

LIFEPAC Writing Lesson

PARAGRAPH COMPONENTS

A *paragraph* is a piece of writing that deals with one central idea or that gives the words of one speaker. A paragraph may consist of one or more sentences.

Traditionally, an indention signals the beginning of each new paragraph. To indent means to set the first sentence five or more spaces in from the left margin. When using a typewriter or writing by hand, indention is a convenient way to signal the beginning of a new paragraph, but with the adoption of digital publication, computer software, and printers, instead of indenting each paragraph, space is left between paragraphs. This method is used in the LIFE-PAC Units. In Section 2 we have indented the sample paragraphs to illustrate the traditional method with the more modern method used in the LIFE-PACs.

The sentence that states the main idea of a paragraph is called the *topic sentence*. A good topic sentence may be a *definition*. Often a topic sentence tells *time, place, or attitude*. The topic sentence is most frequently the first sentence of the paragraph. However, the topic sentence may appear within the paragraph or even as the last sentence of the paragraph. Sometimes the last sentence merely rephrases or reinforces the topic sentence.

When all the sentences in the paragraph support the topic sentence, the paragraph has unity. Unity results when the writer stays with one main idea from the beginning of the paragraph to the end, when all the sentences support the topic sentence.

In addition to supporting the topic sentence, the other sentences should be presented in some logical order, such as time or relative importance. **Sequence** is one name for the logical progression of facts or ideas.



Complete these statements.

- 2.1 Sentences that deal with a single idea or that give the words of a single speaker form a _____ .
- 2.2 The sentence that states the central idea of a paragraph is the _____ .
- 2.3 A paragraph has _____ when all the sentences support the topic sentence.
- 2.4 When all the sentences of a paragraph are presented in logical order, that order is sometimes called _____ .
- 2.5 To set the first word five or more spaces in from the left margin is to _____ .



Read the following sentences and complete the activities.

When the time came to go home I could not open my locker. In my last period gym class I hurt my ankle. Today was a day when everything seemed to go wrong. Tomorrow I promise myself I will wake up on time. First I overslept. Then I realized I had forgotten my library book. My hobby is stamp collecting. Because of that, I almost missed my bus.

- 2.6 Do the preceding sentences combine to form a good paragraph? _____
- 2.7 Is the first sentence a good topic sentence? _____
- 2.8 Do all of the sentences relate to a single idea? _____
- 2.9 Are the sentences presented in a logical time sequence? _____

Read the sentences again and complete these activities.

2.10 The topic sentence is:

2.11 Rearrange the remaining sentences in a logical time sequence. To preserve unity, omit the sentence that does not support the topic sentence.

- a. _____
- _____
- b. _____
- _____
- c. _____
- _____
- d. _____
- _____
- e. _____
- _____
- f. _____
- g. The sentence that does not belong in the paragraph is:
- _____