



TO

FROM  
ARAGRAPH  
ESSAY

EDWIN EZOR  
JILL LEWIS

A PROCESS APPROACH  
FOR BEGINNING  
COLLEGE WRITING

# FROM PARAGRAPH TO ESSAY

A Process Approach for  
Beginning College Writing

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**FROM PARAGRAPH TO ESSAY**  
**A Process Approach for Beginning College Writing**

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# **FROM PARAGRAPH TO ESSAY**

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To our students, who taught us  
what to say in this book,  
and to our families,  
who constantly encouraged  
us while we said it.

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# T O        T H E        S T U D E N T

## THE PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK

This book is designed to help you cope with writing assignments throughout your college career. It will focus upon the kinds of writing that you will be asked to do in a large variety of courses. It may also help you with the reading you must do in these courses.

Each chapter of this book will teach you certain basic steps in writing college compositions and will give you practice in applying them. When you have mastered the steps in one chapter, you will be ready to learn advanced steps in the following chapter. You will also be shown how professional authors use these same writing steps in developing their own materials. But nowhere will this book tell you *what* to write about. It will only tell you *how*.

## THE PLAN OF THE BOOK

Your writing instruction will begin with the paragraph, the basic unit in all college writing. As you move through the chapters, you will learn how to expand a simple paragraph into a long composition of many paragraphs.

Chapter 1 will introduce you to the basic components of a paragraph. Then in Chapter 2 you will be shown how to start writing the paragraph with a single sentence called the "topic statement." In this chapter you will be taught how to develop "supporting

sentences” which will give your readers the extra information about the beginning sentence that they will need to know.

The model paragraphs and activities in these two chapters will afford you practice in recognizing a topic statement when you read a paragraph in a textbook. They will also help you to distinguish a topic statement from supporting sentences.

Chapter 3 will show you how to arrange your supporting sentences in a variety of ways within a paragraph. You will be taught how to move your topic sentence from the beginning to the end or the middle of your paragraph—wherever it will be most helpful to your readers. Finally, you will learn how to write a good concluding sentence for your paragraph.

The reading activities and examples in this chapter will help you to see how textbook authors sequence their supporting sentences. You will also observe how varying the placement of the topic statement affects such paragraphs, and how these authors develop their conclusions.

Chapters 4 through 6 will start to teach you to become a good editor of your own writing. Proofreading is an important part of editing. In college writing, though, the process of editing also includes taking certain steps to *improve* your first draft. You will have a chance to practice these steps on the first drafts of your compositions and on sample reading materials. “Rewriting” such materials will help you to understand more clearly what they mean and how they were constructed.

In Chapter 7 you will learn to construct specific types (or “patterns”) of paragraphs. Your supporting sentences will now serve definite purposes: to help explain or define your topic, to state its cause or effect, to give evidence or proof for it, to solve a problem that it creates, or to compare or contrast it with another topic.

Writing that meets such purposes is called “expository.” Expository writing (and reading) is the kind that most college courses stress. It is also the main type of writing and reading in business, the professions, and the public services.

The reading activities and examples in Chapter 7 will help you to identify patterns in textbook and magazine paragraphs. Detecting the pattern will enable you to anticipate the kind of information that each paragraph will give you as you read through it.

After you have learned how to write *individual* paragraphs, you will be taught in Chapter 8 two easy, logical plans for developing an essay of *several* paragraphs. By using either of these two plans, you should be able to produce well-organized, carefully written compositions of any length in every course you take.

Chapter 9 will offer you some suggestions for making your longer compositions more interesting as well as clearer for your readers. You will be taught how to create more effective openings for your essays. You will also learn how to *strengthen* the main section and conclusion of your essays and how to connect the paragraphs of your essays more effectively.

The Appendix to this book will give you additional guidelines for careful proofreading and editing.

Edwin Ezor  
Jill Lewis

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# TO THE INSTRUCTOR

*From Paragraph to Essay* is a book for beginning writing students in the community college or four-year college. Written by two professors with extensive experience in working with underprepared college students, it teaches such students how to proceed through the entire composing process. They are taken from the initial planning of a concise paragraph through the final proofreading, editing, and revising of a multiparagraph theme. The book emphasizes *expository* writing to prepare students for writing activities in all college-level courses and in business and the professions.

Throughout, the book encourages beginning college writers to regard writing as *an extension of their own thinking*. Writers are taught to develop a sense of audience for each assignment; to decide what *questions* about the chosen or assigned topic should be answered to meet readers' needs and interests; and to generate the paragraph or essay as the *organized responses* to such questions.

The writing strategies in *From Paragraph to Essay* are presented in a cumulative sequence which allows students to proceed at their own pace. The steps for each strategy are explained in clear, easy-to-grasp language and are accompanied by examples and exercises that test students' understanding of the strategy. Students are shown how to apply questioning procedures to each phase of the writing process. A generous number of writing activities provide meaningful practice in applying each strategy. Prefatory material establishes a purpose for each chapter by describing the strategies which students are about to learn, while a checklist page at the end of each chapter reminds them to utilize these skills in future writing. At each new phase of the composing process, students are helped to make use of strategies that have already been taught. At the same time, each chapter establishes readiness for strategies that will be taught later in the book.

Each aspect of the writing process is illustrated by paragraphs from textbooks in many academic areas, as well as a broad, interesting range of general articles, news stories, and anecdotal material. This enables students to perceive that what they are learning about the *writing* process can also be applied to the *reading* process to increase their comprehension in every college course—an important ancillary objective of this book.

The organization of the book and its chapters offers numerous options to suit individual teaching styles and the needs, interests, and capabilities of beginning college students. (These options are explored in detail in the Instructor's Manual.)

- The first three chapters of this book show beginning writers exactly how to generate a *coherent, purposeful paragraph* by answering certain questions. To this end, certain structural devices, unique to *From Paragraph to Essay*, enable students to write answers to these questions in well-formed sentences from the very first writing activity on. Open-ended “starter sentences,” framed from questions, aid students to identify a topic and to phrase a good topic statement. They are then taught to generate appropriate supporting sentences by answering *details questions* about the topic statement. For this task they use a special details sheet. This device not only facilitates “brainstorming” for details, but permits students to select only their most useful ideas, and then enables them to transfer those into the paragraph as complete sentences. Students are also introduced at this point to methods for using questions to aid in the sequencing of supporting sentences—*topical, order of importance (descending and ascending), chronological, spatial*—and for creating a strong clincher sentence.
- After showing beginning college writers how to use thinking strategies to ensure good paragraph organization, the book devotes three chapters to *editing techniques*. Students are offered specific suggestions which involve the ears as well as the eyes in editing and proofreading compositions. They are taught how to apply questions to the initial draft of each composition to make sure it supplies the kinds of information that readers require. To help in this process, they are familiarized with the parts of speech which convey specific types of information. Students are shown, too, how to improve written language in the direction of greater variety, specificity, and appropriateness.

The student is taught methods for improving the readability of very short sentences including a variety of *sentence-combining* techniques. But they are also shown how to break a too lengthy sentence into its component parts when necessary and how to eliminate language that is mere “noise.”

- In Chapter 7 students gain extensive experience in working with starter sentences that are framed from questions pertinent to the major rhetorical patterns: *Definition/Explanation, Thesis/Proof (Opinion/Reason), Cause/Effect, Problem/Solution, and Comparison/Contrast*. They are also taught to employ the directional words and phrases for each pattern.
- For students who are ready to move beyond the single-paragraph composition, the next two chapters offer specific steps for applying questioning techniques for generating and revising *short essays*.

Two methods are demonstrated. With the first method, students are shown how to divide a paragraph they have already composed into its three components, and to expand each component so that the result is the introduction, body section, and conclusion of an essay. The second method teaches students to *preplan* each section of a multiparagraph theme. With the aid of a special composition planning

page, students outline the theme by establishing topic and thesis, selecting patterns and details which will answer *a number of significant questions* about the thesis for readers, and developing an effective conclusion. The composition planning page permits students to translate their outline notes directly into well-organized, properly sequenced paragraphs and to *summarize* them when necessary.

Students are then shown how to improve each section of a theme to make its message more attractive and meaningful to readers. Specific directions tell exactly how they can utilize *examples, anecdotes, interesting details, directions* or *predictions, pattern statements, and rhetorical questions* in each part of the essay. They are also shown how directional words and reiterated main ideas or details can serve as linkages between the parts of a theme.

An appendix to *From Paragraph to Essay* enhances the material on editing and proofreading discussed earlier in the book. It reviews *sentence structure, parts of speech, and important punctuation and placement rules*. Organized as a series of questions and answers, it is intended to guide beginning college writers on those points of usage and mechanics that they frequently find troublesome.

Edwin Ezor  
Jill Lewis

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# *P R E V I E W   O F   C H A P T E R*



THIS CHAPTER WILL INCLUDE  
DISCUSSION ABOUT

PARAGRAPH COMPONENTS, INCLUDING

- Topic Sentences
- Supporting Sentences

PARAGRAPH FUNCTIONS





## PARAGRAPH COMPONENTS: TOPIC SENTENCES AND SUPPORTING SENTENCES

In this chapter you will learn about the components needed for writing a paragraph. A paragraph is usually defined as *a group of sentences that deal with the same subject or topic*. One of these sentences identifies the topic for the reader and makes a statement of some kind about the topic. This statement is called the *topic sentence*. The other sentences in the paragraph give additional information about the idea stated in the topic sentence. These other sentences are called *supporting sentences*. Once you can recognize both types of sentences, it will be easier for you to use them to build paragraphs. First we shall discuss the topic sentence.

### THE TOPIC SENTENCE

As we pointed out above, the topic sentence identifies the topic and also makes some statement about the topic. Commonly, the topic sentence is the opening sentence in the paragraph.

A topic sentence is usually a *general sentence*. That is, it makes a *broad* statement about the person, place, animal, building, idea, event, etc., that is being discussed in the paragraph. Because it is broad or general, a topic sentence leaves the reader with the feeling that more information will follow. The reader expects that there will be some description or explanation within the paragraph that tells *how many, which one, what kind of, when, where, how, why*, etc. Sentences that give such information are called *specific sentences*. Supporting sentences are specific.

For example, a topic sentence might be: "Police officers perform many important services." Notice that this sentence is rather vague as it stands. By itself, it does not tell enough about: What are these services? Why are they important? Who performs them? When and where are they performed? And so on. Sentences answering questions such as these would be specific.

Here are some other general topic sentences. Think about what questions come to mind as you read them:

- Some holidays are particularly enjoyable to me.
- I would be reluctant to go to a big city by myself.
- Your little brother often amuses me.
- There were a number of reasons why we chose to invest in property rather than in stocks.
- His father's illness caused serious hardships for his family.

A good writer or reader can readily tell whether a statement is general (*leads to questions* like those above) or specific (*answers* one or more of these questions). The exercise below will give you practice in identifying these kinds of statements.

### ◆ **ACTIVITY A. LOCATING GENERAL (TOPIC) AND SPECIFIC (SUPPORTING) SENTENCES**

Directions:

Look at the pairs of sentences below. Each pair could be included in a single paragraph. In the space provided at the left of each sentence, indicate which sentence of the pair is general (G) and which is specific (S). Then indicate what question the specific sentence answers about the general sentence. (*Note: There may be more than one question answered.*)

#### *Example*

- a.   G   Large dogs were in the park.
- b.   S   A German shepherd sat by his master.

The specific sentence answers the question *What kind of large dogs?* or *Where in the park?*

1. a. \_\_\_\_\_ Three families huddled together on a small blanket.
- b. \_\_\_\_\_ The beach was exceptionally crowded last Sunday.

The specific sentence answers the question \_\_\_\_\_

2. a. \_\_\_\_\_ President Truman integrated the armed forces.
- b. \_\_\_\_\_ Some American presidents have done a great deal for civil rights.

The specific sentence answers the question \_\_\_\_\_

3. a. \_\_\_\_\_ Radiation can be harmful to pregnant women.  
b. \_\_\_\_\_ One effect of radiation on unborn children is brain damage.

The specific sentence answers the question \_\_\_\_\_

4. a. \_\_\_\_\_ An employer's communication skills can affect her relationships with her employees.  
b. \_\_\_\_\_ A dictatorial employer sometimes has a hard time getting her employees to cooperate.

The specific sentence answers the question \_\_\_\_\_

5. a. \_\_\_\_\_ One commanding officer ran out of food supplies for his men.  
b. \_\_\_\_\_ The country was losing the war.

The specific sentence answers the question \_\_\_\_\_

6. a. \_\_\_\_\_ The human cell has only one nucleus.  
b. \_\_\_\_\_ Human cells are different from plant cells in several ways.

The specific sentence answers the question \_\_\_\_\_

7. a. \_\_\_\_\_ William Shakespeare often wrote historical plays.  
b. \_\_\_\_\_ *Henry VI* was a historical play by Shakespeare.

The specific sentence answers the question \_\_\_\_\_

8. a. \_\_\_\_\_ The British pound sterling is worth about \$2.40.  
b. \_\_\_\_\_ The American dollar is worth different amounts in different foreign countries.

The specific sentence answers the question \_\_\_\_\_

9. a. \_\_\_\_\_ Three angles of that triangle must equal  $180^\circ$ .  
b. \_\_\_\_\_ One angle of that triangle is  $45^\circ$ .

The specific sentence answers the question \_\_\_\_\_

10. a. \_\_\_\_\_ The Spanish have introduced a number of painting styles.  
b. \_\_\_\_\_ Picasso, a Spaniard, was the first to use a painting style we call *abstract impressionism*.

The specific sentence answers the question \_\_\_\_\_

# ◆ ACTIVITY B. WRITING SPECIFIC (SUPPORTING) SENTENCES

Directions:

Each sentence below is a general sentence. In the space below each general sentence, write a specific sentence that gives further information and that could be in the same paragraph as the general sentence. Beneath the specific sentence, tell what question or questions your added sentence answers about the general sentence.

## Example

GENERAL: The elderly woman's companion needed to have a great deal of patience.

SPECIFIC: The companion needed to spend many hours explaining to the elderly woman the importance of taking all the medicine the doctor had prescribed.

The specific sentence answers the question(s) *Why?* (*Why did she need to have patience?*)

1. GENERAL: The student nurse had learned that many vitamins were important to her well-being.

SPECIFIC: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

The specific sentence answers the question(s) \_\_\_\_\_

2. GENERAL: There were a lot of good bargains at my neighbor's garage sale.

SPECIFIC: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

The specific sentence answers the question(s) \_\_\_\_\_

3. GENERAL: The two men and one woman had committed a serious crime.

SPECIFIC: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

The specific sentence answers the question(s) \_\_\_\_\_