

Opinion Paragraphs

GOAL: To learn how to write an opinion paragraph

LANGUAGE FOCUS: Word forms

What do you think of this book? What is your opinion of the weather in your area? Everyone has an opinion about something.

WHAT IS AN OPINION PARAGRAPH?

An opinion paragraph expresses the writer's opinion. A good writer will include not only opinions, but also facts to support his or her opinions. For example, if a writer says "Smoking should not be allowed anywhere," the writer must give reasons for this opinion. One reason could be a fact, such as "Thirty thousand people died in the United States and Canada last year because of lung cancer—a known result of smoking." This fact supports the writer's opinion.

An opinion paragraph

- gives the writer's opinions about a topic
- interprets or explains facts
- is often about a controversial issue
- makes the reader think
- considers both sides of an argument

WORKING WITH OPINIONS

It helps to know how you feel about a topic when you read an opinion paragraph. Sometimes the writer may try to persuade you to agree with her or him.

Activity I

Example Opinion Paragraphs

Read and study these example paragraphs. Answer the questions.

Paragraph 64

This paragraph is about assisted suicide, a controversial topic that many people are discussing nowadays.

Before you read, discuss these questions with your classmates.

1. Do you believe that terminally ill people have the right to end their lives?
2. Do you think that there should be laws to stop people from killing themselves if they are in pain? Why or why not?

Now read the paragraph.



Dying with Dignity

EXAMPLE PARAGRAPH

The U.S. government should support the legal use of “medicide,” which happens when people with terminal diseases choose to end their lives rather than continue living. One reason the government should do this is because people should not be forced to continue living if they are in severe pain and cannot live with it. A second reason is that staying in the hospital for a long time often causes a financial burden on the family. Terminally ill people often worry about the hardship that this will cause their families. Finally, people who are dying sometimes lose hope. Even if they are alive, they can often only lie in bed, and for some people, this is not “life.” In the end, while many people believe that medicide is an “unnatural way to die” and should remain illegal, the government should allow sick people the legal right to end their lives if they want.

dignity: pride

severe: serious; intense

terminal diseases: diseases that
will kill the person

burden: something that is difficult
to bear

rather than: instead of

1. What is the topic sentence? _____

2. In your own words, what is “medicide”? (Do not look back at the paragraph.)

3. List three reasons that people choose medicide.

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

4. Part of one sentence does not express the author’s opinion. Write that partial sentence here:

5. What is the author’s opinion about medicide? _____

6. What is your reaction to this paragraph? Do you agree or disagree with the author’s opinion? Why or why not?

Paragraph 65

This paragraph is less serious than Paragraph 64. The subject deals with the question “Which is better, Coke or Pepsi?”

Before you read, discuss these questions with your classmates.

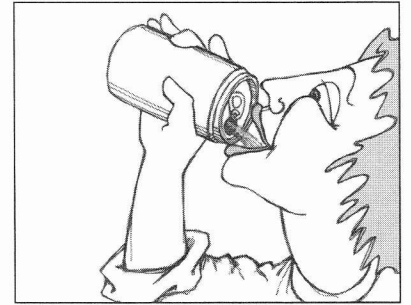
1. Do you like the taste of Coke? Do you like the taste of Pepsi? Do you have a preference?
2. Do you know what the ingredients in Coke and Pepsi are?
3. Coca-Cola and Pepsi are known all over the world. Why do you think these products are so popular?

Read the following paragraph and see how the writer feels about Coke and Pepsi.

Always Coca-Cola

EXAMPLE PARAGRAPH

No matter how much money Pepsi spends on advertising, Coke will always be better in my opinion. Some people say that the two soft drinks are the same, but I think Coke is much better. First of all, it is not as sweet as Pepsi. It has just the right amount of carbonation, or fizz. In addition, the packaging of the product is unique yet simple. The red can is recognizable even from a distance. Coke has also played a rich and interesting part in American history. In the end, even if famous actors or sports stars go on television and try to convince me about the greatness of Pepsi, it will not change my mind. For me, it is "always Coca-Cola."



no matter: it does not matter or make a difference

packaging: the way a product looks on the outside

carbonation: the bubbly gas in a soft drink

1. What is the topic sentence? _____

2. What phrases from the paragraph show the reader that the writer is giving an opinion and not fact?

3. Do you agree with the observations that the writer makes? Why or why not?

4. Can you think of two other topics that could be compared in a similar way?

Paragraph 66

This paragraph deals with a current controversial issue—school uniforms.

Before you read, discuss these questions with your classmates.

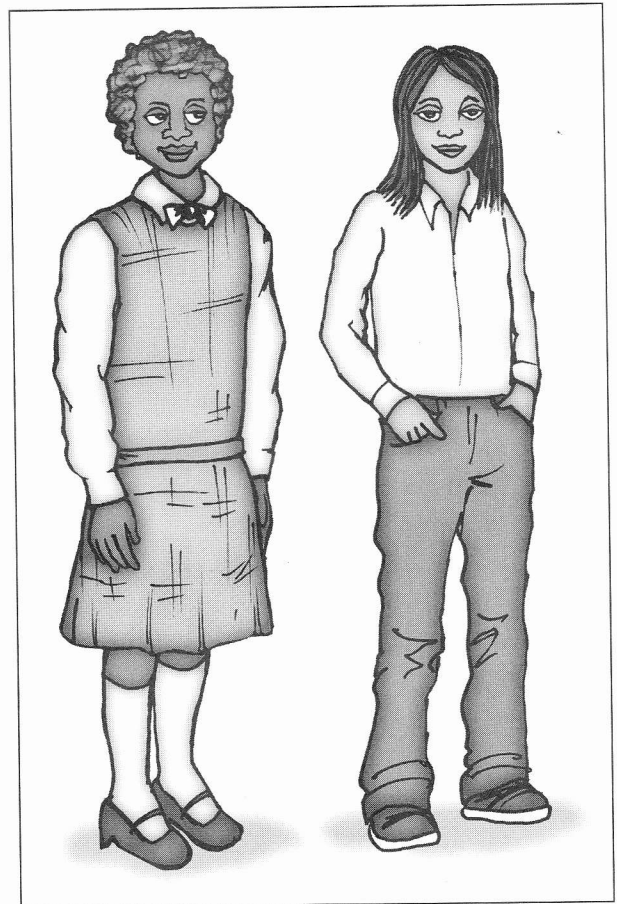
1. Have you ever worn a school uniform?
2. Do you think wearing uniforms is a good idea or a bad idea?
3. What is the best type of uniform for female students? For male students?

Read how the writer feels about this topic.

An A+ for School Uniforms

School uniforms should be mandatory for all students in the United States for a number of reasons. First, they make everyone equal. In this way, the “rich” kids are on the same level as the poor ones. In addition, getting ready for school can be much faster and easier. Many kids waste time choosing what to wear to school, and they are often unhappy with their final choices. Most important, some studies show that school uniforms make students perform better. Many people might say that uniforms take away from personal freedom, but I believe the benefits are stronger than the drawbacks.

EXAMPLE PARAGRAPH



mandatory: obligatory; that must
be done

perform: produce work

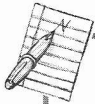
drawbacks: disadvantages

studies: research reports

1. What is the author's opinion about school uniforms?

2. The author gives three reasons to support the opinion. Write them here.

3. The paragraph states that some people do not agree with school uniforms. What is their main reason?

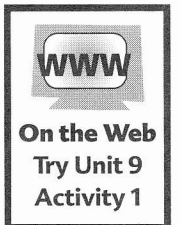


WRITER'S NOTE: Include an Opposing Opinion

In a good opinion paragraph, the writer

- states an opinion about a topic.
- provides supporting sentences with factual information.
- briefly mentions one opposing point of view. This is called the *counterargument*. (This may appear in the concluding sentence.)
- refutes the counterargument in one or two sentences. (This may appear in the concluding sentence.)
- finishes the paragraph with a concluding sentence that restates the topic sentence and/or offers a solution.

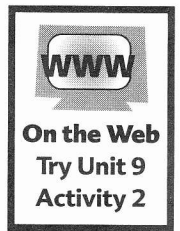
Remember: Most of your supporting sentences will agree with your opinion of the topic. However, it is a good idea to include one opposing point in the paragraph.



Activity 2**Recognizing Good Topic Sentences for Opinion Paragraphs**

Read the following sentences. Which ones are good topic sentences for opinion paragraphs? Put a check (✓) next to those sentences.

1. ____ A hospital volunteer usually has many duties.
2. ____ Soccer is a much more interesting game to play and watch than golf.
3. ____ The largest and best-known city in all of France is Paris.
4. ____ Eating a vegetarian diet is the best way to stay healthy.
5. ____ Euro Disney is the best place for a vacation.
6. ____ The U.S. government uses a system of checks and balances.
7. ____ The Nile River splits into the White Nile and Blue Nile in Sudan.
8. ____ Security alarms are the most effective way to protect homes from burglaries.

**FACTS AND OPINIONS**

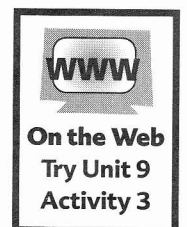
If you choose helpful supporting facts, your opinion paragraph will be stronger. You might even convince readers to agree with you. Remember that the reason for writing an opinion paragraph is to explain your opinion in the most convincing way. You are trying to persuade the reader that the issue is important and that your view or your solution is the best one. Readers will remember good, related supporting examples, so be sure to give time and effort to creating the most convincing examples.

Activity 3**Fact versus Opinion**

Reread Paragraph 64 about medicide. It contains some information that is factual and some that is the writer's opinion. Find two examples of each in the paragraph and write them on the lines below.

Fact

1. _____



2. _____

Opinion

1. _____

2. _____

**Building Better Sentences****Practice 17**

Correct and varied sentence structure is essential to the quality of your sentences and paragraphs. For further practice with the sentences and paragraphs in this part of the unit, go to Practice 17 on page 243 in Appendix 5.

**LANGUAGE FOCUS: Word Forms**

Many English words have different forms, for different parts of speech—noun, verb, adjective, or adverb. In this exercise you will identify word forms. Always check your writing for the correct word forms.

First, study these parts of speech.

| | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| A noun names a person or thing. | <i>growth, agony, illness</i> |
| A verb shows action or being. | <i>desire, equalize</i> |
| An adjective describes or modifies a noun. | <i>financial, unique</i> |
| An adverb modifies a verb, adjective, or other adverb. | <i>sweetly, illegally</i> |

Now complete the chart. Put the word forms in the correct columns. (Some words will not have all four forms.) Use a dictionary if necessary. The first one has been done for you.

| | Noun | Verb | Adjective | Adverb |
|--------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| increasingly | <u>increase</u> | <u>increase</u> | <u>increasing</u> | <u>increasingly</u> |
| increase | | | | |
| increasing | | | | |
| increase | | | | |
| finance | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| financially | | | | |
| finance | | | | |
| financial | | | | |
| believe | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| belief | | | | |
| believable | | | | |
| illegality | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| illegal | | | | |
| illegally | | | | |
| logically | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| logic | | | | |
| logical | | | | |

| | Noun | Verb | Adjective | Adverb |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|------------------|---------------|
| sweetly | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| sweetness | | | | |
| sweet | | | | |
| sweeten | | | | |
| simplicity | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| simply | | | | |
| simple | | | | |
| simplify | | | | |
| equality | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| equal | | | | |
| equalize | | | | |
| equally | | | | |
| benefit | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| beneficial | | | | |
| beneficially | | | | |
| benefit | | | | |
| freedom | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| freely | | | | |
| free | | | | |
| free | | | | |

Activity 4**Correcting Word Forms**

Some of these sentences contain word form errors. Read each sentence. If the sentence is correct, write C on the line. If it contains an error, write X on the line and correct the word form error.

1. ____ Many people did not belief the world was round until after Christopher Columbus's voyages.
2. ____ She parked her car illegally and got a \$30 ticket.
3. ____ Taking multi-vitamins can be benefit to your health.
4. ____ Students in this classroom are allowed to speak freedom.
5. ____ During civil rights demonstrations, protesters fought for equality.
6. ____ Babies often speak using simply words and phrases.
7. ____ My sister is a very sweetly girl.
8. ____ Mathematicians must use their logical to solve difficult problems.
9. ____ Taxpayers do not want the government to increasing taxes.
10. ____ Mary and Bob's financial situation has improved this year.

Activity 5**Sequencing Sentences in a Paragraph**

The following sentences make up a paragraph. Read the sentences. Then number them from 1 to 6 to indicate the correct order. Put an O or an F on the line after the sentences to indicate whether the sentences contain fact (F) or opinion (O).

- a. ____ The damage of these rays may not be seen immediately in children, but adults who spent a lot of time in the sun when they were children have a much higher chance of developing skin cancer than adults who did not spend time in the sun. ____

WWW

On the Web
Try Unit 9
Activity 4

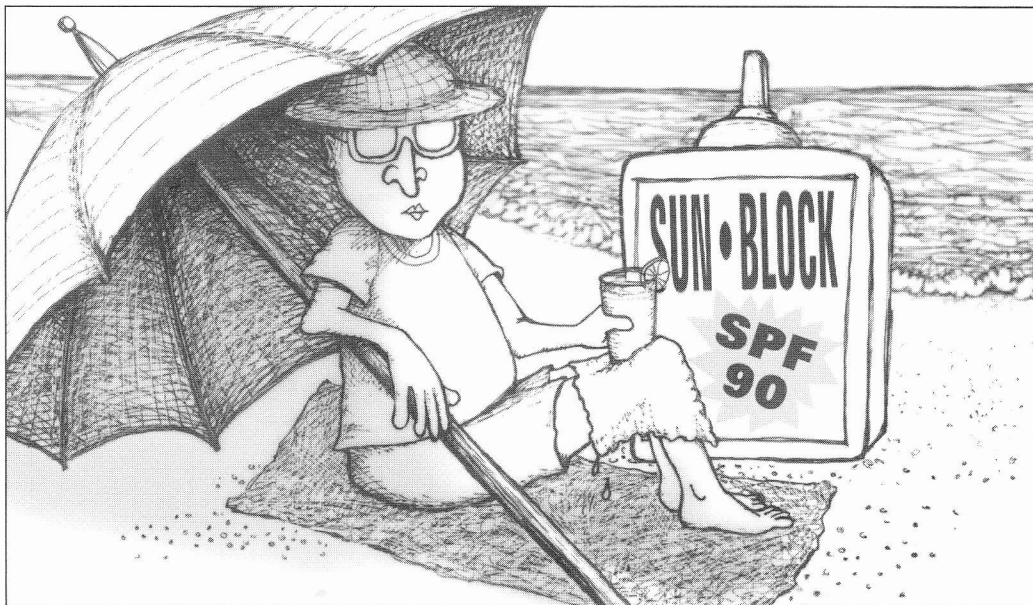
WWW

On the Web
Try Unit 9
Activity 5

- b. ____ Too much time in the sun can cause severe skin damage, especially in young children. ____
- c. ____ This disease, which can be deadly if it is not treated quickly, is a direct result of the sun's harmful ultraviolet rays. ____
- d. ____ In conclusion, the information in this paragraph is enough evidence to persuade parents not to let their children play outside in the sun. ____
- e. ____ Although many people enjoy playing in the sun, parents should limit the number of hours that children play outside. ____
- f. ____ The most serious example of this is skin cancer. ____

Activity 6**Copying a Paragraph**

Now copy the sentences from Activity 5 in the best order to create a good opinion paragraph. Add a title of your choice.



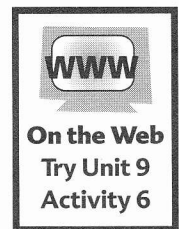
Paragraph 67

CHOOSING A TOPIC FOR AN OPINION PARAGRAPH

In Unit 2, you learned about developing ideas for writing paragraphs. This work includes talking about topics and brainstorming. One good source for topics for opinion paragraphs is the newspaper. Most front-page stories in newspapers can become good opinion topics. The editorial section may also help you with ideas.

Two kinds of brainstorming work well for opinion paragraphs. One kind is to brainstorm using the clusters that you did in Unit 2. This will help you think of ideas and supporting information for a topic. It will also help you eliminate unnecessary or unrelated ideas. A second kind of brainstorming is to make two columns about your topic. On one side list the negative ideas about the topic, and on the other side list the positive ideas.

Here is an example of how to set up a negative-positive brainstorm design.

**TOPIC:**

Negative points
Positive points

Remember: Whichever argument organization you choose, include at least one sentence that disagrees with your point of view. If you look at the sample paragraphs in this unit, you will find a sentence in each one that goes against the main opinion of the writer. However, the writer states this contrasting point of view and gives facts to refute the idea.

**Building Better Sentences****Practice 18**

Correct and varied sentence structure is essential to the quality of your sentences and paragraphs. For further practice with the sentences and paragraphs in this part of the unit, go to Practice 18 on page 244 in Appendix 5.

Activity 7**Original Writing Practice**

Develop a paragraph about a strong opinion that you have. Include facts to support your opinion. Follow these guidelines:

- Choose a topic.
- Brainstorm your opinions. If you want, use the newspaper for ideas.
- Write a topic sentence with controlling ideas.
- Write supporting sentences with facts that support your opinions.
- Check for incorrect word forms.

If you need help, study the example opinion paragraphs in this unit. Be sure to refer to the seven steps in the writing process in Appendix 1 on pages 198–206.

Activity 8**Peer Editing**

Work with a partner and exchange paragraphs from Activity 7. Then use Peer Editing Sheet 9 on page 265 to help you comment on your partner's paper. Remember to offer positive comments that will help the writer.

Activity 9**Additional Writing Assignments**

Here are some ideas for opinion paragraphs. When you write, follow the guidelines in Activity 7.

1. Do you think professional athletes receive too much money? Why or why not?
2. Do you think it is necessary to take an entrance exam to enter a college or university? Why or why not?
3. Should women be allowed in combat positions in the military? Why or why not?
4. When is a person considered an adult?
5. Which do you prefer, classical music or pop music? Why is one better than the other?