

Literacy Skills Collaborative – Guide to Writing Paragraphs

Tamalpais High School ninth graders should be guided toward the following standards for writing paragraphs:

Idea:

- ❑ A paragraph's topic sentence will:
 - state the main topic of the paragraph.
 - share a specific impression of that topic.
 - reference the concrete details that illustrate the topic and the impression.
 - be sufficiently complex to warrant a paragraph of development.
- ❑ The paragraph as a whole:
 - responds to the writing prompt.
 - is written in a writing mode appropriate to the assignment.
 - is unified and cohesive.

Development:

The body of the paragraph will:

- ❑ thoroughly develop the topic sentence, through examples, concrete details, direct quotes, elaboration, explanation, and/or argumentation, as appropriate to the writing prompt and writing mode.
- ❑ be approximately 200 words in length.
- ❑ define key terms and offer background information necessary to understand examples, quotes, and details used to develop topic sentence (if applicable).
- ❑ attribute and cite quotes using the proper format (if applicable).

Style and Conventions (see attached “Appendix A: Use of Effective Sentence Style”)

The writing will:

- ❑ use varied sentence structure.
- ❑ avoid using the passive voice.
- ❑ avoid using qualifiers.
- ❑ use strong, colorful words.
- ❑ avoid flowery language.
- ❑ avoid using fragments.
- ❑ avoid rambling / run-on sentences.
- ❑ use commas appropriately.
- ❑ avoid dangling modifiers.
- ❑ avoid deadwood.
- ❑ avoid clichés / trite expressions.
- ❑ show best efforts to proofread and avoid errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation.

Appendix A: Use of Effective Sentence Style
(based on guidelines in the 2001 and 1995 editions of Writer's Inc.)

(© 2001) Page # 132	(© 1995) Rule # 061	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Varied sentence structure (Avoiding Primer Style) WRONG: <i>Lightening struck Joe. Joe was hurt.</i> CORRECT: <i>When lightening struck Joe, he was hurt.</i>
508	062	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active voice (Avoiding Passive Voice) WRONG: <i>Joe was struck by lightening.</i> CORRECT: <i>The lightening struck Joe.</i>
132	063	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualifiers (Insecurity) WRONG: <i>To be perfectly honest, I was scared when Joe was struck by lightening.</i> CORRECT: <i>I was scared when lightening struck Joe.</i>
130-131	066-071	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong, colorful words WRONG: <i>The lightening struck Joe.</i> CORRECT: <i>The forked lightening singed Joe's blonde curly locks of hair.</i>
87	091	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 091 Straightforward language (Flowery Language) WRONG: <i>The immensely powerful and ominous afternoon storm furiously pounded the poor, curly blonde haired boy Joe with multiple of bolts of 10,000 watts lightening on his cranial region.</i> CORRECT: <i>The powerful lightening repeatedly struck Joe in the head.</i>
83-84	071 081 082	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete sentences (Avoiding fragment / rambling / run-on sentences) WRONG: <i>When the lightening struck him. OR The lightening struck Joe and it was scary and Joe was hurt and he came to school bald the next day.</i> CORRECT: <i>When the lightening struck Joe, he was scared, hurt, and bald.</i>
457-461	080 (also p. 579-594)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commas
86	088	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dangling modifiers WRONG: <i>Trying desperately to get away from the storm, the lightening struck Joe.</i> CORRECT: <i>Trying desperately to get away from the storm, Joe was struck by the lightening.</i>
87	090	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deadwood WRONG: <i>Joe was outside in the afternoon when a storm with lightening in it struck him.</i> CORRECT: <i>Joe was outside when the lightening storm hit.</i>
88	092 096	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clichés / trite expressions WRONG: <i>In a nutshell, the lightening hit Joe like a ton of bricks while it was raining cats and dogs. The bottom line is that Joe's life was short and sweet.</i> CORRECT: <i>The lightening struck Joe like a Volkswagen wielded by the Jolly Green Giant.</i>

