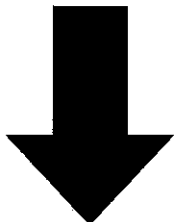


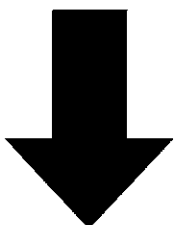
## Basic Paragraph Writing - An Overview

### Basic Paragraph Writing: A Step-By-Step Process

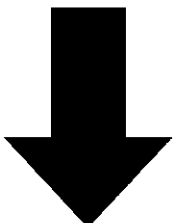
1. Identify and write the topic.



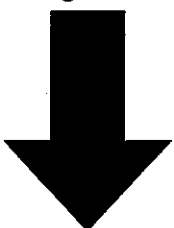
2. Generate a list of items  
in support of that topic.  
Select a minimum of 3 to use in  
your paragraph.



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.