

# Using paragraphs in writing

## Objective

Use paragraphs to organise ideas around a theme.

## Background knowledge

A paragraph is a section of text organised around a topic. It is separated visually from any previous paragraph by its beginning on a new line, usually indented. The first sentence of the new paragraph very often says what the paragraph is about, for example:

*Jason could never keep his written work tidy or clean. There would be fingerprints on it, mistakes crossed out all over the place and no line was ever straight. Even if he remembered to use a ruler, the ruler would slip and the line would veer off in an unintended direction.*

The paragraph topic is Jason's untidiness – introduced in the first sentence, after which there is more information, with examples.

## Activities

### ● Photocopiable page 113 'Story paragraphs'

Here the children summarise the action/main event of each paragraph in a story. They develop their understanding of how paragraphs can be useful in organising the events of a story. They could also look at how authors of stories they know have split the action into separate paragraphs.

### ● Photocopiable page 114 'Paragraph topics'

In this activity the children read a descriptive passage about a character. Each paragraph here presents information about the character and builds up a picture of him. The children learn how paragraphs can be used for organising text into topics as they identify the topic of each paragraph. Encourage them to underline any key sentence or phrase that tells them what the topic of the paragraph is. They could also highlight the words that link the paragraphs (see Chapter 1).

### ● Photocopiable page 115 'Information paragraphs'

Here the children develop their understanding of how a non-fiction information text can be organised into paragraphs that split it into separate topics. Explain that adding headings will help readers to know what the text is about and to find the information they are looking for.

## Further ideas

● **Headlines:** Children write newspaper-style headlines for paragraphs of text from well-known stories, for example: *Mother and son too poor to buy food, Son sent to market with last cow, Son swaps cow for beans, Mother furious in bean swap row, Huge beanstalk appears in garden*, and so on.

● **My story paragraphs:** Children read through their own stories with a partner and decide how they have used paragraphs (for example, for topics in a description or to separate events). They choose a story to edit, marking any places where text could be split into separate paragraphs.

● **Speed read:** Make two different copies of an information text: one with headings and the other with headings deleted. Split the class in half, matched for reading ability and working in groups of three. Ask them to find specific pieces of information, such as the answers to questions. Once the group finds the information, they hold up a card. Did the group who found it first have the text with headings? Children should find that information is much easier to find with headings.

## Digital content

On the digital component you will find:

- Printable versions of all three photocopiable pages.
- Answers to 'Story paragraphs' and 'Paragraph topics'.

## Using paragraphs in writing

## Paragraph topics

- Read the passage.
- Then complete the table to show what each paragraph is about.

**Mr Crumble**

Mr Crumble was absent-minded. Sometimes he put on odd shoes and didn't notice until someone told him that one was black and the other was brown. His socks never matched because he lost so many – never a pair, but always one from each pair.

His brother once said that there must be a secret place where all Mr Crumble's socks were hiding and that if only he could find it he could make pairs of all his brother's socks. But his sister said that was no use because by then Mr Crumble would have lost all their partners. She said he should always buy the same kind of socks – then whatever socks he put on would always be a matching pair.

While everyone else was worrying about all the things he got wrong, Mr Crumble's mind was taken up with more interesting things: it was full of ideas for inventions. It didn't matter if his socks were odd or his jumper was on back-to-front or he had no milk in the fridge when he was busy inventing.

"Inventors don't have to be absent-minded," said Mr Crumble's brother one day. "It's not a special qualification for the job."

Mr Crumble smiled. He knew that. He wasn't trying to be a typical inventor. It was just that it helped if his mind wasn't cluttered up with socks and shoes and milk and things like that. His mind had plenty of space for inventing.

Paragraph	What the paragraph is about
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

## Using paragraphs in writing

# Information paragraphs

- Work with a partner. Read this text from a geography book and discuss how to organise it into paragraphs.
- Draw a box around each paragraph. In the margin, write a heading for each paragraph.

Paragraph headings	
	<p>China is a very big country. Its area is about 9.6 million square kilometres, making it the world's second-largest country by land area. Russia is the largest. A third of the country is covered with mountains. These include the Himalayas, which also stretch into Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, Myanmar, Nepal and Bhutan. Mount Everest, the tallest mountain in the world, is on the border of China and Nepal. There are several rivers flowing through China. The most important are the Yangtze and the Yellow River. The Yangtze is the third largest river in the world. China's largest city by population is Shanghai but its capital is Beijing. The largest by area is Guangzhou. Shanghai has the world's busiest container port. It is on the coast at the mouth of the Yangtze River. China has a population of more than 1.35 billion people. This is the largest of all the countries in the world.</p>