

Using 6-way Paragraphs Readings

The readings in the 6-way Paragraphs text teach basic skills necessary for reading nonfiction content area materials. The readings will help to sharpen students' skills in subject matter, main idea, supporting details, conclusions, clarifying devices, and vocabulary. All of these are items that are tested on the TABE® test that is used for accountability purposes. Many of the skills will also be on the 2014 GED® test.

Step 1: Explain to students that the purpose of the 6-way Paragraphs readings is to master the essential skills needed to organize, understand, and apply information found in nonfiction texts.

Step 2: Ask students to review the title and count the number of paragraphs in the reading passage. Ask students how they know where a paragraph begins. Explain that it is important to know how to find a paragraph quickly as some test questions may ask students to refer to a certain paragraph. If you have an overhead, point to it and/or label the indents.

Step 3: Explain to students they should read all of the paragraphs silently in order to answer the questions that follow. To help students find the main idea of the reading passage, remind them to think *"What are all the paragraphs about?"* and *"What is the point that the author is trying to make?"* while reading.

Step 4: Explain to students that they will decide which of the statements that follow the reading passage is the **main** idea, **broad** idea, or **narrow** idea. Use the following to explain to students the process.

Main idea: This is a statement that says what all the paragraphs are about, not just the first or last paragraph. Look for keywords used in the statement that are found multiple times in the reading. Remember, the main idea answers the question "What is the author trying to say with the writing?" The main idea will be where students will write **M** in the box next to the statement that best fits the main idea.

Broad idea: This is a statement that is too broad or general. It may not be specifically about what the passage is saying, but is about a more general topic. Many times statements with "many" or "in general" are the broad idea. Students will write **B** in the box next to the statement that is too broad or general.

Narrow idea: This is a specific or focused detail or one small idea from the reading. It usually is one phrase or sentence from the reading that is very specific. Students will write **N** in the box next to the statement that is too specific.

Step 5: Describe to students what questions 2 – 6 on the back page are about and ways to find the correct answer. Use the following to help in the explanation to students.

Subject Matter: This is about the overall topic of the passage. The subject matter may be one word or phrase that answers the question, “*What is the topic of this passage?*”

Supporting Details: These are details that give information to further support the main idea. The details may be evidence (proof) in the form of examples, explanations, descriptions, definitions, comparisons, analogies, contrasts, etc. that support the main idea.

Conclusion: This is what happens when we read: we try to guess the ending or conclusion of the passage. The conclusion is a mix of information we all, as experienced adults, bring to the reading plus the information that is presented to us in the reading. On some 2014 GED® or TABE® questions, the conclusion may be worded as “inference”. Explain to students that the words infer and conclude, and conclusion and inference are synonyms. Remind them that sometimes the conclusion is a sentence from the passage, but many times the conclusion is what we determine after we are done reading.

You can describe to students that a simple formula for a conclusion in reading is:

What you know + what you read in the passage = conclusion

Clarifying Devices: This is the way the author presents the information to make it easier for us, the readers to understand. The author may use chronological order to help the reader understand the sequence (order) of events. Or the writer may use transitional or signal words, such as first, last, next, and finally, to help us determine the sequence. Remind students to pay attention to the transitional or signal words while reading.

Vocabulary in Context: Many of the academic vocabulary words used in the 6-way Paragraphs readings have multiple meanings or definitions. Readers should pay careful attention to what the word means as it is used in the passage and not only rely on just their vocabulary knowledge.

Note: Ask students to take notes in the area next to each of these questions (on the left side of the paper). Explain how taking notes is another strategy to help them remember key concepts.

Step 6: Ask students to read the passage silently and answer the 6 questions independently. If they finish early, they should take the time to review their answers and then compare those answers with another student or partner. Circulate while students are reading to see that they are on task and if they have any questions while reading. Use the teacher answer key to check the completed work for those that finish early.

Note: Teachers should model this explicitly. That is, teachers need to explain to students what is expected, do it as a class and then move towards independent work. It may take a number of class sessions before students become familiar with this process.

Step 7: Review the answers as a whole class. If students are comfortable reading aloud, ask for volunteers to read the question and their answer. Remind students that it is okay to make a mistake and that we learn from errors. This is a classroom environment where we all support one another. As students read their answers, ask them what information or evidence from the reading passage led them to the answer. If you have an overhead, point to or underline the evidence to help everyone find it. Ask students to underline the evidence as a way to reinforce their comprehension.

Step 8: Ask students which questions they had right and which ones were wrong. Ask students to circle the wrong questions in order to focus on that area more during the next reading. For example, if they had #4 *Conclusion* wrong, they should focus on this area for the next time they read a passage. Explain to students this is a way for them to monitor their own learning.

Step 9: Explain to students that by reading a passage again, it will help with overall comprehension. Tell them that there are times they may want to read an important passage a few times in order to understand the material, especially in a workplace or college setting. Explain that you will read the passage aloud and they will follow along silently. While you are reading, they should circle or highlight any confusing vocabulary or words that are difficult to pronounce.

Step 10: When you are finished reading aloud, ask students to tell you which words they circled. A good practice is to go paragraph by paragraph. Ask students which words they circled in the first paragraph, then move to the second paragraph, etc. (As a teacher it is okay and good practice to model the use of a dictionary to look up the specific meaning of words. Remind students that many of the reading passages contain academic vocabulary that is used only in reading and writing and not in everyday conversations.) Explain to students what the word means and make sure they understand how it is used in the reading passage.

Other Uses of 6-way Paragraphs in Class

Predicting the Main Idea-

Once students get used to determining the main, broad, and narrow ideas, they can begin to use strategies to predict the answers prior to reading the passage. This is a reading skill that will be useful during timed tests, such as the TABE® and GED 2014®. It is also a great way to activate knowledge prior to reading the passage.

Step 1: Explain to students this is a test-taking strategy and they are going to predict the correct answer prior to reading the entire passage.

Step 2: Ask students to predict the main, narrow, and broad ideas by looking closely at the words and phrases in each statement. Direct students to read the title and then see if it helps to determine the topic, which will most likely be in the main idea. If you have an overhead, ask students to point out the words that help determine the main idea. Remind the students that the main idea usually can answer the following questions – “What or who is the passage about?” – “Where or when does it take place?” – “Why is it important to know?”

Step 3: Once students determine the main idea, explain how they can now determine the other two statements as the broad idea and the narrow idea. The broad idea usually contains words such as “some”, “many”, “in general”, which all point to a broad or more general topic while the narrow idea is a short statement with focused information that is very specific.

Step 4: Use an overhead or write the statements on the board and ask students to predict the statements. Ask students to use a pencil in order to make a light mark next to their predictions.

Step 5: Ask students to read the passage silently and follow the reading steps listed above.

Step 6: When students are finished reading, ask them if their predictions were correct. Review the answers as a whole class. If students are comfortable reading aloud, ask for volunteers to read the question and their answer. Remind students that it is okay to make a mistake and that we learn from errors. This is a classroom environment where we all support one another. As students read their answers, ask them what information or evidence from the reading passage led them to the answer. If you have an overhead, point to or underline the evidence to help everyone find it.

Step 7: Follow the above listed reading strategies to complete the questions related to the reading passage.

Paraphrase the Main Idea –

A skill needed in college, at work, and in the community is the ability of paraphrasing. That is, using your own words to convey the idea of another. It is also a way to show that you fully understand the original idea.

Step 1: Explain to learners that the purpose of paraphrasing is to understand text and to summarize or respond to it, like they will have to do on the GED 2014® test.

Step 2: Model paraphrasing

- Write a sentence on the board, e.g., “The moon drives the ocean's tidal system, and energy from the sun drives our weather and climates.”
- Explain that the first step in paraphrasing is to change vocabulary words. Some **key words** can't be changed; other words can. Ask learners, “Is there another word for *moon*?” (Not really!). Explain that *moon* is a key word that can't be changed.
- Explain that other words can be changed, such as *drive*. Explain that in this sentence, *drive* does not mean to drive a car, but something else. See if anyone can guess what it does mean. (e.g., to *control*).
- Ask learners to come up with another word for *ocean* (e.g., *sea*)

- “Tidal system” is a phrase with two key words that can't be changed.
- Show learners the paraphrase so far, e.g., *“The moon controls the sea's tidal system.”*

Step 3: Complete a sample paraphrase as a group.

- Ask learners, in pairs, to underline key words that can't be changed in the rest of sentence (e.g., *energy*)
- Explain that most of the rest of the sentence can be changed. Ask learners to work on it in pairs. Circulate and guide as needed. *Where learners are off-target, try to ask questions that will help them self-correct rather than giving them a better answer.*
- Ask learners to share out their paraphrases. Explain that there are almost always several ways to paraphrase. Students can share their work orally or by writing their sentences on the board.
- Check students understanding by providing at least one strong paraphrase for this sentence, e.g., *“The moon controls the sea's tidal system. Solar energy control's the earth's weather and climates.”*
- Close by saying that paraphrases should change vocabulary words, like in our example. It's also best if the sentence structure is changed (e.g., in our example, we now have two sentences rather than one.)

Next, use guided practice of paraphrasing with the whole class. Finally, have students apply the paraphrasing process in pairs or on their own. By having students write their paraphrases on the board, it will show how there is not one correct answer, rather there are many possibilities. Remind students that paraphrasing relies on finding synonyms to replace the words. It is not always possible to find a synonym for every word, so you should begin with verbs and adjectives. Paraphrasing is an excellent opportunity to expand vocabulary, especially academic vocabulary.

Step 4: As students gain confidence in summarizing, ask for volunteers to write their examples on the board for others to see. This will provide new and struggling students with various examples of how to paraphrase the main idea.

Summarize the Reading Passage –

Another essential skills needed in college, at work, and in the community is the ability to summarize. That is, to pick out the most important facts and details from the passage. It is important for students to know how to summarize when they are reading text as it helps them find meaning in what they read.

(This information is also in a separate routine *Summarizing Techniques*.)

Step 1: Explain to learners that the purpose of summarizing is to find the main idea and important details in the reading passage. It is a skill they will need for GED 2014® as well a skill they probably already do in life when they retell a story, recap a movie they saw, or a book they read.

Step 2: Model summarizing with a quick oral example – Here is one taken from TV411.com "I will summarize the movie Titanic. The movie was almost three hours long and had many beautiful details, but for a summary I need to be brief. The movie is about a young man and a young woman who met and fell in love on a ship while crossing the Atlantic Ocean. The ship hit an iceberg and sank and many people did not survive including the young man. In the end, the young woman lived to tell the story." The summary of the three-hour movie can be done in three sentences leaving out the details.

Step 3: Explain to students there are three important steps for a summary and you will work as a group to write a summary of the reading passage and how in the future, they will write their own summary.

1. Keep the most important ideas. Ask the students to tell you the most important ideas from the reading passage and write them on the board.
2. Remove the ideas that are not very important. As students tell you important ideas from the reading passage have the class discuss their importance. Some ideas will not be that important and are not needed in the summary. Point out that those details make the reading passage more interesting, but for the purposes of a summary, they are not needed.
3. Use your own words to write the summary. Explain to students that one way to write a summary with the important ideas is to review some of the "Wh" words. Who or what is the passage about? What did that person or thing? How did s/he or it accomplish it? You can review the example summary from Titanic.
 - Who or what = a young man and a young woman
 - What did they do = they fell in love on a ship crossing the ocean
 - How did she accomplish it = the young woman survived the sinking of the ship to tell the story

Step 4: As students gain confidence in summarizing, ask for volunteers to write their examples on the board for others to see. This will provide new and struggling students with various examples of how to summarize a reading passage.

Note: As students become more comfortable with writing summaries, move from the group or whole class summary to more individual summary writing. Circulate while students are writing to check on their work.