I. Framing The Discussion
   - Cognitive Demands of Writing

II. Components of Foundational Composition
   A. Idea Generation & Organization
      • List Generation
      • Expanding Your Ideas
      • Categorization

   B. Building a Five-Sentence Paragraph
      • Where to Start?
      • Scaffolding Instruction
      • Topic & Concluding Sentences
        - A Word On Systematizing Your Language
      • Concluding Sentences

   C. Developing Your Ideas - Expanding Your Paragraph
      • Adding Details
      • The Role of Graphic Organizers
      • Connecting Foundational Writing Into the Genres

III. Word Lists for Writing
Cognitive Demands of Writing

- **Motor Component:** Whether students handwrite or type, part of the mind is engaged in letter formation.
- **Spelling:** Even if students are not penalized for spelling, they must still sound out and spell their words so that the reader can understand the text.
- **Mechanics:** Students must adhere to the conventions of writing, not only capitals and periods, but also the mechanical structures necessary to cluster groups of words effectively for meaning.

- **Syntax:** Students must write coherent sentences, including appropriate structure and variety.
- **Vocabulary:** Students must use words that convey their intended message and vary those words to reflect the development of their ideas.
- **Oral Language:** Students use oral language before and more often than they do written language. They must learn the differences between spoken and written communication, and they must learn to turn the ideas they speak into the ideas they write.
- **Text Structure:** Students must be able to apply a knowledge of introductory, supporting, and concluding sentences and paragraphs at an appropriate level of sophistication for their age and grade.
- **Recursive Processes:** Students must proofread and edit their work, taking into account conventions of spelling, punctuation, sentence construction, and idea development.
- **Content:** Topics chosen from students’ own experiences contain the most simple and direct content. Eventually, students must write on topics assigned by content-area teachers; they must also write using information retrieved from text they read.
- **Purpose & Audience:** Students must determine their purpose and intended audience. The purpose includes an understanding of the assignment as well as the style or approach the piece should take (e.g., narrative, informative, argument). The audience includes the style of the writing (e.g., blog, letter, essay), the discipline (e.g., English, science), and the person(s) who will evaluate the writing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages of Knowledge</th>
<th>Idea Generation</th>
<th>Parts of Speech</th>
<th>Sentence Parts</th>
<th>Paragraph / Essay Parts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definition</td>
<td></td>
<td>learn definition</td>
<td>learn definition</td>
<td>ability to discuss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification</td>
<td></td>
<td>recognize in text</td>
<td>recognize in text</td>
<td>recognize in text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create in Isolation</td>
<td>generate / categorize list</td>
<td>provide examples in isolated sentences</td>
<td>provide examples in isolated sentences</td>
<td>create using known topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create in Application</td>
<td>generate / categorize list for content-based assignment</td>
<td>use in paragraphs</td>
<td>use in paragraphs</td>
<td>create using content-based topic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Basic Paragraph Writing - An Overview

Basic Paragraph Writing: A Step-By-Step Process

1. Identify and write the topic.
   - 2. Generate a list of items in support of that topic. Select a minimum of 3 to use in your paragraph.
   - 3. Turn the topic into a topic sentence.
   - 4. Turn selected list items into supporting sentences.
   - 5. Reword the topic sentence (perhaps expressing your opinion of the topic) as the concluding sentence.

Basic Paragraph Writing: Explanatory Notes

1. At first, topics should be of interest to the students and in areas where they have some knowledge in order to reduce cognitive overload. Once students become comfortable with the basic paragraph structure, topics can be chosen from course material and outside sources. Work with prompts is important even at this stage.

2. Regardless of the length of the assignment, students begin by generating a list. This initial idea generation frees working memory for the more complex writing tasks needed for composing. The students then select from the list at least three items that will form the content of their supporting sentences. Sometimes, lists can be stand-alone assignments. At least at first, students can generate lists together with the instructor serving as scribe.

3. Topic sentences are generally the most difficult to write. These sentences should introduce the paragraph but also engage the reader. Students sometimes find it easier to generate supporting sentences first, returning to write the topic sentence later. As students develop their skills, they need to learn different topic sentence styles; teachers should plan to continue to introduce and help students practice with different kinds of topic sentences.

4. Students develop each selected list item into a sentence. Sentence variety is key in creating an interesting piece of writing. Students should check frequently to see that their supporting sentences connect back to the topic. Transition words are unnecessary for short paragraphs; end punctuation serves as the transition between sentences.

5. The concluding sentence wraps up the paragraph. Learning a variety of styles is useful. Too often, students simply repeat the topic sentence at the end of their paragraphs. Try telling students to rephrase or reword (rather than restate) the topic sentence. Questions such as “How do I feel about the topic?” or “What’s my opinion?” may help students construct this tricky sentence.
Generating Lists

List-Generating Activities...
- encourage students to generate ideas
- help students learn to group, identifying similarities/differences
- prepare for everything from a paragraph to a longer essay
- serve as non-threatening tasks (as spelling does not count and syntax is not required)
- allow students to know early on whether they have enough information to generate a paragraph

Recommendations:
Never let a student write even a paragraph without generating a list first. Any writing assignment longer than a few sentences can and should begin with a list. Instructors can scribe for group list-generating activities or ask students to make a list with a partner or independently. Typically, timed lists cause unnecessary anxiety; instead, assign a specific quantity, often 5, 10, or 15. Generating lists makes an excellent bell ringer activity, and students can log their lists in a special section of their binders.

Some Suggested Topics:
(Slashes represent separate list topic ideas.)

about the senses:
- things that are ________ (any color)
- things that are bright
- foods that taste bad/good
- things that make loud noises
- places where you should whisper/shout
- things that are shorter/taller than you are
- fruits/vegetables/dairy products/sweets
- things that are cold/hot
- things that are rough/smooth/soft/hard
- foods that taste sweet/bitter
- things that smell good/bad
- things that can/cannot fit in your pocket
- things that keep you warm/cool
- breakfast/lunch/dinner foods

other list topic suggestions:
- drinks
- things you can do with a potato
- rooms in a house/mansion/castle
- sports
- things to do on a sunny/rainy day
- places you’d like to visit/vacation
- things you’d buy if you had $1,000,000
- famous people (living/dead) you’d like to meet
- favorite books/movies/stories/T.V. shows
- favorite actors/athletes/musicians
- things to do in _________ (town/city)
- insects/mammals/amphibians/reptiles/birds/fish
- colleges/camps you’d like to attend
- things that plug in or require electricity
- things I do before going to school/bed
- important inventions
- favorite restaurants
- musical instruments
- tools
- vehicles on land/in the air/for water
- bodies of water
- things you’d want on a deserted island
- places you wouldn’t like to visit/vacation
- people you admire
- things you can do in less than a minute
- characters in _________
- favorite places to eat
- zoo/farm/jungle animals
- good/bad animals for pets
- jobs you’d like to try for a day/week/year
- modes of transportation
- favorite video games
- things to take in your tote bag on a plane
- things to take camping/to the beach
- things that cost more than $________
Categorizing

Categorizing Activities...
• encourage students to discover and understand connections between pieces of information
• help students learn to group and organize, identifying similarities/differences
• prepare for all types of writing, particularly longer pieces
• allow students to know early on whether they have enough information in each category to create a supporting paragraph or sub-section of a paper

Recommendations:
Categorizing items on a list is a cognitive activity to be practiced at all grade levels. Sometimes, students will first generate a list and then begin to see similarities and differences between items on that list, creating categories to group similar items. At other times, students will see categories early on in the list-generating stage and list items under each category as they go. Either approach works. Categorization is essential for students who are writing longer, multi-paragraph pieces because it guides them as to which items go into which paragraphs/sections of their paper.

Some Sample Categorizing Activities:
I. Create topic headings (categories) for the following lists:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>cow</th>
<th>chair</th>
<th>milk</th>
<th>police officer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>chicken</td>
<td>couch</td>
<td>water</td>
<td>teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sheep</td>
<td>bed</td>
<td>orange juice</td>
<td>chef</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>horse</td>
<td>table</td>
<td>soft drink</td>
<td>flight attendant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

II. Sort the following items into their appropriate categories:

- brushing teeth
- supervising recess
- going for a swim
- necessities/routine
- job
- leisure

III. Strike through the one item in each list that does not belong. For most, there is more than one possible answer. Be ready to defend your answer.

A. flashlight, lamp, car, remote control, iPod, calculator, watch
B. science focus: chicken, eagle, buzzard, wren, lion, quail, dodo bird
C. history focus: FDR, JFK, RFK, LBJ, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Barack Obama
Listing and Categorizing
For Multi-Paragraph Writing

Procedure:

1. Choose a topic.
2. Gather thoughts/facts on this topic in word/phrase form.
3. Read over your list of thoughts/facts, clustering similar items and deciding upon major categories.
   - Some of the items already on your list may serve as categories though you may need to add categories as well.
   - Eliminate items that are irrelevant; combine items that are redundant.
   - Verify that you have enough items to support the existence of each category.
4. Sequence categories logically. These will become your body paragraphs or major subheadings.

Note: Sometimes, information on a topic is obtained in category form, eliminating #3.

A Few Examples:

1. Dolphin
   - Gather facts from several sources.
   - Read over the facts you gathered.
   - Decide upon categories (e.g., habitat, diet, body structure, communication)
   - Cluster items from your list into your established categories.
   - Eliminate any facts that do not fit into categories. Combine redundant facts. For categories that do not have enough information, either eliminate the category or gather more facts to add to that category.

2. Abraham Lincoln
   - Gather facts from several sources.
   - Read over the facts you gathered.
   - Decide upon categories (e.g., childhood, pre-presidency, presidency, legacy)
   - Cluster items from your list into your established categories.
   - Eliminate any facts that do not fit into categories. Combine redundant facts. For categories that do not have enough information, either eliminate the category or gather more facts to add to that category.
Developing Topic & Concluding Sentences

General Thoughts

If students are in a rut concerning topic and/or concluding sentences, generate several different versions for the same paragraph to show them that variety is possible. At worst you’ve given them “multiple choice” options. At best you’ve shown them a way out of their rut so they can generate their own with better structure and more variety.

Topic Sentences

Probably the most difficult component of a paragraph is the topic sentence. Students must be able to do the following simultaneously:

• understand the overall topic
• verbalize it in a complete sentence that engages the reader
• prepare the reader for the rest of the paragraph
• use an appropriate style for the particular assignment

Initially, students who struggle with topic sentences can begin with “There are...” That will usually lead to an acceptable (if not wonderful) topic sentence.

Here are some activities to assist students with generating topic sentences:

• You provide items, and students generate categories into which they fit.
• You provide titles, and students turn them into sentences.
• You provide supporting sentences (see examples on following page), and students generate topic sentences to introduce those supporting sentences.

Concluding Sentences

Concluding sentences also prove challenging for students. They must be able to do the following simultaneously:

• reword or rephrase the overall topic stated in the topic sentence
• provide a reaction or response to the topic

Initially, students who struggle with concluding sentences can begin with “In conclusion” or “To conclude.” That will usually lead to an acceptable (if not wonderful) concluding sentence. Since “restate” often leads to a verbatim copy of the topic sentence, use the words reword and rephrase to teach students about concluding sentences.

Here are some activities to assist students with generating concluding sentences:

• You provide topic and supporting sentences, and students generate concluding sentences to wrap up the paragraph.
Paragraph Development Exercises

The following exercises are designed to reinforce the basic paragraph format and give students practice with the individual elements, especially those that may prove more difficult, such as writing topic sentences. They are presented in increasing difficulty. Some students may need to spend a great deal of time on each of the elements of the paragraph while others will internalize the structure more easily.

I. Write supporting sentences for the following topic sentences:

I have several favorite foods.

1. ___________________________________________________________________
2. ___________________________________________________________________
3. ___________________________________________________________________

The beach provides the opportunity for a number of great activities.

1. ___________________________________________________________________
2. ___________________________________________________________________
3. ___________________________________________________________________

II. Write a concluding sentence for the following supporting sentences:

1. Drinking lemonade, ice tea, and other cold drinks is one way to stay cool.
2. Turning on a fan or air conditioner drops the temperature in my house.
3. Going for a quick swim in the mid afternoon cools me down for the rest of the day.
C.S. _______________________________________________________________

III. Write a topic sentence for each set of supporting sentences:

T.S. _______________________________________________________________

1. I love to play frisbee in the soft, green grass of the park.
2. There is a playground that my little brother loves near the frisbee field.
3. At the entrance of the park, they have grills where we sometimes barbecue.
C.S. The park is probably my favorite place on the weekends.
Expanding Paragraphs: A Step-By-Step Process

1. Identify and write the topic.

2. Generate a list of items in support of that topic. Select a minimum of 3 to use in your paragraph.

3. Turn the topic into a topic sentence.

4. Turn selected list items into supporting sentences.

5. Generate detail sentences to elaborate upon each supporting sentence.

6. Reword the topic sentence (perhaps expressing your opinion of the topic) as the concluding sentence.

Expanding Paragraphs: Explanatory Notes

1. At first topics should be in areas where the student has some knowledge in order to reduce cognitive overload. Eventually, content should be taken from course material and outside sources.

2. No matter the length of the writing task, the student begins the assignment by generating a list of at least ten ideas.

3. Students sometimes continue to find it easier to generate supporting sentences first, returning to write the topic sentence after they’ve gotten the supporting information down. Teachers should continue to introduce and help students practice with different kinds of topic sentences. These sentences should introduce the paragraph but also engage the reader.

4. Students then develop each selected list item into a sentence. Once again, sentence variety will be key in providing an engaging piece.

5. Students then generate detail sentences to elaborate upon each supporting sentence. At first a single detail sentence for each supporting sentence may prove challenging enough, but eventually students will generate two detail sentences for each supporting sentence. A five sentence basic paragraph becomes an 11 sentence expanded paragraph, with two detail sentences following each supporting sentence. Writers more comfortable with the process will be able to write a supporting sentence and its details, moving between steps #4 and #5, before taking on the next supporting sentence, repeating the process.

6. The concluding sentence brings the paragraph to a close. Once again, learning a variety of styles will be useful to the student. Continue to help students expand their options. Students may find it beneficial to think about how they feel or their opinion about the topic to avoid repeating the topic sentence.
Expanding Paragraphs & Using Transition Words

Once you have practiced writing basic paragraphs and are comfortable with their format, it is time to expand. Take a 5 sentence, basic paragraph and add detail sentences to each supporting sentence. If you add one detail to each supporting sentence, your 5 sentence paragraph will become 8 sentences; if you add two details to each supporting sentence, your 5 sentence paragraph will become 11 sentences!

Add detail sentences for each supporting sentence:

T.S. On a rainy day, there are several things I enjoy doing.

1. Going to the theater to catch a movie or two is a great way to pass the time.
   ____________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________

2. I love having some extra time to play video games.
   ____________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________

3. Usually, I have a great book to read.
   ____________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________

C.S. Some people find rainy days depressing, but every once in a while they can be great.

Add detail sentences for each supporting sentence:

There are several jobs I would like to try. First, I think it would be interesting to work as an architect.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Next, working in an ice cream parlor would be enjoyable. ______________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Finally, I think I would enjoy being a teacher. ______________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

I think it would be interesting to try each of these jobs before choosing a full-time career.
List of 10 Things

1. ____________________________
2. ____________________________
3. ____________________________
4. ____________________________
5. ____________________________
6. ____________________________
7. ____________________________
8. ____________________________
9. ____________________________
10. ____________________________

Start the 3 items you like best. Each will become a supporting sentence.
### Signal Words for Reading, Writing & Notetaking

#### Direction Change & Contrast
A change in ideas to follow:
- alternatively
- although
- as opposed to
- at the same time
- but
- conversely
- despite (the fact that)
- different from
- even so
- even though
- for all that
- however
- in contrast
- in spite of (the fact that)
- instead
- nevertheless
- nonetheless
- notwithstanding
- on the contrary
- on the other hand
- or
- otherwise
- rather
- still
- though
- unlike
- whereas
- while
- yet

#### Addition
Similar ideas, additional support, or evidence to follow:
- additionally
- again
- also
- and
- another
- as an example
- as well
- because
- besides (that)
- equally important
- following this further
- for example
- for instance
- for one thing
- further
- furthermore
- in addition
- in light of the...it is easy to see
- in particular
- in the same vein
- in the same way
- just as
- likewise
- more (than that)
- moreover
- namely
- next
- other
- pursuing this further
- similarly
- specifically
- then
- to illustrate

#### Conclusion, Summary & Emphasis
Conclusion, summary, or emphasis to follow:
- accordingly*
- after all
- all in all
- as a result*
- because*
- certainly
- clearly, then*
- consequently*
- finally
- for the reason (that)*
- generally
- hence*
- in a word
- in any event
- in brief
- in conclusion
- in fact
- in final analysis
- in final consideration
- in general
- in short
- in sum
- in summary
- in the end
- indeed
- last
- lastly
- naturally
- of course
- on account of*
- on the whole
- since*
- so*
- therefore*
- thus*
- to be sure
- to conclude
- to sum up
- to summarize
- truly

(* indicates cause and effect)

#### Sequence & Time
- during
- earlier
- eventually
- finally
- first... second...
- third
- following
- immediately
- in the first place
- in the meantime
- later
- meanwhile
- never
- next
- now
- presently
- recently
- shortly
- simultaneously
- sometimes
- soon
- so far
- subsequently
- then
- this time
- when
- whenever
- while

Note: The bent arrow signifies a change in direction while the two straight arrows represent words that continue in the same direction. The arrow on the right crosses a line to indicate an end point.

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Transitional Chains

Used to separate sections of a paragraph that is arranged chronologically.

- first/second/third
- the first/second/third reason; another reason, still another reason, yet another reason; the main/most important reason; the final/last reason
- one; another; the last kind/type
- generally; furthermore; finally
- in the first place; also; lastly
- in the first place; pursuing this further; finally
- to be sure; additionally; lastly
- in the first place; just in the same way; finally
- basically; similarly; as well
- for example/instance; another example; yet another example; the final/last example
- to begin/first; also; at this point; next/then; when; finally

For opening a paragraph initially or for general use:

- admittedly
- assuredly
- certainly
- granted
- no doubt
- nobody denies
- obviously
- of course
- to be sure
- true
- undoubtedly
- unquestionably
- generally speaking
- in general
- at this level
- in this situation
Recommended Resources

Writing Matters Approach developed by William Van Cleave (available at wvced.com):

Binder Inserts. (several different styles for students at different grade levels, emphasizing quick and easy access to word lists and rules for sentence and essay construction)

Grammar Dice. (grammar/sentence generating dice activities)

GrammarBuilder Concept Cards. (concept cards including parts of speech and sentence parts for student and instructor use)

Sentence Sense, Levels A & B. (workbooks for student practice in sentence skill development)

Sentence Stretches I & II. (sentence expansion card games)

Sentence Templates and Writing Expansion posters.

With a Purpose. (in press) (teacher’s manual focusing on paragraph/essay/genre writing)

Words at Work I & II. (grammar/sentence construction card games)

Writing Matters. (teacher’s manual focusing on sentence-level writing)

Writing Skills Concept Charts. (with co-author Heather Redenbach) (8.5x11 visuals for parts of speech and sentence parts)

Writing Skills Sorters. (grammar/sentence sorting activity packs)

Handwriting/Keyboarding tools that complement the Writing Matters approach:

Educational Fontware. (dual platform CD with all the major handwriting fonts; includes link letter, a revolutionary feature that allows you to link cursive letters together when creating customized handwriting sheets)

Handwriting paper. (different kinds of handwriting practice paper with different line spacings and other features)

King, Diana. Cursive Writing Skills (Left and Right Handed). epsbooks.com. (remedial workbooks)


King, Diana. Learning Cursive - Elementary Level (left- & right-handed versions).

King, Diana. Learning Print. (new print workbook for instructing elementary students)

Pencil Grips. (assorted pencil grips to improve or correct pencil grasp)

Tactile Surfaces for Writing. (Brain Freeze, Gel Board, and Smart Sand)

Other useful tools:


Hochman, Judith and Natalie Wexler. The Writing Revolution. wiley.com. (teacher resource)


King, Diana. Writing Skills - Teacher’s Manual and Books A, One, Two, and Three. epsbooks.com. (teacher resource and workbooks involving grammar and sentence and paragraph construction)


Mather, Nancy, Barbara J. Wendling, and Rhia Roberts. Writing Assessment and Instruction for Students with Learning Disabilities. josseybass.com. (teacher resource)