**Writing a Descriptive Paragraph**

Before we begin working on five-paragraph essays, let’s review what we already know about writing a good paragraph. A good paragraph needs to have a **topic sentence** that addresses the main point**; details** that help describe and support the topic sentence**;** and a **concluding sentence** that reviews what the paragraph was about**.**

Today we are going to work on writing a descriptive paragraph. Your writing prompt is: *Describe a good friend you know. If you don’t want to write about a specific friend of yours, you may write about the characteristics all good friends should have*. The first thing you need to have is a sentence that addresses the topic—also known as **a topic sentence**.

The sentence, “My friend has many likeable qualities.” works as a topic sentence because it tells the reader what you are going to be writing about. Usually the topic sentence in a single paragraph assignment is near the beginning of the paragraph. Notice in the outline below that the topic sentence is followed by **details** that help describe your good friend and explain why you like him or her. There should also be a **concluding comment** that repeats your points in different words.

It’s always a good idea to take a few minutes to write an outline before beginning an assignment. Here’s a good way to outline a response to the question, “What makes a good friend?”

**Topic Sentence**: My friend has many likable qualities.

**Detail** #1: He is kind hearted.

A. (Example sentences of his kindheartedness.)

He is very thoughtful and friendly to everyone. He never puts people down and cares about others before himself.

**Detail** #2 He is funny.

A. (Example sentences of how he is funny and how he helps me laugh at myself)

Because he is smart, he knows how to use humor to get his point across without hurting anyone’s feelings. He is also familiar with how to use humor to motivate people and how to get people to agree with him.

**Detail** #3 He is trustworthy and honest. (Example sentences)

(The third detail is usually the most important and is saved for last because it will be the one the reader reads last and remembers most.)

The most important thing I like about my friend is that I know that he would never turn his back on me or my family. He won’t lie to me. I feel very lucky to have someone like my friend because I can count on him in many ways. If your car broke down far away from home in the middle of the night, my friend is the kind of person who would get out of bed to pick you up.

**Concluding Comment**: (This is a restatement of your topic in different words that includes the details and words that support your topic.) I feel very lucky to have someone like my friend because I can count on him in many ways. I have learned how to treat other people better through watching him, and he has shown me what it means to be honest and trustworthy.

So, when we put the topic sentence, the details, and concluding comment together, the **rough draft** of the paragraph looks like this:

My friend has many likable qualities. He is kind hearted. He is very thoughtful and friendly to everyone. He never puts people down and cares about others before himself. He is funny and helps me laugh at myself. Because he is smart, he knows how to use humor to get his point across without hurting anyone’s feelings. He is also familiar with how to use humor to motivate people and how to get people to agree with him. He is trustworthy and honest. The most important thing I like about my friend is that I know that he would never turn his back on me or my family. He won’t lie to me. I feel very lucky to have someone like my friend because I can count on him in many ways. If your car broke down far away from home in the middle of the night, my friend is the kind of person who would get out of bed to pick you up. I have learned how to treat other people better through watching him, and he has shown me what it means to be honest and trustworthy.

Notice that too many of the sentences are short and begin with “He.” The **contents** of this paragraph are good, but stylistically it is poor. Now it is time to rewrite the paragraph, or what your teacher might call writing a **second draft**. To improve this rough draft, we need to combine these short sentences into larger ones.