

Areas to Review for the Language Arts Section of
Highly Qualified Test for Paraprofessionals

Finding the Main Theme of a Paragraph

The theme of the paragraph is the **main idea** that is being communicated to the reader. Most themes are not directly stated but **implied**. After the first reading of the paragraph, ask yourself what message the author wants to convey. Skim the paragraph again looking for key phrases that develop the theme. The theme is the overall idea of the paragraph.

Reading for Details

Hint: Read the questions before reading the selection; this gives you prior knowledge of the type of questions you will be answering.

Read the selection carefully. Then reread the first question. Go back to the selection and find the correct answer. Do not guess or rely on your memory. The answer is clearly written in the selection.

Putting the Sentences in a Paragraph in Logical Order

Each paragraph has a topic sentence followed by sentences that contain supporting details. First, read the four sentences. Pick out the topic sentence that tells the main idea of the paragraph. Then, find the two detail sentences that explains or supports the topic sentence. The last sentence should wraps up or summarizes the paragraph.

After you have decided on the order of the sentences, quietly read the sentences in the correct order out loud to yourself. Does it flow? Does it make sense? Does it tell the events/story in the proper order?

Locating the Correct Punctuation, Capitalization, and Spelling

First read each question carefully to see what they are asking. You may be looking for punctuation, capitalization and spelling errors in one sentence. If you can not find any punctuation or capitalization errors, check for spelling errors.

Know the rules for the following:

- Singular and plural possessive nouns
- Commas
- Colons and semicolons
- Capitalization
- Format of a Business Letter

See attached material.

Finding the Inappropriate Word in the Paragraph

On this type of question, first read the paragraph carefully. Then find each listed word in the paragraph. Think of the multiple meanings of that word. Is that word used appropriately in this paragraph or is the word incorrectly use? Be sure to reread the sentence before and the sentence after the word to see if the word is correctly used in this context.

Punctuating Dialogue

- Dialogue should be enclosed in quotation marks.
“He’s the best,” said Jamie. “He’s the best there is.”
- Commas and periods always go inside the quotation marks.
“Just a minute,” said Mr. Sanchez quickly.
- Question marks and exclamation points go inside the quotation marks when the dialogue is itself a question or exclamation
“Are there any other nominations?” he asked.
- Commas set off the name of the person speaking within a sentence. Each part of the dialogue is enclosed in quotation marks.
“This dog”, said Billy, “is my very best friend”.

Multiple Meanings of Words

Some words have several meanings. Be sure to know the meaning of all the words on the Reading Workshop handout.

Combining Sentences

When two or more sentences contain many of the same words, you can combine them to make the writing more interesting and easier to read. See handout.

Format of a Business Letter

Pay close attention to the punctuation and capitalization in the heading, inside address, salutation and closing. See hand out.

Reading Workshop

Vocabulary is extremely important in reading. Some words have several meanings. Be sure to know the meaning of the following words:

<p>Prior: previously, before I ate breakfast <u>prior</u> to going to work.</p>
<p>Eliminate: get rid of What can you do to <u>eliminate</u> the smell of garlic when you cook?</p>
<p>Connect: join or put together The child <u>connected</u> the tinker toys to make a house.</p>
<p>Disconnect: to take apart Be sure to <u>disconnect</u> the cord before moving the light</p>
<p>Advance: previously, before, to move forward, promote, lend, offer, being ahead of time Please fill out the forms in <u>advance</u> of enrollment.</p>
<p>Result: come about because of something else, end, something obtained by calculation or investigation As a <u>result</u> of AR test, each student is given a reading level.</p>
<p>Decreased: cause to grow less Her waistline <u>decreased</u> when she lost weight.</p>
<p>Increased: Make or become greater, enlarge in size, something added Interest in eating healthy has <u>increased</u> so many fast food restaurants have added salads to the menus.</p>
<p>Operate: perform work, perform an operation, manages The forklift <u>operates</u> on the principle of using an engine to lift heavy loads.</p>
<p>User: someone who uses, putting something in action Each individual <u>user</u> of the computer has to log on separately.</p>
<p>Indefinite: having no fixed limit or amount, not precise Few appliances are built to run <u>indefinitely</u>.</p>
<p>Current: belonging to the present, swiftest part of the stream, flow of electricity Spikey hair is the <u>current</u> fad for boys.</p>
<p>Useful: having value, utility or function Hot pads are very <u>useful</u> when removing pans from the oven.</p>

Obsolete: no longer useful or in use
Horses are obsolete in commuting to work.

Cost: amount paid for something, cause to pay, suffer or lose
Being late for work cost him his job.

Thrashed: tossed about or moved violently, whipped
The apple tree was trashed by the wind storm and lost its fruit.

Thresh: To beat in order to separate grain for straw.
The threshing crew used a combine machine to cut the fields of wheat

Major:

1. larger or greater- Landing on the moon was a major achievement for the USA.
2. commissioned officer or a leader- Bill is a major in the army.
3. main field of study- A math teacher majors in math in college.
4. noteworthy or conspicuous or main- He was a catcher in the major league.

Superior:

1. higher, better or most important – Billy did a superior job of playing second base.
2. haughty – Mary feels she is superior to everyone.
3. older – Wine that is aged is superior to newly bottled wines.

You're: a contraction that is used in place of you are
You're (you are) my best friend.

Yours: The one belonging to you.
Is that yours? Yours is the best.

World: earth with its inhabitants and all the things on it. World is a common noun and is **not** capitalized unless it is the first word of a sentence.
People live in many different kind of houses all over the world.

Combining Sentences

When two sentences contain many of the same words, you can combine them. You might combine parts of sentences or whole sentences to make your writing more interesting and easier to read.

Combining Subjects, Objects, Verbs, and Modifiers

You can combine parts of two shorter sentences to make one sentence that reads more smoothly. Use the conjunctions *and*, *but*, and *or* to make compound subjects, objects, and verbs.

Rectangles are polygons. Hexagons are polygons.
Rectangles and hexagons are polygons.
(compound subject)

Did Jasmine draw a bar graph? Did Jasmine draw a line graph?
Did Jasmine draw a bar graph or a line graph?
(compound object)

Claudio checked his answer. Claudio erased his answer.
Claudio checked and erased his answer. (compound verb)

A **modifier** is a word or group of words that adds information to a sentence. A word that modifies a noun is an adjective. A word that modifies a verb is an adverb. Use a comma or a conjunction to combine modifiers from different sentences.

I drew a large triangle. I drew a right triangle.
I drew a **large, right** triangle.

Solve the problems quickly. Solve the problems carefully.
Solve the problems **quickly but carefully.**

Combining Phrases

Phrases from separate sentences can be combined to improve the flow of your writing. You might even be able to combine phrases from several sentences to avoid repeating words.

The key is under the mat. The mat is on the porch.
The key is under the mat on the porch.

Sam found the key. Sam unlocked the door.
Sam found the key and unlocked the door.

The dog ran up the stairs. It ran to the front door.
Then it jumped on Sam.
The dog ran up the stairs to the front door and jumped on Sam.

When you combine words or phrases from different sentences, be sure the new sentence makes sense. Otherwise, you might confuse your readers.

Sam threw a ball to the dog. Sam threw a ball high in the air.

Sam threw a ball to the dog high in the air. (This sentence is confusing. The dog isn't high in the air.)

Sam threw a ball high in the air to the dog. (This sentence correctly combines the two original sentences.)

Creating Compound Sentences

Two simple sentences that are related can be combined to form a **compound sentence**. Both parts of a compound sentence express a complete thought. Use a conjunction such as *and*, *but*, or *or* between the two simple sentences, and place a comma before the conjunction.

Mariah loves to swim. She wants to be a lifeguard.

Mariah loves to swim, **and** she wants to be a lifeguard.

You can wear your swimsuit. You can change at the beach.

You can wear your swimsuit, **or** you can change at the beach.

Creating Complex Sentences

Another way to combine sentences is by creating complex sentences. A **complex sentence** is made of an independent clause and one or more dependent clauses. A **clause** is a group of words that has a subject and a verb. An **independent clause** can stand alone as a sentence, but a **dependent clause** cannot. A dependent clause begins with a subordinating conjunction such as *after*, *although*, *because*, or *when* or with a relative pronoun such as *that*, *which*, or *who*. To combine two sentences into a complex sentence, make the idea from one of the sentences into a dependent clause. Note that a comma is not always used between the independent and dependent clauses.

Mariah joined the swim team. She became the captain.

After Mariah joined the swim team, she became the captain.

These are Mariah's lucky goggles. She wears them at every meet.

These are the lucky goggles **that Mariah wears at every meet**.

Capitalization

When you **capitalize**, you make the first letter of a word a capital letter. Letters that are not capitalized are called lowercase.

Capitalize the first word of every sentence.

The bicycle race takes place tomorrow.

Capitalize the first word in a direct quotation.

Mom shouted, "Don't forget your water bottle and your helmet!"

Capitalize proper nouns and proper adjectives.

Proper Nouns: Brazil, Texas, Yankee Stadium

Proper Adjectives: Brazil nuts, Texas resident, Yankee fan

Capitalize the pronoun *I*.

Once I start one of her books, I can't put it down.

Capitalize initials that stand for part of a person's name.

J.R.R. Tolkien L. Frank Baum

Titles

Capitalize people's titles.

Houston Baker, Jr. Wendy Falb, Ph. D.

Dr. Alexis Mazza

Councilwoman Hannah Fernandez

Do not capitalize titles used as common nouns or those following names.

Joan Cohen, a doctor of pediatrics, is running for councilwoman.

Capitalize titles used in place of names.

Will you change your vote, Senator?

Capitalize words used in place of names.

Will Grandpa ask Sergi's grandmother to go?

Notice that *grandpa* used as a name is capitalized. *Sergi's grandmother* describes a person; it is not capitalized.

Geographical and Historical Terms

Capitalize the names of historic periods.

Stone Age
Great Depression
Harlem Renaissance
Victorian period

Capitalize the names of historic events.

Holocaust
Pearl Harbor Day
American Revolution
Battle of Bunker Hill

Capitalize geographic place names.

These include bodies of water, mountains, and other features that have been named.

Great Salt Lake	Everglades
Snake River	Chesapeake Bay
Atlantic Ocean	Mt. Hood
Blue Ridge Mountains	Death Valley

Capitalize the regions of a country.

Snow Belt New England Pacific Northwest Mid-Atlantic

Capitalize direction words used for a specific place.

the South of France
the North Pole
the East
the West

Use lowercase for general direction words.

eastern shore
northwest current
south side of the mountain

Capitalize the names of holidays and special events.

Labor Day Fourth of July
Olympics World Series

Capitalize the names of months and days.

May September
Tuesday Saturday

Capitalize the names of countries, cities, states, and counties.

Portugal Seattle
Kentucky Orange County

Capitalize titles of businesses, institutions, and organizations.

Salvation Army
Cook County Hospital
Westminster College

Capitalize brand names.

Crazy Crunch cereal
Super Spin yo-yos
Speedy sneakers

Capitalize the titles of books, movies, magazines, and newspapers.

Harriet the Spy (book)
Spider Magazine (magazine)
Chicago Tribune (newspaper)

Capitalize the titles of musical compositions and works of art.

The Magic Flute (opera)
Starry Night (painting)
The Thinker (statue)

Capitalize the names of important documents and awards.

Magna Carta
Nobel Peace Prize
Declaration of Independence
Bill of Rights

Capitalize the names of important structures.

Vietnam Memorial
the Pentagon
Golden Gate Bridge
Lincoln Tunnel
St. Louis Arch

Capitalize Religions, Nationalities, and Languages

Religions	Nationalities	Languages
Judaism Islam Hinduism Christianity Buddhism	Polish Colombian Senegalese Norwegian Malaysian	Mandarin English Russian Spanish Japanese

Capitalize only those school subjects that refer to a language.

English Spanish
German French

Use lowercase letters for most school subjects.

math science
social studies reading

Capitalize greetings and closings in letters.

Use a capital letter to begin the greeting or salutation and also the first and last name of the person to whom you are writing. The first letter of every word in the salutation of a business letter should be capitalized.

Dear Ms. Valente, To Whom It May Concern:
Dear Sir: Dear John,

Capitalize the parts of a topic outline.

Use capital Roman numerals and capital letters to label main topics and subtopics. Use lowercase letters for the subdivisions of the subtopics. The first word of each heading, subheading, and subdivision should also be capitalized.

- I. Swimming for fun
 - A. Provides exercise
 - 1. Effects on whole body
 - a. Low impact on joints and muscles
 - b. Works wide range of muscles
 - 2. Heart benefits
 - a. Strengthens the heart
 - b. Increases red-blood cell production
 - B. Provides relaxation
 - 1. Soothing effects of water
 - 2. Stress-relieving effects of the exercise
- II. Swimming for competition

Note: Only the subdivision labels (a., b.) are lowercase.

Possessive Nouns

A noun that shows ownership or possession of things or qualities is a **possessive noun**. Possessive nouns can be singular or plural. Singular possessive nouns are formed by adding 's.

Kyle wanted to go to Cameron's house.

Plural possessive nouns are formed by adding 's to plural nouns not ending in *s*. Plural nouns already ending in *s* simply add an apostrophe to the end.

The geese's eggs were outside my cousins' tent.



Commas

Commas are punctuation marks that help organize thoughts and items. They show the reader where to pause and what thoughts go together.

Commas in a Series

Use a comma to separate three or more items in a series. A series of three or more groups of words also uses a comma after each group.

Please grab the leash, collar, and treats. (series of words)

Was it a toy poodle, miniature poodle, or standard poodle? (series of phrases)

Commas also separate the items in a series of three or more predicates.

The dogs stepped out of their crates, sniffed the ground, and began to play.

Commas After Introductory Phrases or Clauses

Use a comma after a long introductory phrase or clause. A short introductory phrase or clause does not need a comma.

When you become really good at handling dogs, I will let you show them. (long introductory clause)

Until we arrived at the dog show, we had no idea what the schedule was. (long introductory phrase)

At 12:00 the show began. (short introductory phrase)

When it started we had a schedule. (short introductory clause)

Commas in Compound Sentences

Compound sentences contain two or more independent clauses. Use a comma and a connecting word, such as *and*, *but*, or *or*, to join the independent clauses.

The Irish terrier wanted to play catch, **and** the beagle wanted to chase him.

I would really like to see the Weimaraners, **but** the Saint Bernards are showing next.

Do **not** use commas to separate the compound subjects or compound predicates of simple sentences.

Jed brushed his dog from head to tail and walked it outside near the barn. (compound predicate)

Commas and Interjections

Use a comma to set off an interjection not followed by an exclamation point.

Oh, well, I came to the dog show mostly for fun.

Commas with Appositives

Use two commas to set off an appositive, a word or phrase placed next to a noun to provide extra information.

Roger's dog, a German Shepard, is my favorite.

Commas with Direct Address

Direct address is a name or phrase used in speaking directly to a person. Use one or two commas to set off a noun of direct address (the person being spoken to) from the rest of the sentence.

Kara, which is your favorite breed?

Actually, Mariah, I really like mixed breeds.

Commas Used to Separate Adjectives

Use commas to separate two or more adjectives that have equal importance in modifying the same noun.

The sleek, fast greyhound easily outran the basset hound.

Do not use a comma between adjectives when the adjective closer to the noun functions as a part of it.

She is an experienced dog trainer.

Commas with Interrupters

Use commas to set off interrupters, words or phrases that interrupt the central idea of a sentence.

English Setters, on the other hand, require lots of exercise.

They will be quite happy, however, in a large yard.

Commas with Introductory Words

Use a comma to set off the introductory words *yes*, *no*, and *well*.

No, I have never seen that type of dog.

Well, would you like to see it?

Yes, I would.

Commas in Dialogue

Use one comma to set off a direct quotation when the speaker is named at the beginning or end of a quotation. Use two commas, one on either side of the speaker tag, in the middle of a quotation.

Jasmine asked, "When will we get to see the greyhounds?"

"They will be in the show area," he answered, "when the whippets are finished."

"That will be about thirty minutes from now," he added.

Commas with Parts of a Letter

Use a comma after a friendly letter's greeting and after the closing of all letters.

Dear Mrs. Woodhouse,

Dear Ted,

Sincerely,

Yours truly,

Commas with Dates

Use a comma between the day and year of a complete date. Do not use a comma when you write only the month and year.

Champion Master Briar was born April 12, 1996.

In August 1999 he won the best-of-breed award.

Commas in Large Numbers

Use commas in numbers with four digits or more, except for years.

Barbara Woodhouse trained more than 17,000 dogs and their owners.

In 2000 Mr. Singer left an inheritance of \$50,000 to his dog.

Commas in Addresses

Use a comma after a street address when it is followed by the name of a city. Use a comma to set off the name of a state or country when it follows the name of a city. Do not use a comma between a state and a ZIP code.

Regal Rustin prefers to live in Tyverton, England, with his owners.

Write to Ruff and Ready at 236 Lonesome Highway, Cut Bank,
MT 59736

▶ Colons and Semicolons

Introduce a List with a Colon

To introduce a list with a colon, use the words *the following* or *as follows* at some point in the sentence before the colon and list.

The things you will need for the sleepover are **as follows**: a toothbrush, pajamas, a sleeping bag, and a change of clothes.

Colons After Salutations

Use a colon after a business letter salutation.

Dear Ms. Pulaski:

Colons Between Hours and Minutes

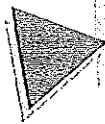
Use a colon to separate the hour and the minutes of a precise time.

Drop your daughter off at 6:15 P.M. and pick her up at 9:30 A.M. tomorrow.

Semicolons (;)

A **semicolon** is a punctuation mark used to join the independent, or main, clauses in a sentence and to help separate clauses joined by some adverbs.

Connect independent clauses not joined by *and*, *but*, *or*, or *nor*.
Everyone finally fell asleep; some of the girls snored.



Business Letters

A **business letter** is a formal letter written to a company, organization, or professional person for a specific reason. Your tone should be less personal and even more polite and direct than that normally used for a friendly letter. Below are the parts of a business letter:

Heading

The heading consists of the sender's address and the date. It goes in the upper left corner.

Inside Address

The inside address includes the name and address of the person receiving the letter. It goes two lines below the heading.

Ms. Greta Frederick, Ph.D.

Salutation

The salutation is the greeting. Put a colon after it.

Dear Ms. Samartino:

You may use salutations like these when you don't know the person's name:

To Whom It May Concern: Dear Sir or Madam:

Dear National Geographic Society:

Body

The body includes what you want to say. Be brief and polite but not overly formal or stiff. Begin the body two lines below the salutation. Leave a single line of space between each paragraph. Do not indent.

Closing

The closing goes two lines below the body, at the left margin.

Yours truly, Sincerely,

Signature

Sign your name under the closing.

