

Lesson Plan: Crafting Clear Paragraphs - Topic Sentences and Supporting Details

This lesson plan outlines a 30-minute session for Intermediate students focusing on the Writing language area. The primary goal is to teach students how to construct well-structured paragraphs by identifying and utilizing topic sentences and supporting details.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the 30-minute lesson, intermediate students will be able to:

- Identify the components of a well-structured paragraph, specifically topic sentences and supporting details.
- Write clear topic sentences for given paragraph themes.
- Distinguish between relevant and irrelevant supporting details for a given topic sentence.
- Construct a simple paragraph using a topic sentence and 2-3 supporting details.

Materials

- Whiteboard or projector
- Markers or pens
- Handout 1: "Paragraph Parts" (containing examples of well-structured and poorly structured paragraphs)
- Handout 2: "Topic Sentence Practice" (containing sentences/phrases for creating topic sentences)
- Handout 3: "Supporting Details Match" (containing topic sentences with a mix of relevant and irrelevant details)
- Small slips of paper or index cards (for exit tickets)

Procedure

3.1. Warm-up (5 minutes)

- Objective: To activate prior knowledge about writing and introduce the concept of a "main idea."
- Teacher Activity: The teacher will engage students by asking how they identify the main idea of a text, likening it to a "main idea" sentence or a "newspaper headline" for a section.
- Activity: A quick game where the teacher presents a few sentences (e.g., "The new cafe on Elm Street serves delicious coffee. They also have a variety of pastries, and the atmosphere is very cozy."), and students orally identify the main idea (e.g., "The new cafe is a great place to visit.").
- Pedagogical Support (Intermediate):
- Modeling: Clear examples and expected output will be provided.
- Scaffolding: Simple sentences will be used, with guiding questions like "What is this group of sentences mostly talking about?" to help students form a main idea sentence.
- Vocabulary Focus: Terms like "main idea," "topic," and "summary" will be briefly introduced or reviewed.

- Interaction: Choral response or quick pair-share will be encouraged before eliciting individual answers to build confidence.
- Resource Idea: Mentions the possibility of using "Would You Rather...?" questions or quick journaling prompts from ESL writing warm-up resources for additional quick warm-up ideas.
- Transition: The teacher will introduce the term "topic sentence" as the "main idea" sentence in writing.

3.2. Introduction of Topic Sentences and Supporting Details (10 minutes)

- Objective: To define and explain the function of topic sentences and supporting details in a paragraph.
- Teacher Explanation:
 - A topic sentence is defined as the main door to a paragraph, telling the reader what the entire paragraph will be about, usually appearing at the beginning.
 - Supporting details are described as the furniture and decorations inside the house, providing more information, examples, explanations, or evidence to support the topic sentence.
 - Activity: Analysis of Handout 1, which contains 2-3 short, clear paragraphs. Students will individually or in pairs underline the topic sentence and circle the supporting details. An example paragraph provided is: "My city is an exciting place to live. There are many cultural festivals throughout the year, offering diverse music and food. Additionally, the city has numerous parks and green spaces, perfect for outdoor activities. Finally, the public transportation system is efficient and connects all major areas."
- Pedagogical Support (Intermediate):
 - Visual Cues: Different colored markers/pens will be used on the whiteboard to differentiate topic sentences and supporting details.
 - Think-Aloud: The teacher will model their thought process for identifying these elements.
 - Guided Practice: The first example will be worked through together, followed by students attempting the next with a partner.
 - Questioning: Guiding questions will be used, such as "What is the most important idea in this paragraph?" and "Which sentences give more information about that main idea?"
 - Key Vocabulary: Reinforcement of "topic sentence," "main idea," "supporting details," "evidence," "example," and "explanation."
 - Resource Idea: Mentions using resources for matching topic sentences to paragraphs or distinguishing between topic and supporting sentences.
 - Transition: The teacher will signal the move to practicing the creation of topic sentences.

3.3. Guided Practice: Crafting Topic Sentences and Selecting Supporting Details (7 minutes)

- Objective: Students will practice writing topic sentences and identifying relevant supporting details.
- Activity 1: Topic Sentence Creation (3 minutes)
- Handout 2: Students will be given general topics (e.g., "The benefits of learning a new language," "My favorite type of food," "Ways to stay healthy") and tasked with writing a clear and concise topic sentence for each.
- Pedagogical Support (Intermediate):
 - Sentence Starters: Optional sentence starters will be provided for struggling students.

- Peer Feedback: Students will share their sentences with a partner for constructive feedback on clarity and focus.
- Teacher Check-in: The teacher will circulate to provide immediate feedback and support.
- Activity 2: Supporting Details Selection (4 minutes)
- Handout 3: Students will be presented with a topic sentence (e.g., "Exercising regularly is crucial for maintaining good health.") and a list of sentences, some relevant and some irrelevant. They will need to choose the most relevant supporting details. An example list includes: "It helps strengthen your heart and lungs," "Many people enjoy watching sports on TV," "Regular physical activity can reduce stress," "Eating a balanced diet is also important for health," and "It contributes to better sleep patterns."
- Pedagogical Support (Intermediate):
 - Justification: Students will be asked to explain why they chose or rejected certain details, promoting critical thinking and reinforcing relevance.
 - Vocabulary: Reinforcement of "relevant" and "irrelevant."
 - Think-Pair-Share: Pairs will discuss before sharing with the whole class.
 - Resource Idea: Mentions using "Irrelevant Sentence Identification" activities to enhance understanding of paragraph unity and coherence.
 - Transition: The teacher will indicate the move to independent paragraph construction.

3.4. Independent Practice: Paragraph Construction (5 minutes)

- Objective: Students will independently construct a short, unified paragraph with a clear topic sentence and supporting details.
- Activity: Students will choose one of the topics from Handout 2 (or a simple topic of their own) and write a short paragraph (3-5 sentences) including a clear topic sentence and 2-3 supporting details.
- Pedagogical Support (Intermediate):
 - Mini-Whiteboards/Scratch Paper: Students can draft on these to encourage quick revisions.
 - Focus on Structure: Emphasis will be placed on practicing paragraph structure rather than perfect grammar or vocabulary.
 - Teacher Guidance: The teacher will circulate and ask questions to guide students, such as "What is the main idea of your paragraph?"
 - Time Management: Students will be reminded of the time limit.
 - Resource Idea: Suggests using writing frames or graphic organizers like the four-square method for organizing thoughts.

3.5. Wrap-up and Review (3 minutes)

- Objective: To summarize key learning points and check for understanding.
- Teacher Activity: The teacher will ask students to recall the two main parts of a paragraph discussed (topic sentence and supporting details) and their importance.
- Activity: Exit Ticket: Students will write down one thing they learned and optionally one question they still have on a small slip of paper.
- Pedagogical Support (Intermediate):

- Quick Check: This allows for quick assessment of individual understanding.
- Anonymity: Students will be reassured that it's for learning, not a test.

Assessment

- Informal Observation: Monitoring student participation during warm-up and guided practice, noting their ability to identify main ideas and contribute relevant examples.
- Handout 1 & 3 Check: Reviewing student answers on Handout 1 (identifying topic sentences/supporting details) and Handout 3 (selecting supporting details) for accuracy.
- Independent Paragraph: Evaluating the student's independent paragraph for a clear topic sentence, at least two relevant supporting details, and basic paragraph unity.
- Exit Ticket Analysis: Reviewing exit tickets to gauge overall class understanding and identify common misconceptions or questions.

Differentiation

For Beginning/Lower-Intermediate Students:

- Provide topic sentences for their independent paragraph writing.
- Offer more sentence starters and fixed phrases for supporting details.
- Pair them with stronger students for collaborative tasks.
- Use simpler example paragraphs in Handout 1 and 3.

For Advanced/Higher-Intermediate Students:

- Challenge them to write paragraphs with concluding sentences.
- Encourage the use of more complex sentence structures or varied vocabulary.
- Ask them to identify implied main ideas in more complex texts.
- Have them generate more supporting details (4-5) for a given topic sentence.

Extension Activities

- Paragraph Expansion: Brainstorm additional supporting details or a concluding sentence for a well-written student paragraph.
- "What Doesn't Belong?" Challenge: Students identify and remove an irrelevant sentence from a paragraph. (Links to salimrazi.com)
- Picture Prompt Paragraphs: Students write descriptive paragraphs about an image, focusing on a clear topic sentence and relevant details. (Links to eslstarter.com)
- Paragraph Chain Story: Students collaboratively build a paragraph by taking turns adding one supporting detail sentence each.

The filename for the downloaded webpage will be derived from the lesson's name ("Crafting Clear Paragraphs"), difficulty ("Intermediate"), and length ("30 minutes").