**UNIT 2**

**PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE (1)**

A paragraph is a group of related sentences that develop an idea. In nearly every paragraph, there is one idea that is more important than all the others are. This idea is called *topic sentence* of the paragraph and is usually found at the beginning of the paragraph. The *topic sentence* consists of *topic* (what is all about) and *comment* (what is it about the topic). Example:

*I love you because you are responsible.*

The words in red is the topic that we want to talk about whereas the words in green is the comment that limits the topic to be talked about. Our discussion in this term is going to be what kinds of responsibility that makes *I* fall in love to *you*.

Textbook chapters, articles, paragraphs, sentences, or passages all have topics and main ideas. The ***topic*** is the broad, general theme or message. It is what some call the subject. The ***main idea*** is the "key concept" being expressed. ***Details***, major and minor, support the main idea by telling how, what, when, where, why, how much, or how many. Locating the topic, main idea, and supporting details helps you understand the point(s) the writer is attempting to express. Identifying the relationship between these will increase your comprehension.

A writer will state his/her main idea explicitly somewhere in the paragraph. That main idea may be stated at the beginning of the paragraph, in the middle, or at the end. The sentence in which the main idea is stated is the ***topic sentence*** of that paragraph.

The topic sentence announces the general theme ( or portion of the theme) to be dealt with in the paragraph. Although the topic sentence may appear anywhere in the paragraph, it is usually first - and for a very good reason. This sentence provides the focus for the writer while writing and for the reader while reading. When you find the topic sentence, be sure to underline it so that it will stand out not only now, but also later when you review.

The bulk of an ***expository paragraph*** is made up of supporting sentences (major and minor details), which help to explain or prove the main idea. These sentences present facts, reasons, examples, definitions, comparison, contrasts, and other pertinent details. They are most important because they sell the main idea.

The last sentence of a paragraph is likely to be a concluding sentence. It is used to sum up a discussion, to emphasize a point, or to restate all or part of the topic sentence so as to bring the paragraph to a close. The last sentence may also be a transitional sentence leading to the next paragraph.

Of course, the paragraphs you'll be reading will be part of some longer piece of writing - a textbook chapter, a section of a chapter, or a newspaper or magazine article. Besides expository paragraphs, in which new information is presented and discussed, these longer writings contain three types of paragraphs: ***introductory, transitional***, and ***summarizing***.

***Introductory*** paragraphs tell you, in advance, such things as (1) the main ideas of the chapter or section; (2) the extent or limits of the coverage; (3) how the topic is developed; and (4) the writer's attitude toward the topic. ***Transitional*** paragraphs are usually short; their sole function is to tie together what you have read so far and what is to come - to set the stage for succeeding ideas of the chapter or section. ***Summarizing*** paragraphs are used to restate briefly the main ideas of the chapter or section. The writer may also draw some conclusion from these ideas, or speculate on some conclusion based on the evidence he/she has presented.

All three types should ***alert*** you: the introductory paragraph of things to come; the transitional paragraph of a new topic; and the summarizing paragraph of main ideas that you should have gotten.

**Sample paragraph 1**

All computers, whether large or small, have the same basic capability. They have circuits for performing arithmetic operations. They all have a way of communicating with the person(s) using them. They also have circuits for making decision.

In sample paragraph 1, the first sentence, ‘*All computers, whether large or small, have the same basic capability*.’ expresses the *topic sentence* of the paragraph.

In some of your reading, finding topic sentence may serve your needs but in much of your studying, you need to grasp details. It is sometimes more difficult to grasp and understand details than topic sentence. You will find it helpful if you think of details as growing out of the topic sentence. In sample paragraph, there are three details, called supporting sentences, growing out of the topic sentence;

1. They have circuits for performing arithmetic operations.
2. They all have a way of communicating with the person(s) using them.
3. They also have circuit for making decision.

**Sample paragraph 2**

My hometown is famous for several amazing natural features.  First, it is noted for the Wheaton River, which is very wide and beautiful. Also, on the other side of the town is Wheaton Hill, which is unusual because it is very steep. The third amazing feature is the Big Old Tree. This tree stands two hundred feet tall and is probably about six hundred years old. These three landmarks are truly amazing and make my hometown a famous place.

In sample paragraph 2, the first sentence is the topic sentence which is developed by second, third, fourth, and fifth sentences. Conclusion is determined by the last sentence.

Short reading 1 taken from *Interaction I: A Reading Skills Book*. Elaine Kirn.

1990.p.18

**Another Sample**

Railways use large computer system to control ticket reservations and to give immediate information on the status of its trains. The computer system is connected by private telephone lines to terminal in major train stations and ticket reservation for customers are made through these. The passenger’s name, type of accommodation, and the train schedule is put into the computer’s memory. On a typical day, a railway’s computer system gets thousands of telephone calls about reservations, space on other railways, and request for arrivals and departures. A big advantage of the railway computer ticket reservation system is its rapidity because a cancelled booking can be sold anywhere in the system just a few seconds later. Railways computer systems are not used for reservations alone. They are used for a variety of other jobs including train schedules, planning, freight and cargo loading, meal planning, personnel availability, accounting, and stock control.

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33. On a typical day, a railway’s computer system gets thousands of telephone calls about reservations, space on other railways, and request for arrivals and departures.

34. A big advantage of the railway computer ticket reservation system is its rapidity because a cancelled booking can be sold anywhere in the system just a few seconds later

35. They are used for a variety of other jobs including train schedules, planning, freight and cargo loading, meal planning, personnel availability, accounting, and stock control.

Main idea

Major details

Minor details

**Task 1** Practice finding the *topic sentence*, *supporting sentences*, and *conclusion* for this short passage.

**The Powerful Influence of Weather**

 Weather has a powerful effect on people. It influences health, intelligence, and feelings.

 In August, it is very hot and wet in the southern part of the United States. Southerners have heart attacks and other kinds of health problems during this month. In the Northeast and the Middle West, it is very hot at some times and very cold at other times. People in these states tend to have heart attacks after the weather changes in February or March.

 The weather can also influence intelligence. For example, in a 1938 study by scientist, the IQ scores of a group of undergraduate college students were very thigh during a hurricane, but after the storm, their scores were 10 percent (%) below average. Hurricanes can increase intelligence. Very hot weather, on the other hand, can lower it. Students in many of the United States often do badly on exams in the hot months of the year (July and August).

 Weather also has a strong influence on people’s feelings. Winter may be a bad time for thin people. They usually feel cold during these months. They might feel depressed during cold weather. In hot summer weather, on the other hand, fat people may feel unhappy. At about 65oF, people become stronger.

 Low air pressure relaxes people. It increases sexual feelings. It also increases forgetfulness. People leave more packages and umbrellas on buses and in stores on low-pressure days. There is a “perfect weather” for work and health. People feel best at a temperature of about 64oF with 65 percent humidity (moisture in the air).

 Are you feeling sick, sad, tired, forgetful, or very intelligent today? The weather may be the cause.

**Exercise:**

*Read the following paragraph and underline the stated main idea. Write down in your own words what you are able to conclude from the information.*

The rules of conduct during an examination are clear. No books, calculators or papers are allowed in the test room. Proctors will not allow anyone with such items to take the test. Anyone caught cheating will be asked to leave the room. His or her test sheet will be taken. The incident will be reported to the proper authority. At the end of the test period, all materials will be returned to the proctor. Failure to abide by these rules will result in a failing grade for this test.

**Main Idea and Supporting Details Practice Exercises**

**Practice 1: A Musical Mouse**

Read the selection, and then answer the questions that follow.

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| *(1)* | There are many different kinds of mice. Some are good swimmers; others like to swing from trees by their tails. And one kind, the white-footed mouse, is not only a good swimmer and tree climber, but it's also quite musical! |
| *(2)* | This minute, furry creature's body is about 8 inches (20 cm) long, with a tail of another 3 inches (7.5 cm). It weighs only about 0.8 ounces (23 g). It's been around North America for a long time; scientists have found 40- million-year-old fossils of the tiny creature's ancestors! |
| *(3)* | Some people call the white-footed mouse the "wood mouse" because it lives in so many wooded areas throughout North America. Other people call the white-footed mouse the "deer mouse." One reason is that its fur is the same colors as a deer's—soft brown on its back; white on its underside. Another reason is that the mice carry deer ticks that spread Lyme disease. |
| *(4)* | The whitefoot makes its nest almost anywhere. It likes a home that is warm and dry, like a hollow tree or empty bird's nest. But most of the time the whitefoot runs along the ground looking for food. It eats seeds, nuts, leaves, bark, and insects. It sleeps by day and looks for food at night—its long whiskers and big ears help it find its way in the dark. |
| *(5)* | Does the whitefoot really make music? In a way, it does because it often makes a humming sound. And it taps its little paws very fast on a dead leaf or hollow log to make a buzzing, drumming sound! Scientists aren't sure why the mouse is a drummer; it just is! |
| *(6)* | So the next time you're in the woods, walk quietly. There might be a white-footed mouse nearby, and you wouldn't want to interrupt a mouse in the middle of its song . . . would you? |

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| **1.** | What is the main idea of this selection? |
| **a.** | Deer are brown and white. |
| **b.** | The white-footed mouse taps its paws in a drumming sound. |
| **c.** | The woods of North America are full of mice. |
| **d.** | Scientists study the habits of mice. |
| **2.** | Which is a supporting detail for that main idea? |
| **a.** | The white-footed mouse is also known as the wood mouse. |
| **b.** | The deer mouse may carry ticks that transmit a disease. |
| **c.** | The mouse taps on a dead leaf or hollow log. |
| **d.** | The white-footed mouse isn't very big. |
| **3.** | Which would make the best substitute title for this selection? |
| **a.** | "How to Build a Better Mousetrap" |
| **b.** | "Concert in the Woods" |
| **c.** | "Caution: Lyme Disease Ahead!" |
| **d.** | "All about Rodents" |
| **4.** | What is the main idea of paragraph 2? |
| **a.** | The white-footed mouse lives in Canada. |
| **b.** | The white-footed mouse is also called the wood or deer mouse. |
| **c.** | The white-footed mouse hums. |
| **d.** | The white-footed mouse is very small. |
| **5.** | Which detail in paragraph 2 is interesting, but not needed to find the main idea of that paragraph? |
| **a.** | Its tail is 3 inches (7.5 cm) long. |
| **b.** | Scientists found 40-million-year-old fossils of its ancestors. |
| **c.** | It weighs 0.8 ounces (23 g). |
| **d.** | Its body is about 8 inches (20 cm) long. |

**Practice 2: Dietary Details**

Read the selection, andthen answer the questions that follow.

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| *(1)* | Everyone needs food as fuel for his or her body. But kids especially need the right fuel to keep their bodies going as they're growing. To help everyone figure out which foods supply the energy needed, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) developed a new Food Guide Pyramid in 2005. Look at the visual. |
| *(2)* | You probably remember the old pyramid, with horizontal layers of blocks like the ancient pyramids. Well, this new pyramid has six, tall, vertical stripes instead. Each stripe represents one source of nutrition. There are horizontal steps on the side of the pyramid, but they signify the need for exercise as well as good food—30 minutes of exercise a day—to create a healthy you! |
| *(3)* | This new pyramid is called MyPyramid, because it's supposed to help meet the needs of each individual. Your food needs are based on your age, if you're a girl or boy, and how active you are. You can go to the USDA website at http://mypyramid.gov to check out how much and which kinds of food you need. |



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| *(4)* | Each stripe on My Pyramid is a different color: |

**Orange:** *grains* The average kid needs 6 ounces a day from this group, which includes breads, cereals, rice, and pasta.

**Green:** *vegetables* The average kid needs about cups a day from this group, which includes dark green veggies, like spinach and broccoli, and bright orange ones, like carrots.

**Red:** *fruits* The average kid needs about 2 cups of fresh, frozen, canned, or dried fruit a day.

**Yellow:** *oils* Kids need about 5 teaspoons of oil a day. Some have no cholesterol or are lower in fat than others. Check food labels for information.

**Blue:** *milk* The average kid needs about 3 cups a day of milk, yogurt, or cheese.

**Purple:** *meat*, *fish*, *beans, and nuts* The average kid needs about 5 ounces a day from this group.

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| *(5)* | These provide a "healthy diet." That's one that has enough of each essential nutrient; a variety from all food groups; energy to maintain a healthy weight; and no excess fat, sugar, or salt. Eating healthy and exercising daily can help reduce the risk of getting diabetes, cancer, or bone problems as you get older. |

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| **6.** | Which is the most likely main idea of this selection? |
| **a.** | People need to exercise at least once a week. |
| **b.** | Beans are a good source of vitamins. |
| **c.** | People need to eat a variety of good foods and exercise for a healthy life. |
| **d.** | Fiber is an important part of a healthy lifestyle. |
| **7.** | Which is NOT a supporting detail for the main idea? |
| **a.** | Always use sunscreen as protection from the sun's harmful rays. |
| **b.** | Pick a variety of things from the vegetable group. |
| **c.** | Get at least a half-hour of exercise every day. |
| **d.** | Don't just pick foods from one food group. |
| **8.** | Why was it suggested that someone go to the USDA website? |
| **a.** | to check the local weather |
| **b.** | to write a letter to Congress |
| **c.** | to exchange recipes for wholesome, healthy foods that taste good |
| **d.** | to find out exactly which foods and how much that individual should eat |
| **9.** | Which would best be another title for the article? |
| **a.** | The Nutrition Needs of Prehistoric Humans |
| **b.** | Food for Thought |
| **c.** | The Eating Habits of Senior Citizens |
| **d.** | Thoughts about Work Routines |
| **10.** | Which is the main idea of the last paragraph? |
| **a.** | It's nice to choose a variety of foods. |
| **b.** | Many older people have heart problems. |
| **c.** | Eating right and exercising now can reduce health risks in the future. |
| **d.** | Getting enough sleep is important to good health. |

**Practice 3: Radio Days**

Read the selection, and then answer the questions that follow.

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| *(1)* | Before there was TV, Americans gathered around their radios daily to listen to the news and more. In the 1930s and 1940s, mystery shows, like *Sam* *Spade* and *The Shadow*, were favorites with young and old alike. Every week people tuned in to hear the top tunes on *Your Hit Parade*. And on Sunday mornings, radio stars read the comics aloud to kids. |
| *(2)* | Did you think soap operas were a TV phenomenon? No way! They started on radio. Do you know why they were called "soap operas"? Most shows were sponsored by soap companies and, because characters had many problems, people said the stories were like operas, most of which don't have happy endings! |
| *(3)* | Because there were no pictures to show what was going on, radio required people to use their imaginations. So, as a sportscaster described the action, people had to imagine "he hits a pop fly high into the infield, the shortstop moves in . . . reaches . . . grabs it . . . throws to second . . . and he's out!" Not only did they picture it, many people cheered as if they were right there in the stadium! |

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| **11.** | Which best states the main idea of the article? |
| **a.** | Soap operas started on TV. |
| **b.** | Before there was TV, people listened to the radio a lot. |
| **c.** | Quite often, operas don't end happily. |
| **d.** | Top tunes were played on the radio. |
| **12.** | The author says radio required people to use their imaginations because |
| **a.** | radio stars read the comics. |
| **b.** | people cheered as if they were at the stadium. |
| **c.** | *The Shadow* was a mystery show. |
| **d.** | there were no pictures to show the action. |
| **13.** | Which could the author best use as another supporting detail? |
| **a.** | Television was not in many American homes until the 1950s. |
| **b.** | Many cars did not have a radio. |
| **c.** | The modern home has two or more TVs. |
| **d.** | Two-way radios were important during the war. |