History 201
The Rules of the Paragraph

1) **What is a paragraph?**
   A paragraph is a connected series of sentences that all concern a *single* topic.
   A paragraph answers a question. (Even if just what happens next).
   A paragraph stands almost completely on its own as a ***developed thought.***
   Most nonfiction paragraphs make and demonstrate a particular point.
   Most nonfiction paragraphs are constructed around demonstrable facts.

2) **What is an effective paragraph?**
   An effective paragraph is focused on a particular thought or expression or point.
   An effective paragraph is organized in a logical pattern.
   An effective paragraph is led by a strong and clear topic sentence.
   An effective paragraph has a style that makes it stronger than the sum of its details.

3) **Why is the topic sentence so important?**
   A topic sentence tells the reader the point of the paragraph.
   A topic sentence summarizes the data contained within the paragraph.

4) **What kinds of data?**
   Raw numbers or statistics
   Apocryphal examples
   Descriptions
   Quotations
   Any fact that shows causation
   Any fact that shows the effects of an action
   Any fact that deepens a description or reveals a character
   Any fact that shows change over time
   Any fact that demonstrates the veracity of a claim

5) **How do I transform data points to sentences?**
   Start with a subject, usually a human, figure out who did the thing that you need to explain. Better a weak acting subject - "government officials" - than passive voice.
   Figure out the action that your human subject did. Pick the best verb.
   Only after figuring the who and the what, should you put your fingers on a keyboard.
   Build out your subject-verb with appropriate detail.
   Put your sentences in an logical order that best makes your point.

6) **Write your topic sentence - and summarize the data of the paragraph**

7) **Read the graf through aloud and make sure it "sounds right"**