



What is a Paragraph? ¹

Level: Basic (A-Level)

Practice 1. Incoherent Sentence in Paragraphs

Instructions. Based on [this lesson](#), read the paragraphs below and do the following:

1. Identify the main idea sentence (the sentence that has the topic and the controlling idea) and
2. Identify the “bad sentence,” that is, the sentence that does not belong in the paragraph.

When you are done, see “Answer Key” to check your answers.

Paragraph 1

¹ Charles is not doing well in the course for several reasons. ² He never arrives on time, and he often leaves before class is over. ³ He does not prepare himself for class, so he cannot participate in discussions. ⁴ He never asks any questions in class. ⁵ The work he does in class is always very good.

Main idea sentence: _____

Bad sentence: _____

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Paragraph 2

¹ The vitamins and minerals that you get from your food can prevent many common health problems. ² Vitamin A in green vegetables protects your skin and helps your appetite. ³ Meat and fish are a source of zinc, which also helps your skin and nails. ⁴ Fish can be very expensive, but vegetables are inexpensive and easy to find everywhere. ⁵ Vitamin C, which you can get from oranges, lemons, and tomatoes, is good for your heart and bones. ⁶ Vitamin C also protects you from cancer and other serious diseases.

Main idea sentence: _____

Bad sentence: _____

Paragraph 3

¹We spend much of our time online; for that reason, we see hundreds of ads everyday. ²Online ads are everywhere. ³We see them when we read the news online. ⁴We see ads when we are chatting with friends on social media. ⁵Some online ads can be entertaining. ⁶We even see ads when we are already shopping online.

Main idea sentence: _____

Bad sentence: _____

Paragraph 4

¹ An invasive species is any animal or plant that is not native to an area or region. ² Invasive species can cause great economic and environmental damage to the new area. ³ For example, Zebra mussels arrived in North America from Asia stuck to the bottom of ships and



harmed native species. ⁴ European green crabs eat huge amounts of native shellfish and threaten commercial fishing in California. ⁵ The American government is working to educate people about the dangers of bringing animals to the country illegally. ⁶ Coypu are large rodents from South America that are causing much damage to agriculture in Ireland and Japan.

Main idea sentence: _____

Bad sentence: _____

Paragraph 5

¹ Multitasking is defined as doing more than one thing at the same time. ² Many people believe that they can multitask, but research shows that multitasking is impossible. ³ The brain can only focus on one task at a time, so the idea of multitasking does not make much sense.

⁴ Companies want to hire people who can multitask because they believe people who can multitask are more productive. ⁵ When people think they are multitasking, in fact they are simply moving their attention between each task.

Main idea sentence: _____

Bad sentence: _____

Answer Key

Paragraph 1

Main idea sentence: [Sentence 1](#) tells us the topic is Charles. The controlling idea is that he is not doing well in the course for several reasons, so the paragraph should present the reasons.

Bad sentence: [Sentence 5](#) is not a reason Charles is not doing well. On the contrary, it is a good thing Charles is doing. This sentence does not belong in the paragraph.



Paragraph 2

Main idea sentence: Sentence 1 tells us that the topic is “vitamins and minerals that you get from your food.” The controlling idea is that they can prevent many common health problems.

Bad sentence: Sentence 4. The price of fish and vegetables is not about how vitamins and minerals prevent health problems. It does not belong in the paragraph.

Paragraph 3

Main idea sentence: Sentence 2. Sentence 1 is just an introduction to the topic, online ads. The controlling idea in Sentence 2 is that online ads are everywhere, so the paragraph should explain or give examples of that.

Bad sentence: Sentence 6. Online ads can be entertaining, but they do not support the idea that they are everywhere.

Paragraph 4

Main idea: Sentence 2. Sentence 2 tells us that the paragraph is about the economic and environmental damage that invasive species cause to a new area.

Bad sentence: Sentence 5 does not belong in this paragraph because it is not about the economic and environmental damage that invasive species cause. (*You could write a separate paragraph just for the idea that the government is educating people about invasive species.*)

Paragraph 5

Main idea: Sentence 2. Sentence 1 introduces the topic, multitasking, by defining it. Sentence 2 then gives us the controlling idea that multitasking is impossible. All other sentences in the paragraph should explain that.

Bad sentence: Sentence 4 is about multitasking, but it does not say anything about why or how multitasking is impossible. It should not be in this paragraph.

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