Writing an Effective Paragraph is as Easy as P.I.E.

Point

The point is the topic sentence. Every sentence has a “point,” a particular topic it’s addressing. It need not necessarily be the first thing that your paragraph does, but it has to make its way through at some point (usually, by the third sentence). Also, always keep one of the cardinal guidelines for paragraph development in mind: restrict your paragraph to one point.

Illustration

During the illustration phase of paragraph structure, the writer provides evidence to support the point, or topic. These supporting statements reinforce the point, whether through presenting evidence, citing an authoritative source, or other means. When using quotes from a text remember to use signal phrases/attributive tags.

Explanation

This is where the writer must find the reasoning between the point and the illustration. Without the reasoning/explanation, a point can seem, well, pointless. Your reasoning explains how the evidence you have drawn from the text adds up to what you claim it means. It’s important not to leave the readers guessing at what is meant by the point and illustration. It’s the writer’s opportunity to show that he knows what he’s talking about. You should have at least two or three sentences of explanation.
Point Illustration Explanation in Action

P: Colors reinforce subtext

I: brown caviar, “silver” spoon, grey in upper corners fade to white

E: The deeper the color the caviar the more expensive and desired, “silver” spoon connotates inherited wealth -- and all that that lifestyle entails, gradation creates a “halo” affect around the ring, thus creating a sense of otherworldliness or divinity.

becomes...

More than just something to paint across a canvas, the use of color reinforces the subtext being sold with the ring. Rather than the expected passionate reds, blush pinks, or romantic pastels Tacori relies on a classic palette of grey/black tones and brown. Marrying the black of the text and the background, is the fade from deep grey in the upper corners to the white center where the ring is displayed. Vying for attention with the ring, the deep brown caviar indicates the rarity of the delicacy, since the deeper the color the higher the quality. The offering of the fish eggs on a silver-like spoon suggests the idea of inherited wealth and a certain lifestyle that comes with being born with a “silver spoon.” This idea of wealth and prestige continues as the dark grey fades and creates a celestial halo encircling the ring. With the brown, black, white, and silver of the rest of the ad, the colored images seem to promise a lifestyle where caviar is commonplace and everything is special. (174 words)

Other Examples

The invention of the TV dinner began with the discovery of how to freeze food. For the first time in history food could be stored for a few days without going bad. Not surprisingly the ability to freeze food was discovered by someone who left their fish in the snow. “One of the first patents related to freezing food was issued to H. Benjamin in 1842” (“TV Dinner”). Towards the end of the 1800s mechanical refrigerators were invented. The refrigerators took the new idea of freezing food and brought it to the people. Women no longer had to go to the market every day and purchase food for dinner. They could buy a week’s worth of food and store it until it was needed. This allowed women to plan meals ahead of time saving time and making it easy for them to save money on the foods they loved.

Although the Andean Condor is listed as an endangered species, its ever-growing population is extremely encouraging. According to ornithologist Marc Whitacre, “Thanks to breeding programs across the country, the Andean condor population seems to be stabilizing almost everywhere” (75). These attempts by concerned citizens may mean the difference between life and disappearance of the majestic species. If these steps are not continued, then the likelihood of the Andean Condor beginning the backward slide toward extinction is highly likely.
Thesis: ____________________________________________________________

Paragraph 1
P: ________________________________________________________________
I: ________________________________________________________________
E: ________________________________________________________________

Paragraph 2
P: ________________________________________________________________
I: ________________________________________________________________
E: ________________________________________________________________

Paragraph 3
P: ________________________________________________________________
I: ________________________________________________________________
E: ________________________________________________________________
Paragraph 4

P:

I:

E:

Paragraph 5

P:

I:

E:

Paragraph 6

P:

I:

E:

Paragraph 7

P:

I:

E: