

Practice with Topic Sentences and Detail Sentences

CASAS Competencies:

- 0.1.2 Identify or use appropriate language for informational purposes, e.g. to identify, describe, state needs, etc.
- 7.2.3 Make comparisons, differentiating among, sorting, and classifying items, information, or ideas
- 7.2.4 Identify or make inferences through inductive and deductive reasoning to hypothesize, predict, conclude, and synthesize
- 7.2.5 Evaluate a situation, statement, or process, assembling information and providing evidence, making judgments, examining assumptions, and identifying contradictions
- 7.3.1 Identify a problem and its possible causes
- 7.4.2 Take notes or write a summary or an outline

Outcomes:

- Name different people, things and actions in a busy street scene
- Identify unsafe situations or behaviors
- Describe actions performed by different people in a busy street scene
- Match topic and detail sentences to specific images
- Organize sentences in a paragraph from more general to more specific.
- Compose a paragraph that includes a topic sentence and 3-4 detail sentences.

Teacher Preparation and Materials:

- Overhead projector and transparency marker
- One blank overhead transparency.
- Overhead transparency and class copies of *Handout 1: A Busy Street Scene*
- Overhead transparency and class copies of *Handout 2A: Is This a Good Paragraph? **
- Overhead transparency and class copies of *Handout 2B: Is This Paragraph Better? **
- Overhead transparency and class copies of *Handout 2C: A Much Clearer Paragraph **
- Overhead transparency and class copies of *Handout 3A: What is the Main Idea? **
- Overhead transparency and class copies of *Handout 3B: Adding Detail Sentences **
- Overhead transparency and class copies of *Handout 4A: What Is the Main Idea?** (optional)
- Overhead transparency and class copies of *Handout 4B: Adding Detail Sentences ** (optional)
- Overhead transparencies and **group** copies of *Handout 5A and Handout 5B: Sentence Strips (enough copies, cut up and paper-clipped into packets for partner or small group work)*
- Class copies of *Handout 6: Describing A Busy Street Scene*

* During the “What?” section of the lesson, the teacher should distribute stapled packets with copies of Handouts 1, 2A, 2B, 2C, 3A, 3B, 4A (optional), and 4B (optional) to students.

Why?

Before beginning the lesson, take a few moments to explain to students the purpose of today’s class: to practice writing short paragraphs that include a topic sentence and 3-4 detail sentences. Model this process by writing a paragraph about one student in class. Elicit information from the class to form a topic sentence and detail sentences.

Sample First Paragraph:

_____ is a student in this class. She has long black hair and a big smile. She studies English and math at this school. She is a friendly and hard-working student. Her family is from _____.

Note: If you feel the students would benefit from another warm-up practice, point to an object in the room, and ask them to help you write a short paragraph about the object (e.g. *That is a chair. It is made of plastic, and it is blue. It is hard, but it is also comfortable. There are many chairs like that in this school.*)

What?

Put the transparency of *Handout 1: A Busy Street Scene* on the overhead projector and explain to students that this is the picture they will describe in a paragraph at the end of this lesson. Distribute a stapled worksheet packet to each student, so that they can look at their own copies of *Handout 1*.

Do!

Controlled Practice 1-3:

Use Handouts 2A/B/C: example paragraphs for comparison, 3A/B: work with main idea sentences and detail sentences and 4A/B: more work with main idea sentences and detail sentences, to help students understand how to write a paragraph with a topic sentence and 3-4 detail sentences. Students should refer to *Handout 1: A Busy Street Scene* to better understand what’s going on in Handouts 3A/B and 4A/B. **Note:** Handouts 4A and 4B are included for extra practice if desired.

Controlled Practice 1:

Use *Handout 2A: Is This a Clear Paragraph?* To briefly discuss with students why this is a poor paragraph. The paragraph contains complete sentences and doesn’t have any punctuation or spelling mistakes, but it doesn’t have a main idea to guide the reader. There are lots of sentences, but they aren’t connected, and they don’t explain the picture.

Compare paragraph 2A to the one on *Handout 2B: Is This Paragraph Better?* Discuss with the students the merits of this new paragraph (e.g. It explains the picture; it has a main idea and detail sentences, the capitalization and punctuation are good, etc.). Help the students to see that the paragraph could be much clearer if the main idea of the paragraph (the topic sentence) came first and was then followed by detail sentences that appeared in logical order.

Write down the topic sentence on the transparency of *Handout 2C: A Much Clearer Paragraph*. Ask students which of the detail sentences should come next and have them copy the paragraph onto their Handout 2C.

Improved Paragraph: *This man is not paying attention. He just hit a lady with his shopping cart. She is angry. I think she is going to yell at him. He should apologize to her.*

Controlled Practice 2:

Show just the picture on *Handout 3A: What's the Main Idea?* Encourage students to suggest some topic sentences that could be used in a paragraph about the drawing of the woman holding groceries. Then tell the students to find their copies of *Handout 3A* in their packets and have them choose the best topic sentence from the list provided below the drawing.

Discuss with students why choice “D – The woman is not safe.” would be the best topic sentence. Help students to understand that choice “d” explains the story behind the picture best. The other sentences are each true, but they don’t tell a larger story about the image. Help students to see that the main idea of this image is represented in the larger picture of the busy street scene in *Handout 1*.

Elicit detail sentences to support the topic sentence: *Why do you think this woman is not safe? What is happening in the picture that makes you think she isn't safe? What might happen to the woman? What should she do?*

Possible responses:

She is in the middle of the street. She might fall down because her dog is pulling her. She should use the crosswalk to be safe.

Write 3-4 of the students’ suggestions for detail sentences on the transparency of *Handout 3B: Adding Detail Sentences* and have them copy the paragraph onto their own Handout 3B.

Controlled Practice 3 (optional):

If more practice is needed, complete Handout 4A and 4B as in Controlled Practice 2. Discuss with the class why choice “C - This boy is not being careful.”

is the best topic sentence to explain the main idea of the drawing of the boy on rollerblades.

Elicit 3-4 detail sentences to explain the topic sentence and have students copy the finished paragraph onto their Handout 4B: *Why is the boy not being careful? What is he doing that proves he is not being careful? What should he do?*

Possible responses:

He is rollerblading on the sidewalk. He isn't wearing a helmet, and he is going very fast. He isn't paying attention. He is looking at the girl on the bike, so he doesn't see the man in the wheelchair. He might have an accident.

Group Practice: Distribute prepared packets containing Handouts 5A and 5B to partners or small groups to give students practice in organizing sentence strips into two paragraphs about two different images.

Step By Step:

Say: OK, now you're going to have a chance to work together in small groups. I am going to give you two pictures and 14 sentence strips. Your job is to put the sentence strips in order to make a paragraph under each picture. You should start by finding the topic sentence that should go under each picture. Be careful to match the rest of the sentence strips to the correct picture and pay close attention to how the sentences connect to each other. Go slowly, work together, and be careful. When you think you have successfully created a paragraph under each picture, raise your hands, and I'll come check your work.

Distribute picture and sentence packets made from *Handout 5A* and *Handout 5B: Sentence Strips* to partners or student groups of 3-4. Give each group about 10 minutes to use the sentence strips to create logical paragraphs under each picture. Walk around the room to make sure students understand what they should be doing with the sentence strips and two pictures. When it appears that most students have finished, put the transparencies of *Handout 5A* and *Handout 5B* on the overhead projector, one at a time, so that students can check their work.

So What?

Students will demonstrate their ability to write a short paragraph that includes a topic sentence and 3-4 detail sentences by spending 15 minutes writing a paragraph by themselves about the busy street scene in *Handout 6*.

Example Handout 6 paragraph with a topic sentence and detail sentences:

Many people in this picture have problems. The man with boxes is afraid because the girl on the bike might hit him. The lady with the dog is in danger because she is in the middle of the street. She can fall and get hurt. There is also a boy on the sidewalk. He is moving very fast, but he is not paying attention. He might hit the man in the wheelchair. Another man just had a car accident, and he is very angry. His car is damaged, and he is yelling. The police are coming to help everyone.

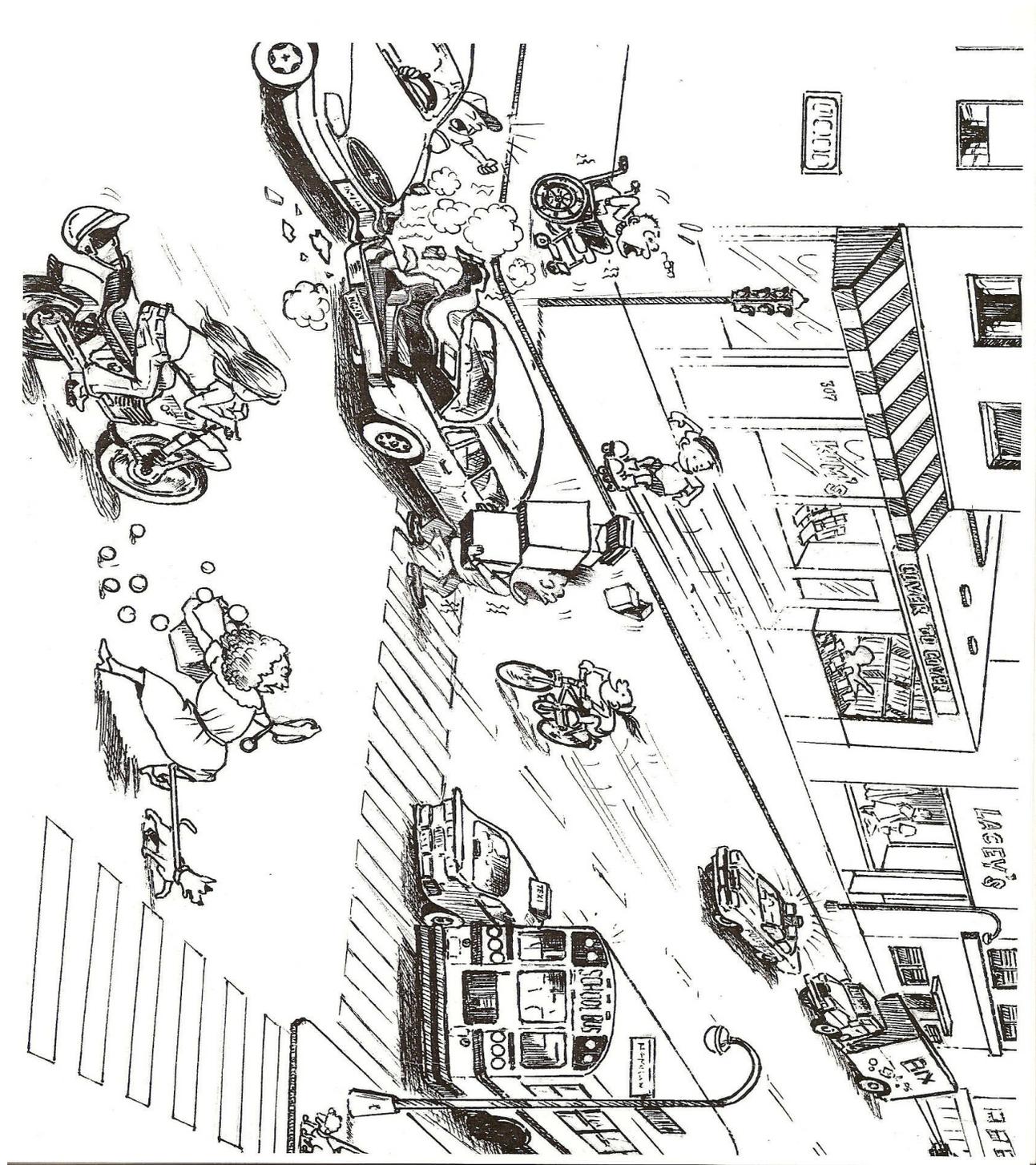
Or

There are a lot of problems in this picture. A woman is walking her dog, but she isn't using the crosswalk. She is in the middle of the street. A man is holding a lot of boxes, but he is also in the middle of the street. Another man is yelling because he just had a car accident. He is very angry. The boy and the girl are having fun, but they're not paying attention. The boy might hit the man in the wheelchair, and the girl might hit the man with the boxes. The police need to help these people.

Follow-up Activity Suggestions:

- 1) Edit the students' writing samples and then return these "first drafts" to the students with a clean copy of Handout 6. Instruct the students to write a corrected "final draft" of their busy street paragraphs on their new copy of *Handout 6*. Check to make sure students make all necessary corrections.
- 2) After class, review all of the writing samples, and identify examples of some common errors from students' writing. Type up 6-8 of these incorrectly written sentences. When the class meets again, give each student a copy of this list of 6-8 student sentences with errors, and invite them to try to rewrite these sentences correctly as a warm-up activity.

Handout 1: A Busy Street Scene



Handout 2A: Is This a Good Paragraph?



He has glasses. I see a basket and a shopping

cart. The store opens at 9:30 every morning. The

food is fresh. My friend wants to work at a store.

I'm hungry. I usually eat chicken and rice for lunch.

Handout 2B: Is This Paragraph Better?



He just hit a lady with his shopping cart. I think she

is going to yell at him. She's very angry. He should

apologize to her. This man is not paying attention.

Handout 2C: A Much Clearer Paragraph



Handout 3A: What is the Main Idea?

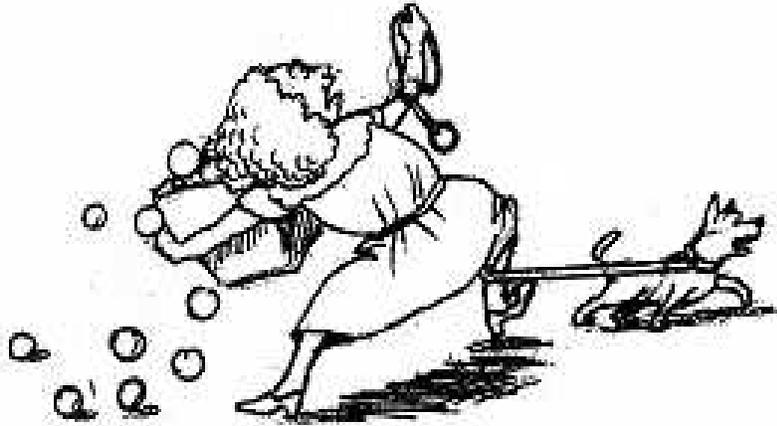


Which of the sentences below best describes this drawing?

- A. This woman is walking her dog.
- B. This woman has curly hair.
- C. This woman is in the street.
- D. This woman is not safe.
- E. This woman is holding a bag of groceries.

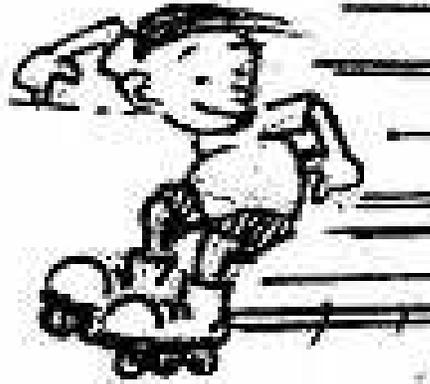
Handout 3B: Adding Detail Sentences

Let's write a short paragraph about this drawing. The topic sentence from Handout 3A is already written down. Now we need to write three to four more detail sentences. These sentences should give more information about the main idea in the topic sentence. Detail sentences will answer these questions: **How do we know this woman is not safe? What is happening in the drawing that shows she is unsafe? What might happen next? What do you think the lady should do?**



This woman is not safe.

Handout 4A: What is the Main Idea?



Which of the sentences below best describes this drawing?

A. This is a boy.

B. He is about eight years old.

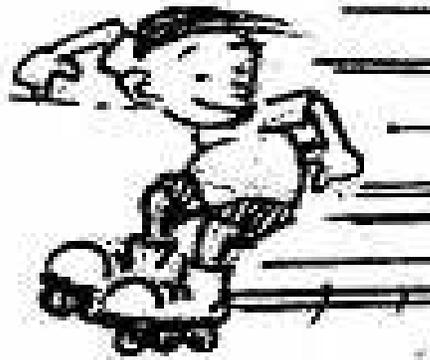
C. This boy is not being careful.

D. The boy in this drawing is downtown.

E. I think this boy likes sports.

Handout 4B: Adding Detail Sentences

Let's write a short paragraph about this drawing. The topic sentence from Handout 4A is already written down. Now we need to write three to four more detail sentences. These sentences should give more information about the main idea in the topic sentence. Detail sentences will answer these questions: **How do we know the boy isn't being careful? What is he doing? What is he not doing? What problem might occur? What should the boy do?**



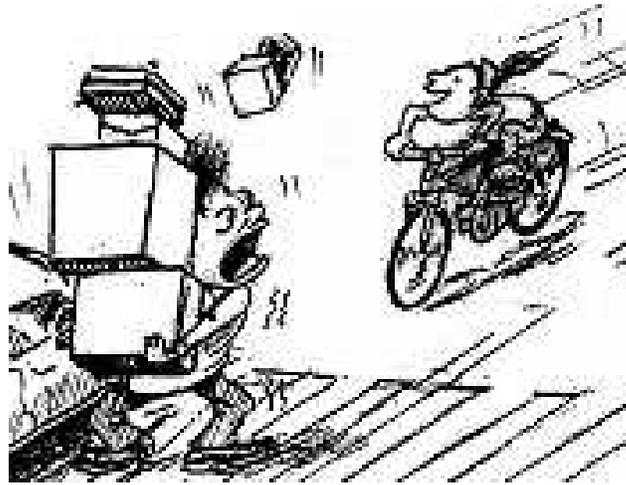
This boy is not being careful.

Handout 5A: Matching Exercise



This man is very angry because he just had a car accident downtown. He sees that his car is damaged, so he is very mad. He doesn't want to spend a lot of money to repair his car. This driver thinks the man with the boxes caused the accident, so he is shouting out his window at him. He called 9-1-1, and the police are going to help him soon.

Handout 5B: Matching Exercise



This man is frightened. A short time ago, he picked up some boxes at a store, and then he went back to his car. He used the crosswalk, but he parked his car in the middle of the street. Now he is very worried because he thinks the girl on her bicycle is going to hit him. She doesn't see the man, and he can't get out of the way because he is holding the boxes.

Handout 6: Describing a Busy Street Scene

