

Paragraphs to Essays

Presented by:

Kay Hartley
Program Specialist
khartley@casas.org

Resources: www.tinyURL.com/casas-essay

Shared Paragraph Writing

Shared paragraph writing allows students to build paragraph writing skills while collaborating with a partner or small group.

This encourages the student to participate in shared learning, work with others to complete tasks, and to reinforce communication and language skills.

Shared Paragraph Writing: Example 1

Have students work in pairs or small groups to deconstruct five-sentence paragraphs into main idea (topic) and supporting sentences.

Start with paragraphs with obvious main ideas.

Then shift the main ideas into different locations in the paragraph.

Shared Paragraph Writing: Example 2

After practicing deconstruction (example 1) several times, provide the pairs/groups with topic sentences and have them write three or four supporting sentences.

Shared Paragraph Writing: Example 3

Provide topics and have the students write a topic sentence and three or four supporting sentences.

Challenge the students to put topic sentences into different locations in the paragraph.

Shared Paragraph Writing: Example 4

Move on to more lengthy and complex paragraphs only when the students are ready.

HINT: Be sure the students understand that complete paragraphs may have fewer than five sentences, or far more than five sentences. Otherwise, they may lock-in to paragraphs being done when you reach five sentences, or incomplete with fewer than five.

NOTES: Shared Paragraph Writing

A four-step process may seem simplistic, but the concept is not really that complex. It will take time to develop the initial prompts for example one, but once you have done that, you can re-use them.

The other topics can be planned ahead or done on the fly based on current events. One paragraph reviews of music, TV shows, movies, sports games, local events, or even the weather can work quite well.

Transitioning to Essays

Once the students have mastered writing effective paragraphs on a topic, it is time to move on to combining paragraphs into an essay.

First, of course, the learner must understand that the paragraphs must all support the more general topic of an essay.

Transitioning to Essays

It might be easiest to start with an essay about an event they have experienced.

This could be anything from a family picnic to a rock concert. Have the students start by reviewing the event in their minds and making a list of details from the event.

Transitioning to Essays: Activity

Try it yourself! Think about an event you recently attended. On your phone or a piece of paper, list four or five memorable details from the event.

For example:

1. There was great food.
2. There was a band.
3. People danced.
4. I visited with friends.
5. There was an award ceremony.

Transitioning to Essays: Using Activity Results

1. Ask students to share their basic details about the event.
2. Ask students to select their own list or someone else's list, and, in small groups, fill in imaginary details about the topics on the list to make paragraphs.

Transitioning to Essays: Using Activity Results

Suggestions:

- What was great, or not, about the food served?
- What did the band play? Was it loud?
- Who was the best, or worst dancer?

Share the paragraphs. Since the students can use their own imaginations, some might be very interesting. You now have the basis of an essay.

Transitioning to Essays: Using Activity Results

The next step will be to decide what kind of introductory paragraph could be used to start an essay about the event.

Resources:

[How to Write an Essay Introduction | 4 Steps & Examples \(scribbr.com\)](#)

[Examples of Great Introductory Paragraphs \(thoughtco.com\)](#)

Transitioning to Essays: Introductory Paragraph

The resources on the previous slide can give you strategies you can use to introduce the concept of introductory paragraphs with “hooks”. This is often a short paragraph. Its purpose is to introduce the topic and entice the audience to read it.

Staying with the theme on the previous pages, the introduction could be brief: *I expected the awards dinner to be boring. I was really, really wrong!*

Transitioning to Essays: Putting it Together

Ask the students to write introductory paragraphs for the topic they have chosen.

Next, it's time to put together the essay. Have the students start putting their supporting paragraphs under the introductory paragraph.

Then, share the results.

Transitioning to Essays: Paragraph Transitions

Provide a sample of an essay with an introductory paragraph and supporting paragraphs, but NO transitions between paragraphs.

It might be best to provide your own example if your students might be shy about their work or sensitive about criticism.

Transitions Example

8

No Transitions

Get two slices of bread. Spread peanut butter on one slice. Spread jelly on the other slice. Put together and enjoy!

With Transitions

First, get two slices of bread. **Next**, spread peanut butter on one slice. **Then**, spread jelly on the other slice. **Finally**, put together and enjoy!

© 2014 Created by Sally Camden ~ The Reflective Educator ~ www.thereflectiveeducator.com

Transitioning to Essays: Paragraph Transitions

Discuss how the essay might seem choppy, jumping from one paragraph to another.

Ask for suggestions on how one paragraph might move more smoothly to the next.

Now is the time to introduce paragraph transition words.

Transitioning to Essays: Transition Vocabulary

A few resources to try:

[45 Best Transition Words and Phrases For Essays \(rafalreyzer.com\)](https://www.rafalreyzer.com/45-best-transition-words-and-phrases-for-essays/)

[Transitional Words and Phrases – The Writing Center – UW–Madison \(wisc.edu\)](https://writingcenter.wisc.edu/transitional-words-and-phrases/) (An excellent resource for transition vocabulary sorted by fourteen categories such as: cause and effect, chronology, compare/contrast, importance, etc.)

[100 Good Transition Words for Essays by Experts - 2021 \(5staressays.com\)](https://www.5staressays.com/100-good-transition-words-for-essays-by-experts-2021/) (Another great resource for transition vocabulary by category.)

YouTube It!

Any student with a cell phone probably knows how to use YouTube. How do you replace that faucet? YouTube it. What is the strange noise my car is making? YouTube it. How can I improve my writing? YouTube it!

YouTube videos allow the presentation of information in different styles, allowing students to find an approach that is more meaningful to them. It also provides the instructor with possibly fresh approaches to instruction.

YouTube It Examples:

Show, Not Tell: Adding detail to your writing.

EngVid: *Benjamins English*:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pHdzv1NfZRM&t=22s>

“Stop Saying Very”

English with James:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PCoyTwltu5g&t=6s>

Stop Saying Very: Another approach from *Learning English with Harry*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IsCw0BggTXM>

YouTube It!

If you have not used **EngVid**, it might be a good time to try it out. Subscribe to your favorite resources. Keep a bank of links on hand for homework, or for substitutes to use.

If you do not have a way to project on a screen, you may wish to have students use their phones or tablets. Put the links on Canvas, Google Classroom, or whatever classroom management system you use.

If you are in Corrections education, use YouTube to help plan your in-class lessons.

Transitioning to Essays: Transition Vocabulary

You will need to directly teach students the purpose of transitions, and words that can make transitions clear.

Start with no more than 5 transition words, and have the students work in pairs or small groups to find the best transition words for sample paragraphs you will provide.

Transitioning to Essays: Transition Vocabulary 2

The resources on the previous pages should provide a good starting place. You may notice that resources in this presentation are not always from adult education sources. That is because writing is something all students at all ages should be able to do effectively.

Writing has been studied extensively in lower grades, and some of our best resources come from those grades. It is up to us to make the content of activities more relevant to adults.

Questions?



Thank you!