideas

1. Summer is a wonderful time to spend at West Beach. It is a beach with light-colored, soft sand. The coastline goes on for a long way and many people enjoy walking along it. Children like to play in the surf and walk along the rocks that are visible at low tide. This is a fun beach for people of all ages.

What is the topic of this paragraph? _____

Underline the main idea sentence in the paragraph.

2. The movie Apollo 13 was a blockbuster for the summer of 1995. It is an exciting story about space exploration. In the movie, the astronauts get in trouble while they are trying to return to Earth. People in the audience are on the edge of their seats waiting to see what happens. What makes it even more exciting is that it is a true story.

What is the topic of this paragraph? _____

Underline the main idea sentence of this paragraph.

3. Most teenagers and young adults do not know what they want to do for the rest of their lives. It is a big decision. There are a number of things you can do to narrow the choices. For example you can take an interest test, do some research on your own about a career, try volunteer work in the field in which you are interested, or “job-shadow”, in which you spend a day with a person who is working in a field that interests you. These are just a few helpful ideas as you begin to choose a career.

What is the topic of this paragraph? _____

Underline the main idea sentence in the paragraph.

Read each paragraph carefully. Choose the best answer to the questions that follow.

4. Juan loves to play games. His favorite game is chess because it requires a great deal of thought. Juan also likes to play less demanding board games that are based mostly on luck. He prefers Monopoly because it requires luck and skill. If he's alone, Juan likes to play action video games as long as they aren't too violent.

What is the main idea of this paragraph?

- a. Juan dislikes violence. b. Juan likes to think.
- c. Juan enjoys Monopoly. d. Juan enjoys playing games.

5. Maria is watching too much television. A toddler shouldn't be spending hours staring blankly at a screen. Worse, yet, those awful cartoons she watches have inspired some of her wild behavior. We need to spend more time reading books with her and pull the plug on the TV!

What is the main idea of this paragraph?

- a. Watching a lot of television isn't good for Maria. b. Books are good.
- c. All cartoons are bad. d. Some cartoons are bad for Maria.

6. Someday, we will all have robots that will be our personal servants. They will look and behave much like real humans. We will be able to talk to these mechanical helpers and they will be able to respond in kind. Amazingly, the robots of the future will be able to learn from experience. They will be smart, strong, and untiring workers whose only goal will be to make our lives easier.

Which sentence from the paragraph expresses the main idea?

- a. Someday, we will all have robots that will be our personal servants.
- b. We will be able to talk to these mechanical helpers and they will be able to respond in kind.
- c. They will look and behave much like real humans.
- d. Amazingly, the robots of the future will be able to learn from experience.

Answers for Main Idea:

1. Summer is a wonderful time to spend at West Beach. It is a beach with light-colored, soft sand. The coastline goes on for a long way and many people enjoy walking along it. Children like to play in the surf and walk along the rocks that are visible at low tide. This is a fun beach for people of all ages.

What is the topic of this paragraph? West Beach

2. The movie Apollo 13 was a blockbuster for the summer of 1995. It is an exciting story about space exploration. In the movie, the astronauts get in trouble while they are trying to return to Earth. People in the audience are on the edge of their seats waiting to see what happens. What makes it even more exciting is that it is a true story.

What is the topic of this paragraph? Apollo 13.

3. Most teenagers and young adults do not know what they want to do for the rest of their lives. It is a big decision. There are a number of things you can do to narrow the choices. For example you can take an interest test, do some research on your own about a career, try volunteer work in the field in which you are interested, or “job-shadow”, in which you spend a day with a person who is working in a field that interests you. These are just a few helpful ideas as you begin to choose a career.

What is the topic of this paragraph? choosing a career

4. D

5. A

6. A

August 22

You should recall that paragraphs focus on one main idea. They should contain a topic sentence.

Paragraphs also contain details. Most teachers like to see a minimum of three supporting details per paragraph. Be aware that these details need to add and support the main idea.

Directions:

First read the paragraph. Then underline the main idea of the paragraph. Then put a “1” in front of the first supporting idea, a “2” in front of the second supporting detail, etc... Cross out any supporting ideas that do not support the main idea. These paragraphs have concluding sentences as their last sentence in the paragraph. We will work on concluding sentences tomorrow, so just know that you should not underline, number, or cross out the last sentence. Check your work when you are finished. Put a tab on the page so you can find it quickly.

Main Ideas and Details.

1. The Louisiana Purchase proved to be one of the shrewdest business pacts in the entire history of the United States. The purchase doubled the area of the country and provided territory from which fourteen new states were created either wholly or in part. It also gave us control over the mouth of the Mississippi River and opened up the way to foreign trade. Prior to the purchase, the waterway had been blocked by the Spanish, probably with the approval of Napoleon. The land that was bought was rich in timber, minerals, and natural resources of many kinds. Finally, the cost of the transaction was unbelievably low; the total of \$15 million amounted to about four cents an acre. The United States greatly benefitted from the Louisiana Purchase.

2. On July 16, 1969, the Apollo 11 spacecraft launched from the Kennedy Space Center in Florida. Its mission was to go where no human being had gone before—the moon! The crew consisted of Neil Armstrong, Michael Collins, and Buzz Aldrin. The spacecraft landed on the moon in the Sea of Tranquility, a basaltic flood plain, on July 20, 1969. The moonwalk took place the following day. On July 21, 1969, at precisely 10:56 EDT, Commander Neil Armstrong emerged from the Lunar Module and took his famous first step onto the moon's surface. He declared, "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind." Later, Apollo 13 did not make it to the moon, but, luckily, the astronauts were all fine. It was a monumental moment in human history!

Main Ideas and Details Answers:

1. The Louisiana Purchase proved to be one of the shrewdest business pacts in the entire history of the United States. 1. The purchase doubled the area of the country and provided territory from which fourteen new states were created either wholly or in part. 2. It also gave us control over the mouth of the Mississippi River and opened up the way to foreign trade. Prior to the purchase, the waterway had been blocked by the Spanish, probably with the approval of Napoleon. 3. The land that was bought was rich in timber, minerals, and natural resources of many kinds. 4. Finally, the cost of the transaction was unbelievably low; the total of \$15 million amounted to about four cents an acre. The United States greatly benefitted from the Louisiana Purchase. (the last sentence is a concluding sentence)
2. On July 16, 1969, the Apollo 11 spacecraft launched from the Kennedy Space Center in Florida. 1. Its mission was to go where no human being had gone before—the moon! 2. The crew consisted of Neil Armstrong, Michael Collins, and Buzz Aldrin. 3. The spacecraft landed on the moon in the Sea of Tranquility, a basaltic flood plain, on July 20, 1969. 4. The moonwalk took place the following day. On July 21, 1969, at precisely 10:56 EDT, Commander Neil Armstrong emerged from the Lunar Module and took his famous first step onto the moon's surface. 5. He declared, "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind." ~~Later, Apollo 13 did not make it to the moon, but, luckily, the astronauts were all fine.~~ It was a monumental moment in human history! (the last sentence is a concluding sentence)

August 23

So far you have practiced finding the topic and main idea sentence of a paragraph. You also learned how find supporting details in a paragraph. Yesterday, you noticed that paragraphs often have a concluding sentence as well. Today, you will focus on concluding sentences. Concluding sentences typically reinforce the main idea of the paragraph. They also serve as a transition to the next paragraph in an essay with many paragraphs. Obviously, concluding sentences are easy to spot since they are the last sentence in a paragraph. They are, however, tricky to write. Most writers are ready to move on to the next topic and forget to write a concluding sentence, but concluding sentences are important to the reader. The concluding sentence lets the reader reflect on the information presented in the paragraph and prepares the reader to transition to a new thought.

Directions: Read the paragraph. Identify the main idea sentence and the supporting details.

Notice that each sentence in the paragraph is not a NEW supporting detail. Sometimes the author expands the supporting detail. Be careful, one detail does not equal one sentence. Often an author needs two or more sentences to properly convey a detail. Cross out any detail that does not support the main idea. Then select the best concluding sentence for the paragraph. Check your work carefully and put a tab on your work so it is easily found when you show me your completed work.

Selecting Concluding Sentences

1. New York and Boston attract millions of tourists, but I think one of the best cities to visit on the east coast of the United States is Washington, D.C. It has some of the most interesting landmarks and tourist spots in the country. There are many monuments to visit, such as the Lincoln Memorial, the Jefferson Memorial, and the Washington Monument, which is the tallest building in Washington. For more excitement, the area called Georgetown in northwest Washington is famous for its shopping and restaurants. Finally, there is the White House tour. On this tour, the guide leads visitors as they walk through many of the rooms in the White House and view the home of the president of the United States.

Select the best concluding sentence:

- A. I have been to Washington, D.C. many times and cannot wait to go again.
- B. Although Washington, D.C., does not have the large number of visitors that New York or Boston does, I think this city is one of the best destinations for tourists.
- C. While in Washington, D.C. tourist often go to the National Zoo to see the animals.

2. There are three good options for traveling between Rome and Paris. The fastest way is by plane. However, flying between these two cities can be a little expensive unless you can find a discount ticket. The second way is by train, which is very popular with many tourists. In fact, Rome and Paris are visited each year by millions of students from all over. The train fare is not so expensive and the service is very good, but the overnight trip takes about 14 hours. Finally, many people take a bus. The bus is the cheapest of the three options, but it takes up to 22 hours, which means it takes the most time.

Select the best concluding sentence:

- A. If you spend a little time researching travel options between Rome and Paris, you will find one that best meets your needs.
- B. Another option is to rent a car, but you will need to have excellent map and driving skills.
- C. Paris and Rome are beautiful cities that are fun to visit.

This exercise was modified [from http://ngl.cengage.com/assets/downloads/greatwi_pro0000000335/gw2_unit4.pdf](http://ngl.cengage.com/assets/downloads/greatwi_pro0000000335/gw2_unit4.pdf)

Answers to Selecting Concluding Sentences

1. New York and Boston attract millions of tourists, but I think one of the best cities to visit on the east coast of the United States is Washington, D.C. 1. It has some of the most interesting landmarks and tourist spots in the country. 2. There are many monuments to visit, such as the Lincoln Memorial, the Jefferson Memorial, and the Washington Monument, which is the tallest building in Washington. 3. For more excitement, the area called Georgetown in northwest Washington is famous for its shopping and restaurants. 4. Finally, there is the White House tour. On this tour, the guide leads visitors as they walk through many of the rooms in the White House and view the home of the president of the United States.

Select the best concluding sentence: B

2. There are three good options for traveling between Rome and Paris. 1. The fastest way is by plane. However, flying between these two cities can be a little expensive unless you can find a discount ticket. 2. The second way is by train, which is very popular with many tourists. ~~In fact, Rome and Paris are visited each year by millions of students from all over.~~ The train fare is not so expensive and the service is very good, but the overnight trip takes about 14 hours. 3. Finally, many people take a bus. The bus is the cheapest of the three options, but it takes up to 22 hours, which means it takes the most time.

Select the best concluding sentence: A

August 27

Last week, you learned the parts of a good paragraph. A paragraph is a group of sentences on one TOPIC; it has a main idea, supporting details, and a concluding sentence.

Good writers PLAN before they write. Today you are going to plan a proper paragraph.

Topic: Your favorite meal.

First identify your favorite meal: _____

example my favorite meal is breakfast

List three - five parts of the meal: _____

example Eggs, orange juice, bagel, grits, fruit.

Now describe each one of those components:

_____ - _____

_____ - _____

_____ - _____

_____ - _____

_____ - _____

_____ - _____

Example:

Eggs - scrambled, golden yellow, fluffy, warm

Read over your notes and add more so that your reader will be able to experience your favorite meal.

August 29

Yesterday, you completed the pre-writing for your first paragraph. Today, you are going to write a proper paragraph that has a main idea sentence, supporting details, and a concluding sentence.

Use your notes from yesterday to write your paragraph.

Ex.

My favorite meal is breakfast at my grandparent's house. She makes the fluffiest scrambled eggs. They are always so creamy and served perfectly warm. Grandpa squeezes the fresh oranges so we can enjoy a glass of tasty orange juice. I like to have a half of a wheat bagel with just a touch of melted butter. My dad helps to make the cheese grits so that they are smooth and tasty. I like to cut up the strawberries for our fruit salad. Breakfast at my grandparent's house is always a special meal.

August 30

Reread your paragraph from yesterday and make any changes or revisions. Type your paragraph.

Be sure to follow the format that is required for this class. See the next sheet for details.

THEN - underline your main idea sentence, number your supporting details, and put a dashed line under your concluding sentence.

Your name

Mrs. Richardson

Grammar and Composition

Date

Name of Assignment

You begin your paragraph here. The entire document is double spaced, black ink, 12 point font, and is typed in a default font like Times Roman or Helvetica. Do not put extra spaces between paragraphs or under the title - just hit return or enter once - never twice. There is one space after a period. You use tab to indent new paragraphs. Use you spell check, but you must read your paper carefully to look for typing errors or even spelling checking errors. Take your time to revise and edit your work.