Paragraph Unity

**Purpose**: Upon completion of this activity, students will understand what paragraph unity is and how to revise paragraphs to make them unified. *This DLA should take approximately 30 to 45 minutes to complete.*

Read the following excerpt from American University’s web site (http://www.american.edu) about paragraph unity:

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**PARAGRAPH UNITY AND COHERENCE**

Paragraphs should have both coherence and unity. A paragraph with unity develops a single idea thoroughly and links it to the rest of the paper. Paragraph coherence is achieved when sentences are ordered in a logical manner and when clear transitions link sentences.

**PARAGRAPH UNITY:**

- Develop a paragraph around a major idea. Express this idea in the topic sentence.
- Make the relationship between the main idea of the paragraph and the thesis of the paper clear. Don’t assume that the reader will “get it.” Spell it out for him/her.
- Support the main idea of the paragraph with details.
- Create separate paragraphs for those details that explore your topic from different perspectives.
- Eliminate sentences that do not support the main idea. Alternately, you may revise the main idea to include those sentences.

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1. Answer the following questions about paragraph unity:
   a. What is unity? ____________________________________________________________
   b. What is a topic sentence? _________________________________________________
   c. How is a topic sentence related to unity in a paragraph? _______________________
      ________________________________________________________________________
      ________________________________________________________________________
      ________________________________________________________________________
   d. How are problems with paragraph unity corrected? ____________________________
      ________________________________________________________________________

2. Next, complete the attached exercise entitled “Evaluating Paragraph Unity” from the Hunter College Reading/Writing Center.

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Instructor sign off Date
EVALUATING PARAGRAPH UNITY

INSTRUCTIONS: Each of the following paragraphs contains sentences that are irrelevant or unnecessary to the main point of the paragraph. The sentences do not support the opening point, and so the paragraphs are not unified. In the interest of paragraph unity, such sentences must be omitted. First, 1) cross out the irrelevant sentences, and then 2) put the numbers of those in the spaces provided. The number of spaces will indicate the number of irrelevant sentences in each paragraph.

1. “How to Prevent Cheating“

   (1) Teachers should take steps to prevent students from cheating on exams. (2) To begin with, teachers should stop reusing old tests. (3) Even a test that has been used once is soon known on the student grapevine. (4) Students will check with their friends to find out, for example, what was on Dr. Thompson's biology final last term. (5) They may even manage to turn up a copy of the test itself, "accidentally" not turned in by a former student of Dr. Thompson's. (6) Teachers should also take some common sense precautions at test time. (7) They should make students separate themselves--by at least one seat--during an exam, and they should watch the class closely. (8) The best place for the teacher to sit is in the rear of the room, so that a student is never sure if the teacher is looking at him or her. (9) Last of all, teachers must make it clear to students that there will be stiff penalties for cheating. (10) One of the problems with our school systems is a lack of discipline. (11) Teachers never used to give in to students' demands or put up with bad behavior, as they so today. (12) Anyone caught cheating should immediately receive a zero for the exam. (13) A person even suspected of cheating should be forced to take an alternative exam in the teacher's office. (14) Because cheating is unfair to honest students, it should not be tolerated.

The numbers of the irrelevant sentences are ___ ___
2. “A Dangerous Cook”

(1) When my friend Tom sets to work in the kitchen, disaster often results. (2) Once he tried to make toasted cheese sandwiches for us by putting slices of cheese in the toaster along with the bread; he ruined the toaster. (3) Unfortunately, the toaster was a fairly new one that I had just bought for him three weeks before, on his birthday. (4) On another occasion, he had cut up some fresh beans and put them in a pot to steam. (5) I was really looking forward to the beans, for I eat nothing but canned vegetables in my dormitory. (6) I, frankly, am not much of a cook either. (7) The water in the Teflon pan steamed away while Tom was on the telephone, and both the beans and the Teflon coating in the pan were ruined. (8) Finally, another time Tom made spaghetti for us, and the noodles stuck so tightly together that we had to cut off slices with a knife and fork. (9) In addition, the meatballs were burned on the outside but almost raw on the inside. (10) The tomato sauce, on the other hand, turned out well. (11) For some reason, Tom is very good at making meat and vegetables sauces. (12) Because of Tom's kitchen mishaps, I never eat at his place without an Alka-Seltzer in my pocket or without money in case we have to go out to eat.

The numbers of the irrelevant sentences are ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

3. “Why Adults Visit Amusement Parks”

(1) Adults visit amusement parks for several reasons. (2) For one thing, an amusement park is a place where it is acceptable to "pig-out" on junk food. (3) At the park, everyone is drinking soda and eating popcorn, ice-cream, or hot dogs. (4) No one seems to be on a diet, and so buying all the junk food you can eat is a guilt-free experience. (5) Parks should provide stands where healthier food, such as salads or cold chicken, would be sold. (6) Another reason people visit amusement parks is to prove themselves. (7) They want to visit the park that has the newest, scariest ride in order to say that they went on the Parachute Drop, the seven-story Elevator, the Water Chute, or the Death Slide. (8) Going on a scary ride is a way to feel
courageous and adventurous without taking much of a risk. (9) Some rides, however, can be dangerous. (10) Rides that are not properly inspected or maintained have killed people all over the country. (11) A final reason people visit amusement parks is to escape from everyday pressures. (12) When people are poised at the top of a gigantic roller coaster, they are not thinking of bills, work, or personal problems. (13) A scary ride empties the mind of all worries except making it to the bottom alive. (14) Adults at an amusement park may claim they have come for their children, but they are there for themselves as well.

The numbers of the irrelevant sentences are   ___   ___   ___

4. “My Color Television”

(1) My color television has given me nothing but heartburn. (2) I was able to buy it a little over a year ago because I had my relatives give me money for my birthday instead of clothes that wouldn't fit. (3) My first dose of stomach acid came when I bought the set. (4) I let a salesclerk fool me into buying a discontinued model. (5) I realized this a day later when I saw newspaper advertisements for the set at seventy-five dollars less than I had paid. (6) The set worked so beautifully when I got it home that I would keep it on until stations signed off for the night. (7) Fortunately, I didn't get any channels showing all-night movies, or I would never have gotten to bed. (8) Then I started developing a problem with the set that involved static noise. (9) For some reason, when certain shows switched into a commercial, a loud buzz would sound for a few seconds. (10) Gradually, this sound began to appear during a show, and to get rid of it, I had to click the dial to another channel and click it back. (11) Sometimes this technique would not work, and I had to pick up the set and shake it to remove the buzzing sound. (12) I actually began to build up my arm muscles shaking my set; I could feel the new muscles working whenever I shot a basketball. (13) When neither of these methods removed the static noise, I would sit popping Tums and wait for the sound to go away. (14) Eventually I wound up slamming the set with my hand again, and it stopped working altogether. (15) My trip to the repair shop cost me $62. (16) The set is working well now, but I keep expecting more trouble.
The numbers of the irrelevant sentences are  ___  ___  ___  ___