

Assignment
Paragraph #1
Higgins 2009

An Introduction to Jane Doe

The purpose of your first assignment is to offer your readers a focused, fascinating look into your classmate's life. You will provide a lot of information, but you'll make sure that it's focused enough to give the reader a sense of one aspect of your classmate's life. In other words, focus on the element that is the most fascinating rather than attempting to tell everything about your classmate. Recognizing what belongs in a paragraph and what doesn't is a valuable skill. First you'll work carefully to get a sense of what your classmate has to tell you, and then you'll ask additional questions to get extra details. While your classmate may not have much to say about his or her educational background, but he or she may have had an interesting career already, or may describe his or her future, purpose, or family life vividly. Choose the most interesting angle, and focus on it. In the interview process, your classmate will probably give you a lot of extraneous information which you'll have to exclude to make your paragraph unified and coherent. This paragraph must be at least seven sentences long. It should contain a topic sentence, supporting major points, and supporting details.

Part 1—Prepare the Questions for the Interview—Before you write the paragraph, you'll need to ask questions to elicit information about the following. Imagine what information you'll need, and write questions pertaining to the information suggested. I recommend writing at least three questions for each of the six categories

1. Name (full name, nicknames, any family history about the name, etc.)
2. Personal background (hometown, family members, etc.)
3. Educational or career background
4. Educational or career goals
5. Hobbies/activities
6. Future

Part 2—Conduct the Interview—Take careful notes throughout the conversation. Ask follow up questions.

Part 3—Choose what to write about. You may choose more than one of the categories above, but keep in mind that you'll need a **focused** paragraph, **not an everything paragraph**.

Part 4—Write it.

What follows is an example of a poorly done paragraph.

Introducing Jane

Let me introduce my classmate, Jane Doe. Named after her great-grandmother, Jane was born in Auburn in 19--. Jane has two sisters and one brother, and her parents still live in the area. She is tall and athletic looking, and she loves to play basketball. Jane also loves volleyball and swimming. She was even on her swim team in high school. After she finished high school at Riverside, Jane went on a long, fascinating trip around the world. She traveled to China, Kenya, and many other places. It was a very interesting trip. In addition, Jane has traveled to Paris and Rome. Although she loves to read, Jane can barely find time to bury her nose in a book because she works forty hours a week at Home Depot. By carefully balancing her studies and work, Jane manages to find time to volunteer at the local hospital, too. Finally, Jane hopes to be a physical therapist one day. That's why she's now in school. Thanks for letting me introduce you to Jane. She is an interesting person.

What traits make this paragraph poorly done?

Grade the following—

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| 1. Unity | A | B | C | D | F |
| 2. Coherence | A | B | C | D | F |
| 3. Topic Sentence | A | B | C | D | F |
| 4. Vivid Details | A | B | C | D | F |