



ESL

The Exit Paragraph Writing - Level V

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The Exit Paragraph in ESL Writing V is a competency test of a student's writing ability on the level of the paragraph. A student must receive a grade of Pass (P) on the Exit Paragraph in order to pass EAP 1540, regardless of the course grade.

The Exit Paragraph requires a coherent paragraph of around eight to twelve sentence or no less than 280 words. At least two or three of the sentences must be **complex sentences using subordinate clauses**. These lengths are minimum ones; writing more will guarantee sufficient development.

You can use a dictionary, but only an English dictionary, not a dual language dictionary.

The paragraph will use one of two methods of organization: comparison and contrast (or similarities or differences) or cause and effect (one cause with its effect or two causes or two effects).

The paragraph must have a clear and precise **topic sentence**. For comparison and contrast, you must state the two topics and a major point of comparison and a major point of contrast. A **general sentence** like the following is not acceptable:

NO Buying a used car and buying a new car are similar yet different.

Instead, state the comparison and contrast:

YES Buying a used car and buying a new car will both provide basic transportation, but buying a used car usually requires more maintenance costs.

For **cause and effect**, again a generalized topic sentence is not acceptable:

NO There are many causes and effects of divorce in America.

Instead, have a specific cause and specific effect:

YES A major cause of divorce in America is poor financial planning which can result in higher costs for lawyers to settle the divorce.

You may be asked to **write a paragraph about two causes or two effects only**.

The **developmental sentences (around ten)** must then contain details that explain each of the points in the topic sentence. You would first discuss the major comparison and then the major contrast, or you would discuss the cause and the effect.

You also need to use effective **transition words** as you move from one point to another, such as *first, next, most important, also* and some of the contrasting transitions, such as *however, on the other hand, but, in contrast*.

Finally, your paragraph must contain a **final concluding** sentence which should not repeat your topic sentence. Your best method would be to point out which of your two points in the topic sentence is more important or has greater value.

EXAMPLES:

"Even though a couple might have to pay for lawyers fees, the end result of the final divorce is necessary if the marriage has failed."

"While buying a new car requires larger monthly payments, the warranty keeps maintenance costs low."

You will have **one hour and a half** for the paragraph, and you should divide your time roughly into the following allotments:

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|---|------------|
| 1. Formulate a T-chart, the topic sentence, and a title | 15 minutes |
| 2. Develop the first point in your topic sentence (5-6 sentences) | 22 minutes |
| 3. Develop second point in your topic sentence (5-6 sentences) | 22 minutes |
| 4. Write your concluding sentence | 5 minutes |
| 5. Proofread using an English dictionary only | 25 minutes |

You will be **graded on the final paragraph**, but you should attach your T-chart and notes to indicate that you did some preplanning (see handouts on Comparison and Contrast and Cause and Effect).

You should **double space** your paragraph and write **on one side of the paper** only. You can make **minor corrections** as long as they are clear and readable. More than likely, you will not have time to write a rough draft and then recopy it.

Proofreading is very **important**, especially if you have had trouble with spelling of common errors, such as confusing **they're** with **their** or **then** with **than**. The following major errors in grammar are serious ones, and you should proofread for them:

1. sentence **fragment** (sentence contains neither a subject nor a finite verb)

2. **subject and verb agreement** (singular subject with a plural verb; be careful about leaving off the -s on third person singular present tense, such as "The student go" or "Marriage allow two people to live together.")
3. **verb tense endings or verb forms** (leaving off the -d or -ed on past tense verbs, leaving off the -s on present tense, third person singular, or omitting a verb altogether)
4. **comma splice or a fused sentence** (joining two complete sentences with only a comma without a conjunction or joining two complete sentences with no punctuation and no conjunction)
5. **common misspellings** (it's for **its**, **their** for **they're**, **your** for **you're**)

The overall determining factor in receiving a Pass on the paragraph is the basic question: does the paragraph writing indicate that you are ready to move to Level VI or Writing VI for a longer form of writing, the essay? An essay usually consists of four related paragraphs.

You can **practice writing an exit paragraph** anytime at the South Campus Writing Lab (G-219), 646-2196. You need not make an appointment.

A lab assistant will assign you two topics and will discuss your major errors after the writing.

The paragraph will then be forwarded to your course instructor for a designation of P (pass) or NP (no pass) although some instructors will let a Communications staff tutor make the designation.

Receiving a grade of Pass on a practice paragraph does not substitute for passing the Exit Paragraph Writing.

