Essential Skill: Paragraph Structure

Tardigrades in Space

TRANSCRIPT

HOOK 1

Hi, writers. It's Margaret.

My friend Soraya sent me this image the other day and said, "I bet you can't guess what this is." Take a moment and look closely at this image. Try to think about what it might be.

At first, I thought it might be a brightly colored sea anemone. Then I thought for sure, it's a cheesy cheese puff. I was totally wrong.

Soraya revealed that it's actually an image of the skin of an orange. She used a special type of microscope to zoom in and take a picture of the orange's skin magnified. You see, Soraya is a microbiologist. Using special tools, it's her job to zoom in and study things up close.

She's currently studying tardigrades. Tardigrades are tiny animals that can survive in almost every environment, even space. As she studies them, she writes all about them in a research paper. Using her microscope to zoom in, she's noticed how the parts of a tardigrade each serve an important purpose—its claws help it to move, and its body helps it survive harsh environments.

If we zoom into Soraya's research paper, we see that it's also made up of different parts. There's pages, sections, and paragraphs.

Here's a paragraph that Soraya wrote:

> *Tardigrades are tiny, microscopic creatures that eat small things. They live in moss, soil, and oceans, where they find food to eat. They use their sharp mouths to eat plant cells, algae, and other tiny creatures. Studying what they eat helps scientists understand how tardigrades survive.*

Even this paragraph is made up of different parts.

DISCUSSION 1

Discuss: Zooming in and looking closely at this paragraph, what are some things or different parts that you see?

HOOK 2

Maybe you notice lots of facts and information about tardigrades. Or maybe you notice that the first sentence is indented. You may have said something else, and that's great!

Zooming into a paragraph reveals a structure that's made up of different parts. The topic sentence is always the first sentence of the paragraph, and it tells the reader what the paragraph is about: *"Tardigrades are tiny, microscopic creatures that eat small things."* This lets the reader know that the paragraph will focus on what tardigrades eat.

Next are detailed sentences: *"They live in moss, soil, and oceans where they find food to eat. They use their sharp mouths to eat plant cells, algae, and other tiny creatures."* These provide more information, like facts, explanations, or examples.

And then there's the concluding sentence: *"Studying what they eat helps scientists understand how tardigrades survive."* A concluding sentence is always the last sentence of the paragraph. It summarizes or restates the main point of the paragraph.

While researching tardigrades, Soraya was amazed by the tardigrades' unusual bodies and the fascinating features of their legs.

Here's what Soraya wrote:

> *“Tardigrades are tiny creatures with special legs. They have eight legs, and each one has little claws at the end. These claws help them grip surfaces as they move. Tardigrades rely on their legs to survive in their environment."*

DISCUSSION 2

Discuss: In this paragraph, which are the topic, detail, and concluding sentences?

HOOK 3

In this paragraph, this is the topic sentence, these are the detail sentences, and this is the concluding sentence. Each of these paragraph parts work together to make the writing clear, organized, and easier to understand.

Soraya is really excited because she is almost finished writing her research paper on tardigrades. She's currently writing a section titled *"Tardigrades In Space!"* It describes how the tardigrades have an amazing ability to survive the extreme conditions of deep space.

But one night, Soraya came home and discovered her kitten playing around on her computer keyboard. She quickly looked at her computer screen and—oh no! One of her paragraphs about tardigrades in space was now completely scrambled!

Soraya needs your help to fix it so that she can finish her research paper. You'll identify the topic sentence, detail sentences, and the concluding sentence, and then recopy the paragraph using the paragraph structure.

I'll get you started, step by step.

STEP 1

Get your supplies.

STEP 2

In today's lesson, you'll need someone to share ideas with. This could be a partner or someone you sit near. When everyone has a partner, click the arrow to go to the next step.

STEP 3

On the Tardigrades in Space worksheet, you'll find Soraya's scrambled sentences for her paragraph. Paragraphs always start with a topic sentence that tells the reader what the paragraph is about. Read the scrambled sentences, and discuss with your partner which sentence is the topic sentence.

When you both agree, move to the next step.

STEP 4

Write a "T" next to the sentence that you and your partner identified as the topic sentence.

STEP 5

Paragraphs always end with a concluding sentence, which wraps up the paragraph. They'll sometimes use words like b*ecause, this is why,* or *that's why* to summarize or restate the main point of the paragraph.

Read through the sentences again, and discuss with your partner: Which sentence is the concluding sentence?

When you both agree, move to the next step.

STEP 6

Write a "C" next to the sentence to mark it as the concluding sentence.

STEP 7

Now that you've identified the topic sentence and the concluding sentence, the remaining three sentences are detail sentences. Detail sentences give facts and extra information about a topic. They'll come right after the topic sentence and before the concluding sentence of the paragraph.

After the topic sentence, which of the sentences should come first? Which should come second? And which should come third?

Read through the remaining detailed sentences to yourself and think about what order they should be in the paragraph. It's okay if your paragraph isn't the same as your partner's.

Give a thumbs up when you're ready to move to the next step.

STEP 8

On your worksheet, write "D1", "D2" and "D3" next to the sentences in the order that you chose.

STEP 9

Now that you've identified and marked the topic sentence, detail sentences, and the concluding sentence, silently read through them in order. Start with the topic sentence, followed by the detail sentences in order, and end with the concluding sentence. Listen carefully to how it sounds. If you want, you can make changes.

When you're done, give a thumbs up.

STEP 10

It's now time to unscramble the paragraph by rewriting it. Remember, paragraphs always start with a sentence that is indented to help keep the writing organized and easy to read.

An indent is about the length of the first joint of your thumb. If it helps, place your thumb at the start of the sentence line, like this, to see where you should start writing.

On your worksheet, find your topic sentence, which you marked with a "T."

In the *"Tardigrades In Space!"* paragraph section of the worksheet, recopy the topic sentence on the first line. Indent and start here.

STEP 11

Find your detailed sentences which you marked with a "D1," "D2," "D3."

In the same section, continue to recopy the paragraph by writing the detailed sentences in the order you chose.

STEP 12

Finally, find your concluding sentence which you marked with a "C."

Finish the paragraph by recopying the concluding sentence.

STEP 13

Take turns reading your completed paragraph to your partner.

WRAP UP

Great job, writers! You've helped Soraya unscramble her research paper paragraph. You found the topic sentence, detail sentences, and the concluding sentence. And you recopied them into an indented, well-organized paragraph. You've helped Soraya finish her research paper on tardigrades. You've also learned the secret to making every new paragraph organized and easy to read.

Soraya is now super excited to share with the world all the incredible things that she's discovered about these amazing micro creatures. And she's learned how much cats love to mess with their owners' electronics!

See you next time, writers!