

Suggested Assignments For Students Using

A Writer's Guide
to
Powerful Paragraphs
by
Victor Pellegrino

from the
Institute for Excellence in Writing



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Introduction & How to Use This Booklet

This is a companion booklet to the text *A Writer's Guide to Powerful Paragraphs* by Victor Pellegrino. If you do not have that book, it may be ordered from The Institute for Excellence in Writing (800.856.5815).

It is assumed that most of the teachers and students using this booklet of Suggested Assignments have some degree of experience with the *IEW Structure & Style Syllabus*.

Generally, these assignments would fall into the realm of our Unit VII (Creative Writing), in that the information for the paragraphs will be coming from the student's brain, rather than from a printed source text or story.

As with all our models, we strongly recommend that students write from key word outlines, even when doing Creative Writing. For a better understanding of how to "take notes from the brain," please review one of the following DVDs:

Teaching Writing Structure & Style, DVD 5 (Unit VII)
Student Writing Intensive (any level), Day 4

In some cases, the paragraphs may be written about something being studied in History, Science, Religion or Literature. In that case, the Unit IV or Unit VI style of note taking would be appropriate. A few assignments will require a small amount of research.

For each assignment, students should make an outline on a separate sheet of paper. While younger or less experienced students may need help in completing the outline, older and more experienced students should be able to do their outline independently. Additionally, teachers should provide students with a checklist of Stylistic Techniques at an appropriate level.

This booklet provides one suggested assignment for each paragraph model. The teacher may wish to provide additional, similar assignments of their own design for added practice and a more thorough understanding. Conversely, if any of the paragraph models in the book or these assignment suggestions seem confusing or frustrating, skip it and move on to another model. Many of the models are very similar. Don't let one bump in the road stop your trip.

Before beginning with these assignments, the teacher and students should read and discuss pages 9-38 of *A Writer's Guide to Powerful Paragraphs*. Likewise, before beginning these suggested assignments, teacher and students should read each chapter, study the sample paragraph and discuss the practical suggestions offered.

Lastly, it is strongly suggested that teachers and teaching parents who use these assignments with students actually do the assignment themselves, either before giving it to the student or while the student is working. This small sacrifice will reap great benefits: greater understanding, better teaching, increased empathy for the student, and improved writing skills. Have fun!

For questions, suggestions, additional books or DVDs, contact:

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#1 Chronological Paragraph (Page 41)

Write a paragraph outlining the sequence of events of something that has happened, either from your study of history or in your own life. Follow the practical suggestions on Page 43. Remember, the goal is to convey a clear sequence of events through time.

For a second assignment for this paragraph, re-write the same sequence of events, only use the flashback idea on Page 43.

Possible events:

- Discovery
- Battle
- Problem and Solution
- Special Day

Other requirements:

- Dress-ups & Sentence Openers (Decoration/Triple)
- Topic and clincher sentences repeat/reflect 2-3 key words
- All details within paragraph support topic sentence

Note: Several student samples of this completed assignment are available at the end of this booklet.

#2 Descriptive Paragraph (Page 45)

Write a paragraph describing your favorite holiday. Try to convey the excitement of the holiday, using sensory words that convey the scene, the smell of food cooking, particular sounds, and tastes that make this the holiday of your choice. Remember, the goal is to convey a clear, complete, and vivid description of your favorite holiday.

Possible holidays:

- Christmas
- Fourth of July
- Thanksgiving
- Easter
- St. Valentine's Day

Other requirements:

- Dress-ups & Sentence Openers (Decoration/Triple)
 - Topic and clincher sentences repeat/reflect 2-3 key words
 - All details within paragraph support topic sentence
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#3 Definition Paragraph (Page 49)

Today's modern technology provides us with many innovative devices, although the relative terminology is scarcely understood. Write a paragraph using a single definition, explaining the phrase, "Computer-generated imagery." Some research may be involved. Use the three-part process as detailed in your book. (For younger students, a less technical topic may be suggested, such as "Encyclopedia" or "Jello" or "Video Game".)

Other requirements:

- Dress-ups & Sentence Openers (Decoration/Triple)
- Topic and clincher sentences repeat/reflect 2-3 key words
- All details within paragraph support topic sentence

Additional assignments may be given using the other four types of definitions: multiple, compare/contrast, operational, extended.

#4 Spatial Paragraph (Page 53)

Write a spatial paragraph describing your favorite amusement park or fair (state or county). Explain the layout of the park, rides, sections, food areas, attractions, etc. Use descriptive and directional words and word pictures.

Possible locations:

- Disney World / Disneyland
- Six Flags / Great America
- A smaller amusement park in your area.

Other requirements:

- Dress-ups & Sentence Openers (Decoration/Triple)
 - Topic and clincher sentences repeat/reflect 2-3 key words
 - All details within paragraph support topic sentence
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#5 Physical Analysis Paragraph (Page 57)

Write a physical analysis paragraph describing a landmark in your area. This can be a historic building, lighthouse, statue, park, etc. Use words that demonstrate how your five senses are affected. If you choose something of considerable size (park, large building, etc.) focus on the aspect that most appeals to you. As with the example paragraph in your book, provide a sentence or two of background to introduce the subject to your reader.

Other requirements:

- Dress-ups & Sentence Openers (Decoration/Triple)
 - Topic and clincher sentences repeat/reflect 2-3 key words
 - All details within paragraph support topic sentence
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#6 Process Analysis Paragraph (Page 61)

Write a process analysis paragraph explaining how to play your favorite game. Start with the set-up and then explain, step by step, the strategy of the game, obstacles to avoid along the way, and finally, how the game is won. Be sure to first outline the process, picturing in your mind every step you go through.

Other possible tasks:

- Give a pet a bath
- Bake and frost a cake
- Wrap a present

Other requirements:

- Dress-ups & Sentence Openers (Decoration/Triple)
- Topic and clincher sentences repeat/reflect 2-3 key words
- All details within paragraph support topic sentence



#7 Example Paragraph (Page 65)

Write an example paragraph explaining what the particular area you live in is known for. It could also be what your state is known for if nothing is in your area. Elementary level students should do the Single Example Model, while intermediate students should try the Multiple Example Model. Advanced students (and teachers) should attempt the Hypothetical Example Model.

Start with general information. Mention the involved area (town, state or country) along with broad topics (category: factories, rocks, trees, etc.). Subsequently, narrow down to your specific topic, and finally state its usefulness or significance.

Possible topics:

- Natural: rocks, minerals, trees, animals, plants, fish, shellfish
- Manmade: crops, cars, computers, pollution
- Landmarks: parks, beaches, buildings

Other requirements:

- Dress-ups & Sentence Openers (Decoration/Triple)
- Topic and clincher sentences repeat/reflect 2-3 key words
- All details within paragraph support topic sentence



#8 Analogy Paragraph (Page 71)

Write a paragraph using analogies to compare glue to the Bible. First, make a list of all the attributes of glue. After that, compare the list to find similarities with the Bible and what it provides. Obviously, you could not list everything in one paragraph, so think of a few specific examples and use the ones that would best help the reader to make the connection. If you struggle with this, ask yourself, “What is the primary function of glue?” An alternative or second assignment might be to compare shoes to a house, or any other analogy you think of.

Glue	Holds things together White-pure Sticks to whatever it touches Repairs things	Bible
Shoes	Warm Comfortable Surround feet Hold in odors	House

Other requirements:

- Dress-ups & Sentence Openers (Decoration/Triple)
- Topic and clincher sentences repeat/reflect 2-3 key words
- All details within paragraph support topic sentence

#9 Division Paragraph (Page 75)

Write a division paragraph that names the benefits of a family fun night. When outlining, list all the benefits, then narrow down to three. As with the example paragraph in the book, write a topic sentence first, then introduce three benefits. Following that, briefly explain each benefit. Try using climactic order (least to greatest) if appropriate.

In writing, be sure to:

- Write a clear topic sentence
- Introduce three values
- Briefly explain each in relation to the topic sentence

Other requirements:

- Dress-ups & Sentence Openers (Decoration/Triple)
 - Topic and clincher sentences repeat/reflect 2-3 key words
 - All details within paragraph support topic sentence
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#10 Classification paragraph (Page 79)

Write about the advantages of shopping at a department store. Unlike the division paragraph, the parts in a classification paragraph are introduced one at a time. Discussion of whole subject and topic relevance should be last.

Steps:

1. Outline the four main groups found there.
2. Write a clear topic sentence mentioning department stores
3. Introduce and briefly explain each part individually
4. Briefly discuss whole subject involving advantages and disadvantages
5. Conclude with general statement about department stores

Possible Parts of a Department Store:

Housewares
Perfume
Jewelry
Men's clothes
Women's clothes
Children's items

Possible Advantages/ Disadvantages:

one stop shopping
large selection
can't find same item easily
get lost
bathrooms/escalators

Other requirements:

Dress-ups & Sentence Openers (Decoration/Triple)
Topic and clincher sentences repeat/reflect 2-3 key words
All details within paragraph support topic sentence

#11 Enumerative Paragraph (Page 83)

Write an enumeration paragraph about one of the following subjects (or pick one of your own):

The advantages of allowing a teenager to drive
The advantages of homeschooling
The advantages of enabling a teenager to earn an allowance

Give at least three examples in your paragraph using enumeration; first, second, third. When outlining, list all the advantages then narrow down to the main ones. Remember to mention the subject in your topic sentence, and then name the examples. After this, discuss each part in the order that it was named using enumeration.

Other requirements:

Dress-ups & Sentence Openers (Decoration/Triple)
Topic and clincher sentences repeat/reflect 2-3 key words
All details within paragraph support topic sentence

#12 Comparison Paragraph (Page 87)

Write a paragraph comparing two similar subjects. Select one example from the following list, or choose your own:

- Basketball game to football game
- Awanas to Boy Scouts/Girl Scouts
- Skiing to snowboarding

When outlining, first decide what to compare, then list all the ways the two subjects are similar. If you decide to do a climactic paragraph, save the strongest subject similarity for last.

Other requirements:

- Dress-ups & Sentence Openers (Decoration/Triple)
- Topic and clincher sentences repeat/reflect 2-3 key words
- All details within paragraph support topic sentence



#13 Contrast Paragraph (Page 91)

Write a contrast paragraph about something that is similar but with distinct differences. This will likely require some research.

Possible contrasts:

- Dolphin / Whale
- Lion / Tiger
- VCR / DVD player
- Coyote / Wolf
- Parasailing / Hang Gliding

Other requirements:

- Dress-ups & Sentence Openers (Decoration/Triple)
- Topic and clincher sentences repeat/reflect 2-3 key words



#14 Compare & Contrast Paragraph (Page 95)

Write a compare/contrast paragraph regarding one pair of subjects from the following:

- Crocodile / Alligator
- Jet skis / Snowmobiles
- Manatee / Walrus
- Cellular telephone / Cordless telephone

When outlining: List similarities and differences of each. Decide on pattern (alternating, block, similar/dissimilar). This will likely require some research.

Other requirements:

- Dress-ups & Sentence Openers (Decoration/Triple)
- Topic and clincher sentences repeat/reflect 2-3 key words



#15 Climactic Paragraph (Page 101)

Write a climactic paragraph on one of the following topics, listing details which support your topic statement in order of importance—least to greatest.

- Importance of being a member of a church
- Importance of getting an education
- Importance of learning to write well

Other requirements:

- Dress-ups & Sentence Openers (Decoration/Triple)
- Topic and clincher sentences repeat/reflect 2-3 key words
- All details within paragraph support topic sentence



#16 Anticlimactic Paragraph (Page 105)

Write an anticlimactic paragraph on one of the following topics, listing details which support your topic statement in order of importance—greatest to least. List objective, factual information. Use a topic from #15 or one of these possibilities:

- Importance of learning to drive
- Private free enterprise
- Strong military defense

Other requirements:

- Dress-ups & Sentence Openers (Decoration/Triple)
- Topic and clincher sentences repeat/reflect 2-3 key words
- All details within paragraph support topic sentence



#17 General to Particular (Page 109)

Write a paragraph on the dangers of participating in an extreme sport. Start with the general statement then give particular examples and details of possible dangers and how to avoid them. When writing, note use of transitional words and expressions.

Possible sports:

- Snowboarding
- Snow skiing
- Skateboarding
- Rock Climbing

Other requirements:

- Dress-ups & Sentence Openers (Decoration/Triple)
- Topic and clincher sentences repeat/reflect 2-3 key words



#18 Particular to General (Page 113)

Write a paragraph on the benefits of learning a particular skill. List the reasons and benefits, waiting until the clincher to present your strongest and most general statement about the benefits of having this skill.

Possible skills:

- How to cook
- How to hunt
- How to fish
- How to shop (this is a skill, believe it or not)

Other requirements:

- Dress-ups & Sentence Openers (Decoration/Triple)
- Topic and clincher sentences repeat/reflect 2-3 key words
- All details within paragraph support topic sentence



#19 Simple to Complex (Page 117)

Write a paragraph that slowly explains the complexity of writing. Think back on everything you had to learn before and while learning to write. Outline these. You will be amazed at how much knowledge you have gained in the area of language arts. The end result should demonstrate that the skills involved in writing well are surprisingly extensive.



#20 Opinion and Reason Paragraph (Page 121)

Write an opinion and reason paragraph explaining one of the following:

- Why children should learn computer skills
- Why young adults should learn basic car maintenance
- Why public speaking should be practiced at an early age

Remember to use clear, logical and accurate details in your reasoning.

Other requirements:

- Dress-ups & Sentence Openers (Decoration/Triple)
- Topic and clincher sentences repeat/reflect 2-3 key words



#21 Question/Answer Paragraph (Page 125)

Write a question and answer paragraph using one of these following questions:

- Do Americans need to take vitamins and minerals to supplement their diets?
- Is our diet no longer sufficient for our nutritional needs?
- What, if anything, has caused this deficiency?
- Is there such a thing as too much exercise?

Consider the three goals in asking the questions:

- To set the stage for the topic sentence
- To provide focus for the rest of the paragraph
- To control the size and content of the paragraph

Remember to make your responding sentences clear, fully developed, and logically organized.

Other requirements:

- Dress-ups & Sentence Openers (Decoration/Triple)
- Topic and clincher sentences repeat/reflect 2-3 key words



22 Problem & Solution Paragraph (Page 129)

Write a problem and solution paragraph about keeping the house clean. In our fast-paced, modern society, it is sometimes difficult to maintain a clean, healthy household. Present the problem of a cluttered, dirty house and solutions to keeping it clean. When outlining, list ways family members or others can help.

Other possible topics:

- Keeping your room clean
- Avoiding road rage

Other requirements:

- Dress-ups & Sentence Openers (Decoration/Triple)
- Topic and clincher sentences repeat/reflect 2-3 key words



#23 Cause & Effect Paragraph (Page 133)

Write a cause and effect paragraph about one of these topics:

- French Revolution
- American Revolution
- Civil War
- Mt. St. Helens eruption
- Exxon Valdez Oil Tanker Spill in Alaska

Other requirements:

- Dress-ups & Sentence Openers (Decoration/Triple)
- Topic and clincher sentences repeat/reflect 2-3 key words



#24 Dialogue Paragraph (Page 139)

Write a paragraph using primarily dialogue that would convey to the reader an event which recently occurred in your home or classroom. Follow guidelines from the text, especially regarding punctuation and indentation. Don't neglect to plan the paragraph with a key word outline. As this is a narrative form, adherence to the style checklist and topic/clincher rule isn't necessary.



#25 Narrative Paragraph (Page 143)

Write a hypothetical narrative from your life. If you could do anything at all, what would you do? Describe your ideal day.

Other possibilities:

A great shopping trip

Your ideal birthday

Your first day of _____ (College, work, marriage, etc.)

Write in a first person point of view. Tell the story chronologically from start to finish. Use dialog sparingly. Try to work in your dress-ups & openers, but not rigidly. Bring the reader into your experience.

Alternative / additional assignment: Rewrite the same event in third person, limited or omniscient.



#26 Anecdotal Paragraph (Page 151)

Write an anecdote about a person who has influenced you. First, briefly explain what happened (the incident) then elaborate on how this experience with this person has changed you, and in what way. What is the new vision, goal, or way of operating that you have because of this experience (your anecdote)? Dialogue, if used, should be very limited. Try to work in your dress-ups & openers, but not rigidly. Write in a friendly way—probably in first person—so the reader can relate to you and the person who influenced you.



#27 Introductory Paragraph (Page 155)

Plan a five-paragraph composition, either creative or factual (see IEW Units VII and VIII). Write the introduction to the essay, following both the guidelines from the IEW syllabus and the *Guide to Powerful Paragraphs* text. It should include the following components:

- Get the attention of the reader.
- Give background information.
- Make the thesis statement (the main point of the essay) clear.
- State the three topics of the essay.

Other requirements:

Dress-ups & Sentence Openers (Decoration/Triple)



#28 Transitional Paragraph (Page 159)

No assignment given. Review this section of the Pellegrino text when writing a super-essay, which would need a transitional paragraph of this sort between major sections of the paper.



#29 Conclusion Paragraph (Page 163)

Write a conclusion to the outline for the five-paragraph composition planned in #27. Be sure to follow both the guidelines from the IEW syllabus and the *Guide to Powerful Paragraphs* text. It should include the following components:

- Re-state the three topics of the essay.
- Answer the thesis question (or restate the thesis).
- State the most important (significant, noteworthy, etc.) thing from the essay, and tell WHY.

Other requirements:

Dress-ups & Sentence Openers (Decoration/Triple)
Topic and clincher sentences repeat/reflect 2-3 key words



#30 Summary paragraph (Page 167)

Write a summary paragraph to add to your narrative paragraph summarizing the day.



Sample paragraphs from students completing assignment #1:

By Faith Porter (12/02)

School has increased in its difficulty over the years. In the past, kindergarten was carefree; all I had to do was finger paint, crafts, and daily naptimes, which gave me the rest I needed. During my elementary years, math went from adding and subtracting to multiplication and division, while I also studied states and capitals. After that came junior high with its more advanced math, it also strengthened my independent study skills. Recently high school has been the most difficult, my responsibilities have gone from naptime to excellence in writing. School has had such a huge part in helping me plan for the future.

Life Changes Dramatically
by Aimee Dominick (12/02)

Throughout my ten years of schooling, my education has gone from learning to write my A-B-C's to a squared + b squared = c squared. What seems like eons ago was really just kindergarten. I don't remember much about that first year in public school except making a gingerbread man Christmas ornament and getting my fingers maliciously smashed in a cubby hole by the kindergarten bully. Following that, the next four years of elementary school were spent at Mother Lode Christian School. There I learned how to read in the first grade and met my best friend in second. In third grade I wrote a report on horses and in fourth grade I was introduced to California history and long division. Soon after, I transferred to home schooling for fifth grade. I was devastated at the time although now I see it was the best decision my parents ever made regarding my schooling. Little by little, I became accustomed to this method of schooling and my education continued to expand. From this point, I entered my junior high years, but, praise be to God, I was privileged enough to take only one year of junior high for which I am eternally grateful. Until the eighth grade, school was never in its smallest measure, a struggle for me. Learning new concepts came easily to me. But it was then that it hit me: school was not going to be so easy anymore. Pre-Algebra loomed before me and I came to dread the hour when I went into a detailed study of the constitution. Similarly, high school and geometry is constantly challenging. But, with God's help, I can succeed and excel. As is obvious, life dramatically but gradually changes from kindergarten to high school.

Growth in Independent Study
by Isaac Dominick (12/02)

Throughout my numerous years of schooling, my individual progression towards independent study has strengthened. In kindergarten, I, who was five years of age, savored every minute of learning. However, in my next years of elementary school, I found that learning was not so exciting after all. I began studying and taking tests and in some cases even having homework. During these crucial years I began to understand the meaning of independent study. As soon as I entered junior high, I began to move from class to class each hour, when in elementary school I stayed firmly planted in one classroom. Soon I realized that independence was key if I was to pass on to the next level. Well, I made it! I moved on to high school, and that is where I am now. Evidently, in my opinion, high school is for those who can take care of themselves school wise. It requires diligence, self-confidence, perseverance, courage, and without a doubt the help of God. Due to the intensive training in the formal years of my life, independent study has become normal. I can only hope that as I succeed into college my strength in independent study will not diminish, but surpass that of now.

