**Writing**

LESSON TWO (2)

Paragraph Writing

**1. The Topic Sentence**

A paragraph is a number of sentences written about the same topic. The main idea of the paragraph is usually given in the first sentence—which is called the topic sentence.

The topic sentence introduces what the paragraph is talking about and limits the information that can be given in the other sentences.

The other sentences add information to the topic and are called supporting sentences.

A topic sentence should talk about the topic, not about what you intend or are planning to write. Students often mistakenly begin a paragraph with sentences such as: I want to tell you about . . . or I’m going to write about . . .or This paragraph is about . . . or Let me tell you about . . .. These are not proper topic sentences as they do not really introduce the topic. They introduce your intent or your writing plan, but not your topic.

Begin a paragraph with a topic sentence like this:

My day was wonderful / a giant mess/a big problem/a lot of fun

Today was easier than usual / terrific! / a lot of hard work

**2. The Supporting Sentences**

The sentences that follow the topic sentence are the supporting sentences. All the supporting sentences should be about the topic only. If the sentences talk only about something other than the topic sentence, it is irrelevant and should be deleted. The supporting sentences provide more detail about the topic by using examples and facts.

Supporting sentences they may begin with a general statement and be followed by more specific information. Transition words are used to introduce the more specific information. Transition words help guide the reader through the passage; they let the read know in what direction the flow of ideas is going.

Common transition words include for example, such as, and like.

**2.1 General information:**

There are several ancient palaces that are major tourist attractions, which draw thousands of people annually.

**2.2 Specific information:**

One example is Kyongbok Palace, which was founded by the Yi Dynasty in 1392.

**2.3 Example of irrelevant / relevant supporting sentences:**

Topic Sentence: Seoul is a great town to visit on vacation.

1. There are many museums and art galleries to see. (Relevant)

2. The city is well-known for its many fine restaurants. (Relevant)

3. The traffic jams in the city are terrible. (Irrelevant)

4. It is an easy city to fly into from outside the country. (Relevant)

Sentence number 3 is irrelevant because it is not talking about something “great” about

Seoul.

**2.4 Using So and Because in supporting sentences**

**Because** and so help us write cause and effect sentences. Because is used to give a cause or reason.

**So** is used to give a result. Both because and so can join two sentences.

Using because:

I have a big test tomorrow. I want to study.

Because I have a big test tomorrow, I want to study.

I want to study because I have a big test tomorrow.

Notice that if the reason (because) comes first, you must use a comma after it.

Using so:

I have a big test tomorrow. I want to study.

I have a big test tomorrow, so I want to study.

Notice that you must use a comma before so.

**2.5 Using And and But in supporting sentences**

As your writing skills improve you will want to use more complex sentences to keep your writing interesting. And or but can connect two sentences. When using and or but to connect two sentences, use a comma before and or but.

That car is beautiful. It is fast.

That car is beautiful, and it is fast.

Dr. Park’s class is very interesting. Dr. Park’s class is difficult to pass.

Dr. Park’s class is very interesting, but it is difficult to pass.

When you use and, it adds information to the first sentence. When you use but, it adds surprising or unexpected information to the first sentence.

She is a very rich woman, and she has a large savings account.

She is a very rich woman, but she never has any money with her.

Her house is expensive, but it is very dirty inside.

Note: Don’t use a comma when you use two adjectives and join them with and or but.

The puppy is cute and playful.

He is smart but lazy.

**2.6 Combining Supporting Sentences**

Reading sentences that are always very short is uninspiring and can be very uninteresting to read. The reader will soon give up and look for something more challenging to do. Short sentences, which have the same subject, can be joined together to make longer, more interesting ones. Look at the example below.

A. There are many cows in the pasture.

B. They are grazing on the grass.

These two sentences can be joined together to form:

There are many cows in the pasture grazing on the grass. **or**

In the pasture, grazing on the grass, are many cows.

**3. The Concluding Sentence**

The concluding sentence is the last sentence of the paragraph. The function of the concluding sentence is to signal the end of the paragraph. Concluding sentences can either be a restatement of the topic sentence, a summary of the supporting sentences, or contain a final comment about the topic. The concluding sentence in a paragraph should be a general statement that relates to the idea expressed in the topic sentence, and not another fact or detail of support. If restating the topic sentence, it should be expressed in different words, not an exact copy of the topic sentence.

Many words or phrases can be used to signal the end of the paragraph in the concluding sentence. Here are just a few (These require a comma followed them):

finally in conclusion in summary

therefore thus as a result

indeed in brief in short,

Other phrases (which do not require commas) include:

we can see that . . .

it is clear that. . .

these examples show that. . .

there can be no doubt that. . .

the evidence suggest that. . .

**Exercise 1**

Choose the best topic sentence for each of the following paragraphs and put an “x” on the line next to it.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ a. Korea has a great variety of plant life.

\_\_\_\_\_ b. Korea is great!

\_\_\_\_\_ c. Korea is a nice place to visit.

There's more to Korean plant life than just rice, apple trees, and pine trees. Because of the diversity of Korean soil and environments, it has a wide variety of plants. A drive around the countryside will show you what an interesting assortment of plants there are.

2. \_\_\_\_\_ a. Flying in bad weather is difficult.

\_\_\_\_\_ b. Pilots do a lot of pre-flight preparation.

\_\_\_\_\_ c. Pilots make a lot of money and fly all over the world.

They check their plane to make sure that it is working properly. They also make sure that baggage or cargo has been loaded correctly. They check the weather forecast to see if they will run into any bad weather on their trip. Pilots then decide what route they should take, and how high and fast they should fly.

**Exercise 2**

The following sentences are about the weather and how to dress while touring Beijing, China. There is too much information here for one paragraph. Some of the sentences are specifically about the weather. Put the number of those sentences in the box below marked Weather. Other sentences are about how to dress while touring Beijing. Put the number of those sentences in the box below marked Dress. Each set of sentences has one that is general enough to be a topic sentence. Circle those two sentences.

Once you have identified the above sentences as to whether they are talking about weather or dress and found the topic sentences, arrange the sentences in a logical order and write (on a separate sheet of paper) a paragraph about each topic.

1. Winter is freezing cold.

2. Autumn is best as the temperature is mild and the sun is out a lot.

3. Beijing's four seasons are distinctly recognizable.

4. In the warmer months, T-shirts and light pants or shorts are the best bet.

5. It is easy to dress for touring Beijing.

6. In the autumn, jeans and a sweater are usually fine.

7. For touring during the day, wear casual clothes.

8. Bring nice clothes for going out at night.

9. The temperature in spring is nice, too, but it is very dry and windy.

10. Summer can be unbearably hot.

11. In the colder months, it is wise to dress in layers; long underwear and jeans, shirt, sweater and a down jacket.

**Exercise 3**

Read the paragraph below and

1. Underline the topic sentence.

2. Circle the transition words (see supporting sentences).

3. Write a concluding sentence for the paragraph.

Seoul, the capital of Korea, is a very fascinating place. It is a very old city, but very modern. There are several ancient palaces that are major tourist attractions, which draw thousands of people annually. One example is Kyongbok Palace, which was founded by the Yi Dynasty in 1392. It is easy to tell that Seoul is also a very modern city. The most obvious clue is the skyline, everywhere you look one can see countless high-rise office buildings and apartments. Another indication is its transportation system; the subway, buses, and taxis are second to none. Seoul, being the cultural and financial center of the country, is also the most populated city in the country. The city’s thriving and energetic 10 million plus population is eager to make any tourists stay an event to remember.