



Are you ready to write Touchstone 1?

The sample paragraphs below provide examples in the proficient to advanced range. As you read through each paragraph, notice how the author adjusts her writing style based on the audience, purpose, and mode. For each sample paragraph, underline the topic sentence, the concluding sentence, and one supporting sentence.

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Foundations of English Composition

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Descriptive Paragraph

Purpose: To describe my grandmother's quilt.

Intended Audience: People who are interested in quilting or have a valued possession handed down by a relative

On the wall of my bedroom hangs a hand-stitched quilt my grandma made. If I stand closely enough and close my eyes, I can still smell my grandma's house: the aromas a mingling of chicken soup, strong coffee, and mothballs. The pattern of the quilt is a variation of what Grandma called the Bear's Paw. Within a border are individually stitched blocks of fabric made up of squares, diamonds, and triangles to resemble a bear's paw. Twenty-four of these blocks – four across and six down – make for a dramatic statement of

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Comment [1]: Be sure to appropriately label your paragraph as either "descriptive" or "informative" and include the intended audience and purpose above each paragraph.

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Comment [2]: This is the topic sentence for the paragraph. The topic sentence conveys the controlling idea of the paragraph.

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Comment [3]: This is an example of sensory details that the writer has incorporated into this piece of descriptive writing.

color and texture. The colors Grandma chose are a riotous blend of blues, greens, yellows, and reds because the materials she used are all clothes I wore as a child and outgrew.

Grandma was never one to waste anything; she collected my worn and discarded clothing and made neat stacks of the squares, diamonds, and triangles she cut them into. She did this for years with the intent of sewing them into a quilt for me. As I look at the quilt today, I see a piece of the red and yellow flowered shirt I wore every day one summer; I see a square of an old denim dress; and I see a border made of my favorite pair of yellow pants. Inspecting more closely, I marvel at Grandma's tiny, even stitching and think of the many hours she devoted to sewing this quilt for me. The quilt on my bedroom wall represents my grandma's thriftiness, patience, and love.

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Comment [4]: Note how the supporting sentence provides additional detail related to the topic sentence.

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Comment [5]: This is the paragraph's concluding sentence. A concluding sentence should give closure to the paragraph.

Informative Paragraph

Purpose: To inform readers about using household products as natural cleaners.

Intended Audience: People who are concerned with using toxic cleaners and want a more natural approach to household cleaning

Most people have salt, vinegar, and baking soda as staples in their kitchens, but some may not know that these products can also be used as cleansers. Salt, for example, is a natural abrasive and can, along with hot water, keep drains open and fresh smelling. Salt and ice cubes swirled together in the bottom of a glass coffee pot is a diner-tested method of removing coffee stains, and a greasy cast-iron skillet can be cleaned with salt and a rub with a paper towel. Vinegar is a versatile cleansing agent that can be used to clean almost

any surface. Vinegar and warm water can shine up a floor, a wall, or a window. Vinegar and water can also remove ink and pencil marks from walls and disinfect cutting boards. Finally, a box of baking soda can do more than absorb odors in the refrigerator. It can be mixed with a little water to form a paste that will clean the tarnish off silver, or it can be sprinkled on a sponge to clean the inside of a microwave or other kitchen appliance. Rugs and carpets can be freshened by dusting them with baking soda before vacuuming. Many kitchen staples, such as these, have multiple uses around the home.

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Comment [6]: Note that the tone in this piece of informative writing is a bit more formal than in the previous descriptive paragraph.

Reflection Questions

1. What do you think your strengths and weaknesses are in terms of sentence construction and paragraph development? (1-2 sentences)

One of my biggest weaknesses as a writer is avoiding run-on sentences. I often write too fast and end up with many run-on sentences that need to be corrected.

2. Explain how writing for a particular purpose and audience shaped each of your paragraphs. (3-5 sentences)

As I was writing, I was continually considering the audience and purpose of each paragraph. My intended audience shaped my approach to the writing and helped determine how to achieve my intended purpose. The audience and purpose affected my word choices, formality, and sentence structure and set the overall tone of each paragraph.

3. Discuss your feelings about writing in different modes. Is there a particular mode you enjoy writing in more than another? (3-5 sentences)

I found it interesting to try writing two paragraphs in different modes. I found it much easier to write in the descriptive mode over the informative mode. The descriptive mode felt like it had a more casual tone and it felt less formal and more natural for me. I think what I enjoyed most about the descriptive mode was incorporating vivid sensory details into my writing to bring it to life.

4. Explain how different writing modes that you have learned about might be applied to scenarios in your real life. (3-5 sentences)

As a working adult in an office setting, I communicate with a variety of people on a variety of tasks. Using the descriptive mode would likely be useful when describing a new product to a client or even describing instructions on a new process to a co-worker. The informative mode would be useful when I want to write a letter to my friend in Florida informing her about what to expect and how to pack for her upcoming visit to Minnesota. The argumentative mode would be useful if I am trying to dispute or take a stance in an office debate or even if I am debating with my brother through email what restaurant we should take Mom to for her birthday. Lastly, the narrative mode would be useful if I am emailing friends or family members to update them about something in my life, such as how my vacation in the Caribbean went.