

Paragraph Practice –University Life

Goals for this Unit:

- express ideas using complete sentences
- organize topics into categories (pp. 1- 2)
- learn how to organize sentences into paragraphs (p. 3)
- write definitions (pp. 5 -7)
- practice revising weak paragraphs (pp. 8 -11)
- write an informal letter (p. 12)

Part I. Idea Generating – University Life



Exercise 1 (pair work) – Make a list of activities and events in the life of a university student. Your list should have 20 to 30 items.

Example: homework
eating lunch with friends (part of a student's social life)
internship
playing soccer

Exercise 2 (pair work) – Use the chart below and separate the items on the list into topics. Write the topic name at the top of the column.

Example: Social Life

Social Life			
1) eating lunch with friends	1)	1)	1)
2)	2)	2)	2)
3)	3)	3)	3)
4)	4)	4)	4)
5)	5)	5)	5)
6)	6)	6)	6)

Exercise 3 – Compare your list with other students' lists.

For additional practice repeat exercises 1 and 2 using other general topics such as, summer vacation activities, items in a house, food, places to go in Tokyo.

Part II. Analyzing a paragraph

Reading 1—Read the following paragraph and answer the questions.

1University students should join a social group or club to **enhance** their experience during the years of **undergraduate** study. 2University life should be more than just academics, study and grades for a student. 3Although learning is **essential** preparation for a career, university life should also involve growing as a person and developing social **networks**. 4Students often have a **rigorous** schedule of classes and countless assignments to complete outside of class time. 5This can cause stress and pressure. 6Therefore, students need a healthy outlet to relieve the stress and recharge their *mental batteries*. 7Some students join a club such as a drama club, cooking club or art club to fill their leisure time with **pleasurable** activities. 8Joining a club is one way students can meet new friends and join in activities that will add to their university experience. 9Other students may choose to take part in sporting events such as cycling, hiking, playing soccer or playing badminton as a diversion from the academic pressures of university life. 10These **extra-curricular** activities can provide a balance to create a happy and memorable university experience for students.

Exercise 1 – Questions

- 1) What is the main idea of this paragraph? Which sentence states the main idea?

- 2) What is the purpose of sentences 7 and 9?

- 3) Which sentence contrasts aspects of university life?

- 4) What is the purpose of sentence 10?

- 5) What does the term “mental batteries” mean?

Part III. Writing Word Definitions

- 1) State the word
- 2) State the part of speech
- 3) Provide clear and basic information
- 4) Provide facts or examples

Example:

Cocker Spaniel (noun) = A Cocker spaniel is a medium-size dog with curly black, brown or light brown fur. Cocker Spaniels have long furry ears and big eyes. Although Cocker Spaniels are often glamorous show dogs, they also make excellent family pets.



What is a paragraph?

A paragraph....

- is group of sentences on the same topic.
- has a strong topic sentence that clearly states the main idea.
- has adequate supporting sentences that explain the main idea.
- can provide information.
- can explain a concept.
- can voice an opinion.

Note: In academic writing a paragraph usually has 6 – 12 sentences. However, the number of sentences can vary depending on the writing style. For example, newspaper articles often have paragraphs that are 1 – 5 sentences and some novels or short stories may have very long paragraphs.

Exercise 1 –Write a definition for a paragraph.

Exercise 2 – Write definitions for the bold words in Reading 1. Try to use each word in a sentence

enhance

undergraduate

essential

networks

rigorous

pleasurable

extra-curricular

Exercise 3 – Compare your definitions with your partner’s definitions.

Part IV. Organizing Ideas for a Paragraph

Exercise 1 – Which of the following paragraphs are strong? Which are weak? Why? List all the reasons.

1)

My first day at my university was scary. I didn't know anybody. But I knew when I would finish in four years I could get a job. My parents wanted me to do that. After my first day I joined the drama club. It was there that I met many friends. The drama club had many great activities and I learned a lot about communication with other people. I also made some friends in my English class. However, joining the drama club helped me have a wonderful time my freshman year at school.

2)

Going to Shimoda was the best summer vacation of my life because I met many new friends and had some very interesting experiences. On the first day in Shimoda, my friends and I went deep-sea fishing with some local fishermen. We left at 5:30 am in the morning to get an early start. It was a long but exciting day since we caught some large fish. That evening the fishermen invited us for a beach barbeque and we grilled the fish we had caught. We met some students from Osaka at the barbeque and immediately became friends with them. In the following days, we camped on the beach, went swimming, tried jet skiing, and ate delicious food with our new friends. It was difficult to come home after such a wonderful time.

3)

There are many factors a high school student should consider before applying to a university. First, a prospective student should research the types of courses a university offers. In addition to the curriculum, it is important to find out if the university has a high rank for the student's major. For example, one university may have a great reputation for producing excellent engineers, but the same university may have a low rank for their fashion design department. In addition to academics, a high school student has to consider tuition costs and location of a school. It is important to apply for schools that are affordable for the student's family and in a desirable location. Finally, a student should consider whether or not a university offers ample leisure activities such as clubs and sporting events. After careful consideration of these factors a high school student should be able to make an informed choice about applying to universities.

4)

It is difficult to study hard if a student has a part-time job. Many students always worry about money because there are many expenses while attending university. Extra-curricular activities are important because it is through participation in clubs and sports that students form life-long friendships and social networks. After graduation most students will enter the work force and work most of their lives so the university years should be devoted to study and personal growth. University students should not have part-time jobs because a job can infringe on their academic performance and leisure time. And if a student has a part-time job, they may get lower grades because they won't have enough time and energy to devote to their academic work. In addition, many university students take part in extra-curricular activities.

5)

A university student can make extra money from a part-time job that will help pay for some of the expenses associated with university life. A lack of money can cause unnecessary stress for a student and adversely affect the student's academic performance. A part-time job is a great opportunity to make new friends. There are many advantages to having a part-time job for a university student. A part-time job can provide valuable training and experience that will help a student enter the workforce after graduation. Interacting with coworkers helps a part-time employee develop workplace social skills.

Exercise 2 – Rewrite the weak paragraphs organizing the ideas. Make sure each revision has a strong topic sentence and ample support.

Part V. Writing a Letter- An example

Hí Jennífer,

How have you been? I hope everything is going well at your new school. Are you making any new friends?

As you might remember, I decided to go to Spain to study Spanish. Now I am in Barcelona and I enrolled in a language school here. The first week has been difficult because I need to study a lot. However, I have also made many new international friends. There are students here from France, Italy, Portugal and England. I am the only Canadian, but I don't mind because everyone is very friendly. In fact, yesterday we had a dinner party and then went dancing. Some of our Spanish instructors came, too.

Carmelita, my teacher, showed us how to dance the Flamenco. The Flamenco is a traditional Spanish dance with a lot of hand clapping and foot stomping. It is usually performed as a solo so I can practice it when I am alone. Flamenco dancers also wear brightly colored dresses when they perform. Maybe when I come back to Canada, I can show you how to do the Flamenco.

Well, I have to go because I have a lot of homework tonight. We have a Spanish grammar test tomorrow, too. Please say hi to your parents and your brother for me. I miss you a lot so please send me a letter or an email soon.

Take care,
María

The Greeting

The Letter Body



Closing Paragraph

**Closing with
Signature**

For additional information of the parts of a personal letter go to:

<http://englishplus.com/grammar/00000143.htm>

Writing Assignment 1 – Write a personal letter to a friend or relative. Describe your first few weeks of university life. Try to include a definition in the letter. Type the letter. Use 12 point, Times New Roman font. Double space when you type.