

Warm up

Start by writing the following statement on the board:

English is easy/difficult.

Ask individual students to tell you which option they agree with. Point to a student who thinks English is easy, and say: *So you think English is easy. What do you mean by that?* Elicit a variety of explanations and then ask students: *So you think English is difficult. Why?* Again, elicit a variety of explanations.

Next you can say: *Give me an example of why English is easy/difficult.* Elicit a variety of examples.

Point out that what you have just done is to construct a short paragraph with a topic sentence supported by a reason and an example. You could write the following on the board:


English is easy. [Topic sentence]

By this I mean that ... [Reason]

For example / For instance ... [Example]

Explain that this, in its simplest form, is a paragraph with supporting sentences.

Practice

1  Read the topic sentences and make notes about how you could support them in a paragraph. Can you give reasons? Can you think of any good examples? Discuss with a partner.

- You might like to do the first item with the class. Elicit a variety of suggestions, if possible (see the suggested answers below). Correct any mistakes in the suggestions, making sure they contain relevant information. Keep students focused on the idea of supporting the topic sentence. Their supporting material should be in the form of examples and/or reasons. As you discuss their suggestions, encourage students to form them into sentences they could use in a paragraph.
- For the remainder of the items, tell students to work in pairs or small groups at first, so that they can help each other. Remind them that they are looking for reasons and examples, and that they only need to write them in note form at this stage. Give help if necessary. Students can then work alone to write the notes.

Answers

Students will come up with a variety of ideas, but make sure they are aware of the following possibilities because they form the basis of Exercise 2. Students should make a note of these ideas as well as any others that are suitable.

- a** use of the internet
MOOCs
study from home
science and technology – better/more reliable equipment
- b** develop healthy habits / active lifestyle while young
save the government money (need less access to healthcare in later life)
sports centres with free access
- c** no organization = underachievement
organization important in your studies
compartmentalize things – live a full life
- d** productivity up
fit work in
family commitments

2 Using the information you discussed in Exercise 1, complete the paragraphs.

- Here, students work on four near-complete paragraphs with supporting sentences. Point out that the topic sentences are the same as in Exercise 1. They will also find the answers among the things they discussed in Exercise 1.
- Allow plenty of time for this, and ask students initially to work alone to fill in as many gaps as they can. If you wish, you can let them compare notes with a partner after they have attempted the task.
- There are many ways to express the information needed in the gaps, and your students are likely to come up with different answers. Use the following as a guide, and give praise to all well-expressed ideas. Point out that the last sentence in paragraph **b** (*Sports centres with free access to all, for example, would actually be an investment for governments*) includes an example, a suggestion and an expected result (the example/suggestion being to build free sports centres and the expected result being that the government will actually save money).

Suggested answers

- a**
 - 1 private/home study
 - 2 the internet
 - 3 MOOCs
 - 4 better / more reliable equipment
- b**
 - 5 healthy habits
 - 6 they are young
 - 7 access to healthcare
 - 8 Sports centres
- c**
 - 9 underachieve
 - 10 in your studies
 - 11 live a full life
- d**
 - 12 productivity
 - 13 family commitments
 - 14 when they work

3 Read the topic sentences and choose the option that best matches your beliefs. Discuss possible ways of supporting these topic sentences. You might want to take notes. Then develop each one into a full paragraph like those in Exercise 2.

- Begin by pointing out that students have a choice to make in each topic sentence.
- You may wish to do the first paragraph with the class, allow students to do the second one in pairs and ask them to do the third alone. As long as they get some practice at constructing a paragraph alone, they will benefit. Encourage your students to use structures from Exercise 2 to help them express their own ideas. Point out that as well as reasons and examples, they can include suggestions and expected results.
- However you approach this, it will take some time. Be on hand for students who might have difficulty. There are many possible ways to approach the paragraphs. Make sure that you encourage students to find good reasons/examples to support the points.

4 Write a paragraph related to a subject you have studied.

- If your students study different academic subjects, ask what they are. Encourage them to think about a topic they have covered recently and to come up with one topic sentence related to it (you should be prepared to help them if necessary by asking questions, as it may be difficult for them to choose a focus – ask them what books they've studied recently, or if they've been to any memorable lectures).
- If English is the only thing they are currently studying, you could prompt them to think of topic sentences about that. Examples could include:
Knowledge of functional English is more important than knowing all the grammar rules.
The ability to speak English is more important than the ability to read it.
We should forgive mistakes in English and focus on whether or not the message is conveyed.
- To make this practice as realistic as possible, students need to come up with a topic sentence which they believe is true. You might want to make sure they've done this before they go on to write the rest of the paragraph, which can be set for homework if time is short.

Reflect

5 Plan out another paragraph using the paragraph plan – perhaps about something else related to your studies.

- The idea here is not to get students to write another paragraph, but rather to practise using the plan as a template.
- Tell students that this is a reflective task. They can write notes if it helps them remember, but the essence of the task is to put into practice what they have learnt in the lesson.
- Depending on the size of your class, you can go around and ask each student to tell you how they would construct their paragraph. In a very big class, get students to discuss it with a partner, while you go around offering help where necessary and listening to as many paragraphs as possible.
- Remind students to use the template when they do their own academic writing.