

Writing

PARAGRAPHS

From Topic to Paragraph



2

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1 Beginning to Work

In this unit, you will ...

- recognize and write complete sentences.
- learn how to begin and end a sentence.
- learn the common features of a paragraph.
- identify the topic of a paragraph.
- identify strong and weak paragraphs.

1 Look at this chart. Check (✓) the answers for your country.

	It's common.	It's not common.	I'm not sure. / It depends.
a. High school students have part-time jobs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. University students have part-time jobs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. University students have volunteer jobs (jobs that don't pay a salary).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Part-time jobs pay a good salary.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. After graduation, both men and women want to find a full-time job.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Most jobs for new university graduates will involve technology.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2 Share your information with a group of your classmates. Then ask and answer these questions about part-time jobs.

- What are some common part-time jobs?
- Have you ever had a job? What was your first job?
- What kind of job do you think is best for a high school / university student?
- (your idea)

3 You are going to read a paragraph called *Part-time Jobs and High School*. What do you think the paragraph is about? Circle the answer.

- a. Useful high school subjects
- b. Working and studying at the same time
- c. How much money a part-time job pays

4 Read the paragraph. Did you choose the right answer in exercise 3 above?

Part-time Jobs and High School

¹ High school students should not have part-time jobs. ² High school is a very important time for a student, and students are very busy. ³ Students have to study hard to enter a good university. ⁴ Many high school students also play sports, and they practice before and after school. ⁵ High school students also spend time with friends of the same age. ⁶ Those friendships can be important for the rest of their lives. ⁷ A part-time job takes time away from studying, playing sports, and making friends. ⁸ People work for most of their adult lives. ⁹ When they are in high school, it's important for them to just be high school students.



5 Which sentence tells the writer's most important idea?

1 2 3 8

6 What do sentences 3, 4, and 5 do?

- a. They show new ideas.
- b. They give examples.
- c. They show different opinions.

7 Do you agree with the writer? Why / Why not?

Writing focus: What is a sentence?

How many words are in the shortest English sentence? Except for one-word commands (*Sit!*), a complete sentence in English needs at least two words: a subject (a noun or pronoun) and a predicate (a verb) (*She sits*).

Of course, most English sentences are longer than just two words, but every sentence tells a complete thought. Groups of words that do not make complete sentences are called *phrases*.

If you need more information on complete sentences and phrases, see pages 85–87.

8 Work with a partner. Look at the following. Some of them could be sentences with the correct punctuation. Check (✓) the ones that could be sentences.

- a. housewives and young parents
- b. some retired people want to work
- c. earn some extra money
- d. meet new people
- e. volunteer jobs don't pay a salary
- f. an opportunity to learn new skills
- g. several part-time jobs

Language focus: Capital letters and final punctuation

Sentences in a paragraph ...

- start with a capital letter
Part-time jobs can be stressful.
- end with a period (.) question mark (?) or exclamation point (!)
Many students work as tutors.
How old were you when you got your first job?
I will never work in a restaurant again!

Note: Exclamation points are not as common in academic writing as they are in casual writing. Don't use them too often. Never use more than one exclamation point at the end of a sentence in academic writing.

The company offered me a part-time job!! = when writing to friends

The company offered me a part-time job. = when writing in school

9 Unscramble the sentences and write them on the lines below. Begin and end each sentence correctly.



a. in a shop / my sister / works

My sister works in a shop.

b. is / a useful subject / computer science

c. don't / I / like / working with people

d. can't find / many students / a job / easily

e. more women / are / after high school / working ?

f. first job / was / my / wonderful / a / experience

10 Look again at exercise 8 on page 7. Write the complete sentences with correct punctuation. Add to the phrases to make complete sentences. Then share your sentences with a partner. How are they different?

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____
- f. _____
- g. _____

Writing focus: What is a paragraph?

A paragraph is a group of about 6–12 sentences about one *topic*. Every sentence in a strong paragraph is about the same topic. All of the sentences explain the writer's *main idea* (most important idea) about that topic. When the writer wants to write about a new main idea, he / she begins a new paragraph.

A paragraph can give information, tell an opinion, explain something, or even tell a short story. The sentences are arranged logically, so the reader can easily understand what the writer wants to say.

In academic writing, a paragraph has a *topic sentence* that directly tells the reader the main idea. The other sentences in the paragraph, called *supporting sentences*, give more information about the topic. They add specific details and explanations. In academic English, the topic sentence is usually (but not always!) first or last.

11 Work with a partner. Read the groups of sentences below and on page 10. Circle the letters of the strong paragraphs. If you think the sentences make a weak paragraph, say why. Choose one or more of these reasons:

- The sentences are not all about the same topic.
- There are not enough sentences.
- There is no topic sentence.
- Some sentences say the same thing.

It's important for me to get a job working with other people. I'm a very social person, and work is more enjoyable when I am with friends. In addition, talking with other people helps me think better and more creatively. I'm a more effective worker when I can work with others, and a happier worker too.

a. _____

I need to buy a motorcycle. With a motorcycle, I could get to my job more quickly. It takes two hours to get to work by bus. That's very slow. A motorcycle is much faster. If I had a motorcycle, I could save a lot of time. Taking the bus is not fast enough for me.

b. _____

First, register for an account. Then, fill out the information for your profile. Finally, upload a .pdf of your resume. Now you're ready!

c. _____

I will never forget the first day at my new job. I was very nervous because I wanted to make a good impression. I looked around for someone friendly. I saw a young woman at the front of the room who wasn't talking to anybody, so I decided to make friends with her. Even though I was shy about talking to her, I went up to her and said, "Don't be nervous. I'll be your friend. Do you want to work with me?" She looked a little surprised and said, "Actually, I'm the new manager."

d. _____

Internships are very popular. They can be interesting. But they often don't pay.

e. _____

Sports instructor is a good part-time job. You can enjoy your favorite activity and earn money at the same time. Some other jobs pay better. You can also volunteer as an instructor. I had a difficult time learning to swim, because my instructor wasn't very good. My tennis instructor was much better. If you get a lot of experience as a sports instructor, you can get a job at a gym or as a coach in the future.

f. _____

12 Read this paragraph about a student's first job. What is the topic?

- a. Working in a laboratory
- b. Getting my first job
- c. What my first job taught me

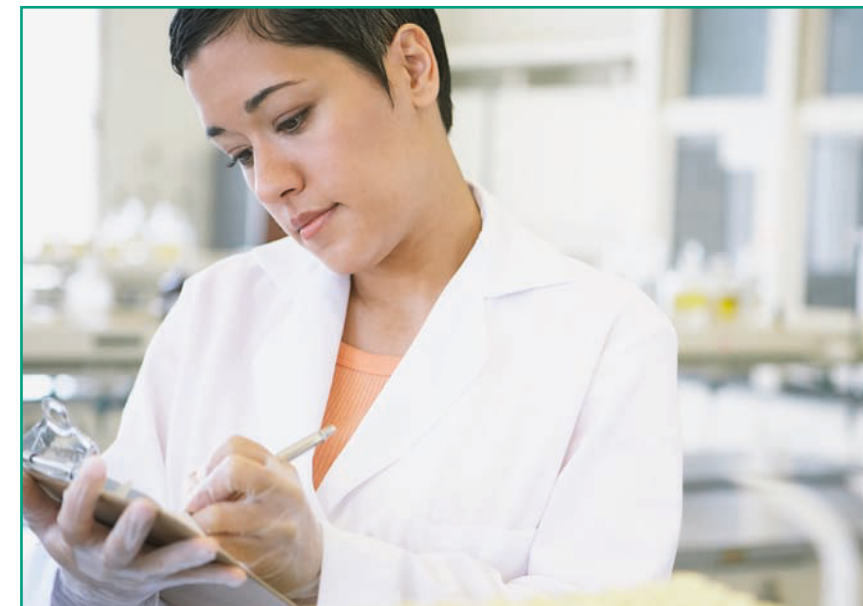
Learning Responsibility

¹ My first job was as a sales clerk in a small clothing store. ² It wasn't a difficult job, and it wasn't really a very interesting job. ³ My best friend had a more exciting job. ⁴ Every weekend I had to open the store at 10:00 a.m. ⁵ I couldn't be late. ⁶ Now on weekends I like to sleep late. ⁷ I helped customers find clothes, and I kept the store neat and clean. ⁸ My parents' house was very clean, too. ⁹ I used the cash register and handled credit cards, so I had to be very careful. ¹⁰ These things all taught me responsibility. ¹¹ Now I work in a research laboratory. ¹² I don't work with clothing anymore, but I still use that important skill I learned in my first job.

13 Cross out the sentences that are not connected to the topic.

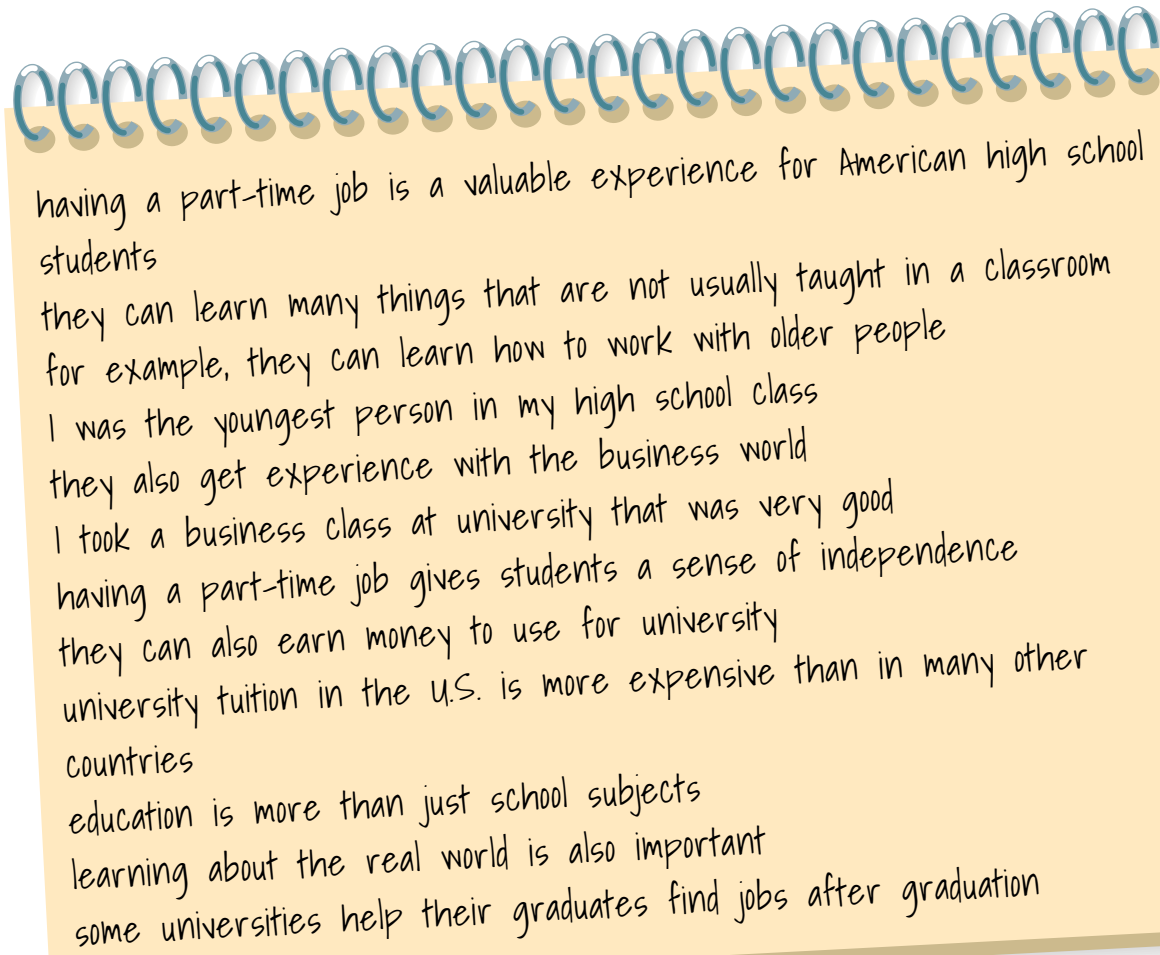
14 Which additional sentences could be connected to the paragraph? Write C (connected) or U (unconnected).

- a. _____ I answered the phone and opened the mail.
- b. _____ On weekdays I did my homework for school.
- c. _____ I once worked delivering pizza, too.
- d. _____ I learned how to choose and order new clothing.
- e. _____ Dressing neatly and professionally was an important part of the job.
- f. _____ A lab assistant is a good job for me.
- g. _____ In the future, I would like to take some business trips.



Put it together

- A** Look at these sentences for a paragraph about having a part-time job in high school. Cross out the ones that are not connected. On a separate sheet of paper, write a paragraph using the connected sentences. They are already in the right order but are not yet correctly punctuated.



having a part-time job is a valuable experience for American high school students
they can learn many things that are not usually taught in a classroom
for example, they can learn how to work with older people
I was the youngest person in my high school class
they also get experience with the business world
I took a business class at university that was very good
having a part-time job gives students a sense of independence
they can also earn money to use for university
university tuition in the U.S. is more expensive than in many other countries
education is more than just school subjects
learning about the real world is also important
some universities help their graduates find jobs after graduation

- B** Check your writing.

Did you ...

- include a heading on your paper?
- format the paragraph properly (see page 2)?
- start and end each sentence correctly?
- give the paragraph a title?

- C** Hand in your paragraph to your teacher.