

How to Start a Knitting Circle

Level: Intermediate

Time required: 60 minutes

Goals: To introduce students to the concept of a knitting circle; to facilitate students' understanding of the relationship of ideas in an essay through a paragraph-ordering activity

Materials: Copies of the reading passage "How to Start a Knitting Circle" (one for each group of two or three students to share), scissors, chalk and a chalkboard or markers and a large sheet of paper

Optional materials: a picture of a group of people knitting

Preparation:

Option 1: Make copies of the reading passage "How to Start a Knitting Circle." Cut up the copies of the passage so that each paragraph is on one strip of paper. Shuffle the paragraphs and clip them together. You will need one set of paragraphs for each group of two or three students.

Option 2: Write the reading passage on the board or on a large sheet of paper *with the paragraphs out of order*. (Note: Save space on the board for brainstorming at the beginning of the lesson.)

How to Start a Knitting Circle

Knitting is a popular craft in the United States. Knitters use needles and yarn or thread to stitch (or create) garments such as scarves, mittens, hats, and sweaters. Some people prefer to knit by themselves. Other knitters enjoy getting together to form a knitting circle—a club whose members chat and stitch at the same time. If you want to start a knitting circle, planning is easy.

First, you should invite people to join your knitting circle. Ask your friends if they are interested in being a part of the group or if they know people who are. You only need two people to start your circle, but as the saying goes, "The more, the merrier!"

Next, you need to decide when and where to meet. A time in the evening or on the weekend might be most convenient. You could get together at a member's home, a local coffee shop, or a community center.

After you have decided on a time and place, contact the other members of the circle to tell them where you will meet and what they should bring. You might want to ask them to bring their own yarn and needles—and extra to share! Knitting circle members often lend and borrow materials.

At your first meeting, you should discuss your long-term plans for the club. How often do you want to meet? Do you want to take turns bringing refreshments to the meetings? Do you want to donate the items your group knits to a charity?

Starting a knitting circle does not require much work. With some successful planning, after a few meetings, your group can become a close-knit community!

Note: To complete this activity, students should have a basic understanding of the way a typical academic essay is organized in American English—with a general introduction, supporting body paragraphs, and a conclusion that summarizes the main points of the essay.

Procedures:

1. Activate your students’ background knowledge around the topic of the reading passage: knitting circles. Write the word *clubs* on the board and ask the class the following questions:

- Do you know what a club is? (If your students don’t know, you can tell them that a club is a group of people who get together for an activity, such as a hobby, sport, or other pastime.)
- Have any of you ever been a part of a club? What did you do in your club?
- What kinds of clubs would you like to join?

2. Write the kinds of clubs students mention on the board or a large sheet of paper. Add some of your own examples to their list, including knitting circles. Tell students that knitting circles are a popular kind of club in many parts of the world. If your students are not familiar with knitting, you can explain what it is by miming and, if possible, sharing a picture of a group of people knitting. When you define the concept, explain the terms *yarn*, *needles*, and *stitch*, using gestures and, if possible, pictures.

3. Ask students if they have ever organized their own club. If they have, ask them to share what steps they took to organize their club. If they have never organized a club, ask them to make predictions about what is involved. (These ideas do not need to be written on the board.)

4. Tell students that you want more information on the topic of how to organize a knitting circle. You tried to read a short essay about it, but the paragraphs were unorganized. You would like the class to help you put the paragraphs in order.

5. Ask the class the following questions about how they would structure an essay called “How to Start a Knitting Circle”:

- What kind of information would you include in the introduction?
- What would you discuss in the body paragraphs? How would you order this information?
- What kind of information would you include in the conclusion?

Have students share their ideas with the whole class. If there is room on the board, you can write notes on what they say. Tell them that as they work with the essay, they should check to see whether the author included the information they suggested.

6. Put students in groups of two or three. Then give the following directions:

a) If you chose Option One (see “Preparations” at the beginning of this activity), give each group a set of paragraphs. To ensure that everyone participates, you might give two or three paragraphs from the set to each student in the group. Give the groups about ten minutes to work together to put the paragraphs in order. Tell them to underline specific words or phrases that help them decide on the order of the paragraphs.

b) If you chose Option Two in your preparations, ask each group to rewrite the essay on their own paper with the paragraphs in the correct order. You may need to remind groups not to copy the essay exactly as it is written on the board (or sheet of paper) because the paragraphs are not in the correct order there. Tell the groups to underline words or phrases that help them decide on the order of the paragraphs. (If you feel that having groups rewrite the essay will take too much time, you can label the unorganized paragraphs A through F on the board, and have groups arrange them in logical order.)

7. Circulate and listen to your students discuss the essay. Provide guidance as necessary; ask students if they notice a word in the first sentence of the paragraph that can help them determine where the paragraph should go in the essay. Take note of students who make useful observations

Classroom Activities

about transition signals or content that helps determine the order of information. Tell those students you would like them to share their ideas with the whole class when everyone is finished putting the essay in order.

8. When all groups believe they have their essays in the correct order, have students report their choices to the whole class. Ask a student to read aloud the paragraph his/her group chose for the introduction and explain why they made that choice (e.g., because it introduces the topic by defining the topic of the essay, knitting circles). Ask a different group to read its choice for the first body paragraph and so on until the whole essay has been read in order. Make sure to draw your students' attention to the introductory clauses in each body paragraph and the way they help connect the paragraphs in chronological order.

- a) **First**, you should invite some people to join your knitting circle.
- b) **Next**, you need to decide when and where to meet.
- c) **After you have decided on a time and place**, contact the other members of the circle to tell them where you will meet and what they should bring. (In this sentence, *time and place* is a reference to *when and where to meet* in the previous paragraph.)
- d) **At your first meeting**, you should discuss your long-term plans for the club. (The other paragraphs discuss what to do *before* the first meeting.)

Be sure your students notice that the conclusion summarizes the main idea and provides a

concluding remark—in this case, one that offers a prediction for what might happen in the future.

9. You may choose to provide everyone with a copy of the reading passage in the correct order after you finish the class discussion about the correct order of information.

10. Ask your students to think back to their predictions about the information that might be included in the essay. Were they correct? What is different or missing, and why?

Variation

Use the “How to Start a Knitting Circle” passage for a basic reading comprehension activity. Follow steps 1 through 4 above, and then complete the steps below.

1. Allow your students two to three minutes to read through the text and highlight or write down the four steps they should follow when organizing a knitting circle.
2. Ask students to read more carefully and “plan” their own imaginary knitting circle according to the steps described in the essay. They should write down who they will invite, where to meet, what to bring, and the “business items” to discuss at the first meeting. Ask students to add ideas of their own to develop or improve their knitting circle.
3. Have your students work in groups to organize a club of their own. After they plan, they can work together to write a process essay or speech about the steps they followed as they planned their meetings. Their essays or speeches should make use of transition signals to show chronological order.