

CERS Paragraph – Practice with Final Sentences

DIRECTIONS: On both sides of this paper are unfinished paragraphs. Each paragraph is missing a final sentence—the “Part D” sentence. Choose the best sentence for each paragraph from the choices given below it. Write the ENTIRE sentence in the space provided at the end of each paragraph.

1. Students should attend school all year. Shorter breaks in the school year provide big benefits in and out of school. With shorter breaks, students do not forget as much from the start of a vacation until the end. This lets teachers reduce review time and teach more new material. Short breaks also keep kids from getting bored the way they sometimes are by the end of a long vacation. Since they are not bored, they do not get into trouble as they look for new ways to fill time. In addition, a year-round schedule is more like a college or work schedule than a traditional school year. This helps older students move more easily from high school to the next phase of their lives. _____

- a. Since learning never stops, neither should active instruction.
- b. With smaller blocks of time away from school, students are better off at home and in school.
- c. Teachers and students should be happy about a year-round school schedule.

2. People should stop saying “Bless you” when someone sneezes. There is no good reason for it. This custom is said to have begun in response to a superstition either about the soul leaving the body or a person’s heart skipping a beat at the time of a sneeze. We know now that the heart does not skip during a sneeze, and there is no method of proving or disproving information about a soul. _____

- a. Since there is no justifiable reason for this custom, it is time for it to end.
- b. With everyone’s agreement, this custom could end tomorrow.
- c. Because people hold onto traditions, this one will probably never die.

3. It is time for the American flag to be redesigned. It is an artistic mess. For one thing, there is no symmetry to its design, making it look like it was designed by a child. This is especially evident in the way the field of blue in the corner looks misplaced and shoved out of the way. On top of that, the two sizes of stripes appear to be the result of a random decision, with no thought given to balancing the entire design. Finally, the idea of stars does not connect to that of stripes in any obvious way. _____

- a. Given the lack of design sense in the finished product, the flag should be overhauled.
- b. Without giving offense to Betsy Ross, I say there should be a national design competition to fix our flag.
- c. Despite its history, the flag is open to criticism.

4. Ballroom dancing should be part of middle school physical education. It is an effective combination of exercise and social interaction between genders. First, good dancers must be able to athletically control their own movements. Second, they must be able to adjust their movements to those of their partners, adding another layer of athleticism. Third, boys and girls can participate equally and with each other. Finally, everyone can be involved at once, unlike many activities in physical education classes. _____

- a. Ballroom dancing is the perfect physical activity for boys and girls to participate in together.
- b. Now do you see why ballroom dancing could be a great part of gym class?
- c. Ballroom dancing is something everyone should try.

5. No matter who he or she is, the President of the United States deserves the respect of Americans. The holder of the office is the ultimate spokesperson for the nation, and how its citizens treat its leader sends strong signals to the rest of the world. After all, the president projects the power of the nation. Such power is weakened, however, when Americans do not seem to take the president seriously. And Americans should be concerned about other countries’ thinking that the United States is weak in its convictions. This can happen when Americans do not stand behind their leader. This does not mean that Americans should never criticize their president, but criticism can and should be done respectfully. _____

- a. Some presidents have not performed that well, but Americans must deal with such occurrences.
- b. With this in mind, Americans need to think before they act.
- c. For the sake of the nation’s prestige, America’s citizens should show respect for their president.

6. Summer is my favorite season. It is the time when I feel least restricted. Perhaps it is obvious, but summer is vacation time. I can relax without worrying about the obligations that I have when I am on the job. What's more, the hot weather itself offers freedom. I don't have to bundle up against the cold when I go outside, or hunker down under a blanket or by a fire when I am inside. There is no snow to keep me from traveling where and when I want to, either. Finally, the long hours of daylight allow me to participate in outdoor activities for the longest times of the year. _____

- a. Summer is better than autumn, winter, and spring put together!
- b. To me, summer means "freedom," which is why it is my favorite time of the year.
- c. I like autumn a lot, too, but summer is my favorite time of the year.

7. Calculators have made people lazy about math. When misused, these tools make it too easy for people to avoid mental computations. Math teachers tell stories of students who feel it is their right to use calculators for the simplest of math problems—even problems that people should have memorized, such as basic times tables. And once someone falls into that trap, reliance on a calculator may prevent that person from ever learning the basic building blocks of mathematics. As a result, he or she is left without a foundation for manipulating numbers mentally. _____

- a. Calculators should not be allowed in school until the fifth grade.
- b. People should memorize their times tables and be able to do basic math in their heads.
- c. The decline of people's concern with doing basic math in their heads can be traced to the rise of the calculator.

8. Berkshire Middle School students would be better off without the current hot lunch program. It introduces unnecessary complications to the lunch hour. As nice as the program may be, students do not need a hot lunch in the middle of the day. Sandwiches, salads, fruit, and other traditional cold lunch choices are both nutritious and delicious. With this in mind, a new cafeteria program could be developed that has fewer choices and fewer preparation requirements. This would move students through the lunch line faster, as there would be less time necessary to make selections, and no more delays connected with students' waiting for the next batch of French fries to cook or the next pizza to come out of the oven. The result: more time to eat instead of another part of the day when students feel rushed. _____

- a. Lunch time should be a relaxing time, but someone in the back of the line doesn't feel relaxed.
- b. Lunch at Berkshire could be simplified and improved with a new program that eliminates hot meals.
- c. To really make things easier, students should bring lunch from home and skip the hot meal choices.

9. Calculators have improved people's mathematical capabilities. They allow people to extend the levels of their mathematical computation. Like any good tool, calculators let people do more than they might otherwise do on their own. They make working with large numbers quite easy. As a result, people can concentrate on the ultimate problem that needs solving instead of being bogged down with manual calculations. _____

- a. Calculators help the average person with math tests, homework, and calculating measurements.
- b. By simplifying complicated calculations, calculators encourage people to attempt more advanced mathematical reasoning.
- c. Because people have embraced new technologies, they are no longer intimidated by complicated issues.

10. The design of the American flag should never be changed again. It has become an important symbol of this country. As a symbol, the flag is more than just a design or even a work of art. It calls to mind the many qualities of the United States of America for citizen and foreigner alike. _____

- a. It would be unpatriotic to change the flag unless a new star needed to be added for a new state.
- b. It does not seem likely that more states will be added, anyway, so no more stars will be required.
- c. Such a powerful reminder of a nation's greatness deserves better than to be tinkered with.

CERS Paragraph – Practice with Second Sentences

Below are unfinished paragraphs. Each is missing a second sentence—the “Part B” sentence. Choose the best second sentence for each paragraph from the choices given. Write the ENTIRE sentence in the space provided within the paragraph.

1. Bottled water is something most city dwellers do not need. _____

For one thing, bottled water is no purer than most city tap water. In fact, many brands of bottled water consist of nothing more than filtered tap water. But regardless of the water’s source, quality requirements for a city’s tap water are often higher than the standards that water bottlers must follow. On top of that, the cost of bottled water is, on average, nearly one thousand percent more than the drinking water that major cities send to their residents. By turning on the tap instead of unscrewing a cap, the majority of thirsty consumers with access to municipal water can save themselves some money without sacrificing quality.

- a. It is an expensive substitute for a similar, low-cost product.
- b. If you have well water, bottled water might be better.
- c. It may come from another state or even another country, which hurts America’s economy.
- d. It is too expensive.

2. The first snowfall of the year is the true start of winter. _____

When the snow begins to fall, the landscape changes in a way unique to the season. Children are pulled to the window as if by a magnetic force, craning their necks to see this new event. The ground turns white, and immediately it is difficult to recall the hottest day of the summer that occurred only weeks before. No matter what the calendar tells us, it is the coming of snow that really impresses upon us that winter has once more arrived.

- a. Thoughts of snowball fights can’t be far away.
- b. It is a more important sign than when the geese fly south.
- c. Drivers had better put snow tires on their automobiles!
- d. It focuses our attention on the next phase of nature’s cycle.

3. A collegiate dictionary is a useful tool for writers. _____

A complete list of its useful features could take pages to explain, but a look at a few of the highlights in a collegiate dictionary should suggest how useful it may be. Within a definition of a word, for example, readers will find parts of speech, languages of origin, and pronunciation explanations. However, there are sections beyond the definitions that explain such things as the parts of a business letter, the uses of punctuation symbols, and even how to address an envelope. In addition, most collegiate dictionaries have a separate section listing famous people and the occupations they are known for, and some even have a section of cities, states, provinces, countries, and other famous geographical locations. While a collegiate dictionary is still a handy way to check spelling, there is more to it that makes it a writer’s reference tool with a considerable number of uses.

- a. It contains important information beyond the spellings of words.
- b. Its weight alone makes clear that it contains many pages.
- c. It makes a perfect gift for any person interested in the study of language.
- d. Many colleges require students to buy one just like any other textbook.

CERS Multiple Paragraphs – Practice with Second Sentences

Below are unfinished multi-paragraph essays. Each is missing a second sentence—the “Part B” sentence. Choose the best second sentence for each paragraph from the choices given. Write the ENTIRE sentence in the space provided within the paragraph.

4. America needs to find new ways to manage its energy consumption. _____

For starters, America’s dependence on oil has major drawbacks. One problem is the reliance on foreign oil, a source that can dry up as a result of natural disaster or man-made decisions. Another problem is the environmental impact of burning this fossil fuel in its many forms—gasoline and home heating oil being two examples. Pollutants continue to be sent throughout our environment through the burning of oil.

Coal is another “dirty” source of power. It is needed to run electricity-generating plants. But it is more polluting than oil.

Natural gas burns more cleanly than coal or oil, but like oil, much of it comes from outside the country. Many Americans rely on it for home heating, which accounts for the high demand for it.

Finally, nuclear power (also used for electricity generation) brings a new kind of problem. While Americans do not need to rely on any other country for this source of energy, the byproduct of every nuclear power point is radioactive waste. Disposing of such waste is a major health concern.

If Americans continue to use the same energy sources in the same ways they have been, the potential for problems will remain, too. New solutions to energy management problems are urgently needed.

- a. An energy disaster will strike when Americans least expects it.
- b. Recent events in the Middle East show the vulnerability of America’s oil supply.
- c. The best solution is to expand the use of nuclear power.
- d. There are significant problems with the nation’s use of every major energy source.

5. Cable television is a luxury that people are better off without. _____

In the first place, cable television costs a lot for what it delivers. While a customer may receive over one hundred channels in exchange for a monthly fee, many of the channels will be of no interest to the viewer. Even those that are of interest are not commercial free, meaning that a customer partly pays to watch advertising.

In addition, cable viewers tend to watch more TV than if they only had access to traditional over-the-air broadcasts. This may seem natural to a customer who wants to get his or her “money’s worth.” But no one *needs* to watch television, and people are giving up time that they could be spending on more worthwhile activities in order to stare at a television screen.

There are better things to spend money on than cable TV. There are better ways to spend time than watching cable TV, too. With such obvious drawbacks, people would be better off pulling the plug on this unnecessary entertainment option.

- a. It rots people’s minds.
- b. It is a waste of both time and money.
- c. With such important problems in the world, entertainment seems unimportant.
- d. However, many people are employed by the cable TV industry, so Americans should keep watching for the sake of the economy.