PARAGRAPH DEVELOPMENT EXERCISE: CONTRAST

One way a paragraph can be developed is by using contrasts. The basic idea of such a paragraph is called the topic idea, and the one to which it is contrasted is called the functional idea. The functional idea should be

- simple
- clear
- familiar

and its chief characteristics should be different from those of the topic idea.

If the topic idea is the opposite of the functional idea, the reader learns what the topic idea is because it is *not* what the functional idea is—and vice versa.

EXAMPLE:

*topic idea*  
*functional idea*

Another difference between a meal at home and a meal in a restaurant is rather important—at least to me. I admit that in a restaurant the food may be unattractively arranged, stingy in the amount served, and not very well cooked. Nevertheless, I can eat it without conversation. At home, while I chew her really excellent roast beef, my mother asks me all sorts of questions, my sister wants to know where I put her sweater, and my dad tells me that our neighbor just bought a new pick-up truck. He got a GMC. Isn’t Ford better? What do I think about the Dodge or Chevy? Would I rather get a truck or a van? In a restaurant, despite the talk of the other customers, the clatter of dishes, and the racket of a jukebox, I can at least eat in impersonal noise.

WRITING EXERCISE:

Try a paragraph in which you get at the main or topic idea by contrasting it with a functional idea. Remember to use good specific details for both ideas to show your reader what you mean.