

LESSON 4: PARAGRAPH DEVELOPMENT

TEACHER NOTES

Age: Late teenager/Adult
Level: Intermediate (B1)
Time: 60 minutes
Focus: Writing
Materials: One copy of the worksheet per student
Overall Aims: In this lesson, students will:

1. develop an awareness of paragraph development in English;
2. write a paragraph following the conventions of English academic writing.

students improve their abilities, support is gradually removed and students can act with more freedom. Exercise 1 here is the most structured/controlled task: students read a paragraph and identify its main idea. Exercise 2 moves a step further, asking them to identify the function of highlighted sentences from the same paragraph. Exercise 3 asks the students to analyze another paragraph, looking for its main idea, major and minor supports. Finally, they are expected to write a paragraph themselves.

ACADEMIC WRITING



TEACHING TIP: Writing well in a foreign language requires more than grammatical knowledge. Some students may produce error-free sentences, which nonetheless sound awkward when put together in a paragraph in English. Most non-English-speaking students benefit from a short but overt explanation of discourse differences between English and their own language (discourse is any piece of extended language, as defined by the British Council). To illustrate, English paragraphs have a preference for the main idea being given first and supporting detail to follow, while other languages may have a preference for the opposite. Students write better texts when they understand that there simply are different expectations in different languages. If you wish, you may ask your students to compare and contrast the English paragraphs in this lesson with one written in their native tongue and to share their findings with their classmates.

1. Distribute the worksheet and start with Exercise 1.

Answer:

In order for a town or city to become a Cittaslow, there are some criteria they need to fulfil.

2. After you elicit the main idea, move on to giving students information about topic sentence, major and minor supports. Make sure you mention that, as a general rule, there are at least two major supports in a well-developed paragraph. Each major support may have more than one minor support. It is these minor supports that make a paragraph rich and interesting.
3. Get the students to do Exercise 2. Check the answers.

Answers:

First, the population of the town needs to be fewer than 50,000: Major support

Of course, it is not enough to eat locally-grown foods; these should be organic too: Minor support

In other words, people should look after old and traditional buildings: Minor support

Another criterion is that pollution should be prevented and air quality should be improved: Major support

Last but not least, slow cities should of course encourage slow food restaurants: Major support

THE ANATOMY OF A PARAGRAPH

Aims: to familiarize students with the components of English paragraphs

Approximate time: 15 mins

PROCEDURE:



TEACHING TIP: This part of the lesson uses scaffolding. Scaffolding is a teaching technique that involves providing students with gradually decreasing support as they complete a series of tasks. As the

LESSON 4: PARAGRAPH DEVELOPMENT

TEACHER NOTES

DEVELOPING YOUR PARAGRAPH THROUGH ENUMERATION

Aims: to familiarize students with the technique of enumeration; to get students to write an enumeration paragraph in groups (thus recycling the information about teamwork and collaboration from Lesson 3)

Approximate time: 45 mins

PROCEDURE:

- As with the previous section, go over the information about enumeration.
- Get the students to complete Exercise 3. (These two steps should take around 15 minutes.)

Answers:

Topic sentence: *Organic dark chocolate is a superfood with many health benefits.*

Major Support 1: *To start with, it is full of antioxidants that slow the aging process and fight with diseases.*

Major Support 2: *Second, it is full of micronutrients such as potassium, magnesium and iron.*

Minor Support: *The human body needs these to function properly.*

Major Support 3: *As a third benefit, dark chocolate increases blood flow to the brain and to the heart, improving both brain and heart function.*

Major Support 4: *Finally, dark chocolate also helps against stress.*

Minor Support: *It reduces stress hormone levels and balances your mood at times of anxiety.*

Concluding Sentence: *Next time you go shopping, do yourself a favour and reach for a bar of organic dark chocolate.*

Transitions: *To start with, Second, As a third benefit, Finally*

- Set up the group writing activity. As a general rule, groups of 3 or 4 work well in writing activities. First, ask the groups to read through Dean Harry R. Lewis' letter to Harvard students and complete the chart as they do so. Check their answers before they move on to the writing activity (this step should take around 15 minutes).

Possible Answers:

#	Major advice	Minor details, examples
1	<i>Don't do too much academic planning.</i>	<i>Be flexible and expect changes.</i>
2	<i>Don't resist taking time off from your studies if you feel the need.</i>	<i>Foreign travel, an internship, etc may set you back on track.</i>
3	<i>Don't ignore your physical and emotional health.</i>	<i>You need to relax to perform well academically.</i>
4	<i>Don't expect yourself to be perfect.</i>	<i>Make sure you enjoy the experience too.</i>
5	<i>Don't see this advice as rules that you must follow.</i>	<i>It is essential to know and understand yourself.</i>

TEACHING TIP: The instructions ask students to use their own words while completing the chart. This is a good opportunity to teach them about paraphrasing and plagiarism. If the chart uses their own words, their paragraphs will likely do so, too.

- Tell the groups to turn their chart into a well-written enumeration paragraph. You may want to remind them of the rules for effective teamwork and collaboration from Lesson 3 (the actual writing activity should take around 15 minutes. In weaker classes, the previous steps may take longer and the actual writing activity may be assigned as homework).

LESSON 4 WORD LIST:

This lesson only includes a list of words that appear at some point in the lesson and in Coxhead's Academic Word List. These are frequent in English medium classes at university and your students may already be familiar with some of them. My suggestion is to foster ownership of learning by giving the students the responsibility to learn/review these words on their own. For classroom practice or home study, a short set of vocabulary exercises follows each word list.

LESSON 4: PARAGRAPH DEVELOPMENT

TEACHER NOTES

Academic Vocabulary Exercises:

Answers:

A.

1. to
2. to
3. to
4. on

B.

1. specific
2. flexible
3. previous
4. approximate

C.

1. *The availability of the course depends on having enough students.*
2. *Flexibility is crucial to succeed at university.*
3. *Was it easy to adapt to your new school? / Did you adapt to your new school easily?*
4. *Did you receive a response to your email to the International Student Office?*