

What You Need to Know About Writing  
Paragraphs . . . Now in One Book



# **A Writer's Guide to Powerful Paragraphs**

Victor C. Pellegrino

30 Ways to Organize and Write  
Effective Paragraphs

# P A WRITER'S GUIDE TO PARAGRAPHS



Victor C. Pellegrino

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E-mail: [books@maui.net](mailto:books@maui.net)  
Website: [www.booksmaui.com](http://www.booksmaui.com)

Publisher's Cataloging-in-Publication Data  
(Provided by Quality Books, Inc.)

Pellegrino, Victor C.

A writer's guide to powerful paragraphs / Victor C.  
Pellegrino. -- 1st ed.

p. cm.

Includes index.

LCCN 2002109852

ISBN 0-945045-05-0

1. English language--Paragraphs. I. Title

PE1439.P45 2003

808'.042

QBI02-200563

Pellegrino, Victor C.

*A Writer's Guide to Powerful Paragraphs*

International Standard Book Number: 0-945045-05-0

Library of Congress Control Number: 2002109852

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Printed in Korea

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Icons: Christopher Magee, Graphic Artist

Pen point cover graphic: Hemera Technologies, Inc.

Printing: AMICA International, Seattle, WA

Published by

Maui arThoughts Company

P.O. Box 967, Wailuku, HI, USA 96793-0967

Phone or Fax: 808-244-0156

Phone or Fax Orders: 800-403-3472

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# DEDICATION

To my wife

Walette Pualani Lyn-fah

To my children

Shelley Jeanne La‘ela‘eokalā Lyn-oi  
Angela Terese Mahinamālamalama Mei-lyn  
Hōkūao Christopher Joseph Bailey Wu-wei

To my parents

Albert and Adeline Pellegrino



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*A Writer's Guide to Powerful Paragraphs* has been in the process of creation for several years. During that time, many special people have provided me with support and guidance.

I am most specially grateful to David Merchant and Shelley Pellegrino, who painstakingly edited and proofread the chapters. Their diligent efforts, constructive changes, and love for writing turned the manuscript into a book of which I am proud.

I am also grateful to Angela Pellegrino for the creative assistance and direction she provided for the cover design, graphics, and layout.

My wife, Walette, deserves so much gratitude for having supported me throughout the writing of this book—and seven others. She provides a kind and careful eye and sincere comments, which I always welcome.

Many people from different professions and backgrounds have reviewed this book. I am especially grateful—and humbled—to have received such glowing testimonials from Claire Kamasaki, Professor of English, Middlesex Community College; Regina Lehnhoff, English Department Chair, Marian High School; Andrew Pudewa, Director, Institute for Excellence in Writing; Dr. Joyce Trafton, Collegiate Professor, Education, University of Maryland; and Debbie Hasegawa Winkler, Acting Director, The Learning Center, Maui Community College.

I want to extend special thanks to Christopher Magee, Visiting Assistant Professor in Animation at the

University of the Arts, Philadelphia, for creating the chapter icons. This is my second book for which Chris has designed icons, and I continue to appreciate his creativity and imagination.

I also wish to acknowledge the dedication and professionalism of Aziz Junejo and Rizwan Awan of AMICA International, Seattle. Besides being excellent printers and business people, they understand an author's perspective.

Finally, I wish to thank the hundreds of students of writing I have had the pleasure of teaching. Because of them, my writing is what it is.

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# PREFACE

Writing is something almost everyone must do, and do well. Writing well requires more than putting words on paper. Writing is best when it is concise, meaningful, and easily understood. This book is written with these objectives in mind. It is designed for writers of all ages and backgrounds who want to improve their writing.

If you are in school, this book will help you master basic paragraph writing skills that you can apply to longer pieces of writing. If you are entering the workforce, this book will be a useful reference tool to reinforce what you learned in school. If you have not written in a while, this book will help refresh your writing skills. If you have been recently promoted, changed jobs, or simply want to improve your writing, this book can add polish to your existing skills.

Most of today's communication is brief. Letters, notes, memos, faxes, and e-mails are generally short and to the point—sometimes only a paragraph or two. Writing briefly, however, does not mean you can ignore the hallmarks of good writing. Whether you are writing a long or short piece, your main focus should be clarity, brevity, and understandability. Writers should not rush. A common mistake writers make when using today's shorter styles is to rush through the writing process without organizing, proofreading, or editing.

To help you improve your writing, *A Writer's Guide to Powerful Paragraphs* focuses on how to organize the shortest piece of writing that can stand alone—the paragraph. The heart of this book lies in the thirty chapters that provide thirty different ways to write paragraphs. Each chapter contains a short, simple, and direct expla-

nation of one type of paragraph, followed by an example, an analysis of the example, and practical suggestions for writing that type of paragraph.

*A Writer's Guide to Powerful Paragraphs* is a “hands-on” book. Rather than force you to wade through fine print and a lot of complicated textbook-like instruction, this book uses short discussions followed by practical examples. After you read and study the paragraph type outlined in each chapter, practice writing that type of paragraph. Then let someone else critique your work; there is no better method to improve your writing than to have it reviewed by a friendly, but critical, eye. Hopefully, this process will make learning about paragraph writing painless and enjoyable.

Finally, although this book focuses on structuring your paragraph in one of thirty ways, do not think that you have to limit yourself to just one paragraph type. Good writers will be able to combine two or more. So once you have a good handle on each of the paragraph types, experiment by using more than one within a paragraph or in multiple paragraphs.

As writers, we combine words to make sentences, we combine sentences to make paragraphs, and we use multiple paragraphs to create essays, chapters, and books. Once you have mastered the paragraph, you are on your way. Experiment. Create. Enjoy.

Good writing,  
Victor C. Pellegrino  
Waikapū, Maui, Hawai'i  
2003

# HOW TO USE THIS BOOK



*A Writer's Guide to Powerful Paragraphs* is designed to be simple and easy to use. If you have not done so already, I recommend that you read the *Preface* and scan the *Contents*. Reading these sections will provide a sense of the goals of this book and a road map of how it will try to achieve those goals. I recommend reviewing these sections not because I wish to insult my audience, but because so many readers tend to neglect the importance of previewing a book in their haste to get into the content. In doing so, they fail to understand the “big picture” of a book.

Next, read and study the seven sections listed under *The Paragraph*. Some of this material may be familiar to you, depending on your age or writing experience, and some of it may be new. In either case, these seven sections will set the foundation for what is to follow, and make learning the thirty different methods less complicated and more enjoyable.

After you have reviewed the foundation chapters, it is time to move to the heart of the book—the thirty paragraph types. These thirty structures will help you write a variety of paragraphs. Each chapter is laid out similarly

and contains the following sections: (1) a short explanation of the paragraph type; (2) a sample paragraph; (3) an analysis of the sample paragraph; and (4) practical suggestions for writing that type of paragraph.

I have tried to avoid formal terminology — what I call “scholarly gobbledygook” — as well as complex content. After all, the purpose of this book is not to camouflage or obscure information, but to show simply and directly how you can master basic paragraph writing skills.

While I certainly hope you benefit by studying this book, the best advice I can give anyone who wants to improve his or her writing skills is this: Practice. Practice. Practice. Use the models in this book as a springboard to create your own paragraphs. After you are able to write individual paragraphs using the basic structures, practice combining different paragraph structures within a larger piece of writing.

An equally important part of writing practice is sharing. Writing is meant to be read, so share your paragraphs with others. Listen to feedback and do not be afraid to restructure your ideas. Once you learn the value of writing and revising, you will become a much better writer.

Finally, as you begin to combine your paragraphs into larger pieces of writing, you will want to make the paragraphs flow together. Two excellent books that will be helpful to this process are *A Writer’s Guide to Transitional Words and Expressions* and *A Writer’s Guide to Using Eight Methods of Transition*.



# A WRITER'S GUIDE TO POWERFUL PARAGRAPHS





# THE PARAGRAPH



History

Definition, Signal and Function

Length and Development

Topic Sentence

Unity

Coherence

Planning and Organizing

