**Hunter College Exercise: Paragraph Unity**

**Read RG: Chapter 3a, 3b, 3c (pg 21).** What does it mean when a paragraph does not have ***unity***? Each of the following paragraphs contains sentences that are irrelevant or unnecessary to the main point of the paragraph. The sentences do not support the opening point, and so the paragraphs are not unified. In the interest of paragraph unity, such sentences must be omitted. First, underline the topic sentence and see what the subject of the paragraph is. Then, put the numbers of the irrelevant sentences (the ones that wander off topic) in the spaces provided.

**Questions to ask of your paragraphs for better paragraph unity:**

* What is the paragraph's central, controlling idea?
* Does each sentence in the paragraph relate directly to developing or explaining that idea?
* Are there any sentences that do not relate to the central idea and therefore need to be eliminated?

1. **How to Manage Your Time**

**(1)** As you use your calendar to manage your time, think about how long certain activities will take. **(2)** A common mistake is to underestimate the time needed to do something, even something simple. **(3)** For example, when you are planning the time needed to get cash from the cash machine, remember that there may be a line of people. **(4)** Last week in line I met a woman I went to high school with, so we chatted. **(5)** It turns out she has two children just the same age as mine. **(6)** When you are estimating time for a more complex activity, such as reading a chapter in a textbook, block out more time than you think you will need. **(7)** If you finish in less time than you have allotted, so much the better. **(8)** One should allow for interruptions because it is better to allow too much time than too little.

**The numbers of the irrelevant sentences are** \_\_\_ \_\_\_

2. **Rain Forest Diversity**

**(1)** Rain forests, such as those in South America and Africa, contain more plant and animal species than does any other area in the world.  **(2)** For example, more bird species have been identified in a wildlife preserve in Peru than in the entire United States. **(3)** If habitat is not protected, the bird species will eventually vanish. **(4)** At least 700 different tree species have been found in one forest in Borneo. **(5)** That same number exists in the whole of North America. **(6)** One river in Brazil contains more species of fish than all the rivers and lakes in the United States together. **(7)** If nothing is done to prevent these rain forests from being cleared, untold numbers of plants and animal species will certainly become extinct.

**The numbers of the irrelevant sentences are** \_\_\_ \_\_\_

3. **Untitled**

**(1)** Savannah, Georgia, is an interesting city to visit. **(2)** Atlanta, Georgia, also attracts many visitors. **(3)** In downtown Savannah, several historic houses dating back to the early nineteenth century are open to the public. **(4)** When one takes a walking tour, they will easily see the tree-lined squares the city is famous for.

**The numbers of the irrelevant sentences are** \_\_\_

4. **How to Prevent Cheating**

**(1)** Teachers should take steps to prevent students from cheating on exams. **(2)** To begin with, teachers should stop reusing old tests. **(3)** Even a test that has been used once is soon known on the student grapevine. **(4)** Students will check with their friends to find out, for example, what was on Dr.

Thompson's biology final last term. **(5)** They may even manage to turn up a copy of the test itself, "accidentally" not turned in by a former student of Dr. Thompson's. **(6)** Teachers should also take some common sense precautions at test time. **(7)** They should make students separate themselves--by at least one seat—during an exam, and they should watch the class closely. **(8)** The best place for the teacher to sit is in the rear of the room, so that a student is never sure if the teacher is looking at him or her. **(9)** Last of all, teachers must make it clear to students that there will be stiff penalties for cheating. **(10)** One of the problems with our school systems is a lack of discipline. **(11)** Teachers never used to give in to students' demands or put up with bad behavior, as they so today. **(12)** Anyone caught cheating should immediately receive a zero for the exam. **(13)** A person even suspected of cheating should be forced to take an alternative exam in the teacher's office.

**The numbers of the irrelevant sentences are** \_\_\_ \_\_\_

5. **Untitled**

**(1)** The students in our class meet each Monday to plan our weekly newspaper. **(2)** Reporters decide which school-related events to cover. **(3)** Artists plan the cover of our paper and decide which articles to illustrate. **(4)** My mother loves the illustrations in our class newspaper. **(5)** Feature writers suggest topics they think will interest our readers.

**The numbers of the irrelevant sentences are** \_\_\_

6. **A Dangerous Cook**

**(1)** When my friend Tom sets to work in the kitchen, disaster often results. **(2)** Once he tried to make toasted cheese sandwiches for us by putting slices of cheese in the toaster along with the bread; he ruined the toaster. **(3)** Unfortunately, the toaster was a fairly new one that I had just bought for him three weeks before, on his birthday. **(4)** On another occasion, he had cut up some fresh beans and put them in a pot to steam. **(5)** I was really looking forward to the beans, for I eat nothing but canned vegetables in my dormitory. **(6)** I, frankly, am not much of a cook either. **(7)** The water in the Teflon pan steamed away while Tom was on the telephone, and both the beans and the Teflon coating in the pan were ruined. **(8)** Finally, another time Tom made spaghetti for us, and the noodles stuck so tightly together that we had to cut off slices with a knife and fork. **(9)** In addition, the meatballs were burned on the outside but almost raw on the inside. **(10)** The tomato sauce, on the other hand, turned out well. **(11)** For some reason, Tom is very good at making meat and vegetables sauces. **(12)** Because of Tom's kitchen mishaps, I never eat at his place without an Alka-Seltzer in my pocket or without money in case we have to go out to eat.

**The numbers of the irrelevant sentences are** \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_

7. **Untitled**

**(1)** Computers help writers in a number of ways. **(2)** With a computer, a writer never has to face a messy draft. material can be inserted or deleted easily. **(3)** Writers are always changing and rearranging their work. **(4)** A writer can also move a word, sentence, or paragraph by pressing a few keys. **(5)** The material can easily be stored on a disk.

**The numbers of the irrelevant sentences are** \_\_\_

8. **Why Adults Visit Amusement Parks**

**(1)** Adults visit amusement parks for several reasons. **(2)** For one thing, an amusement park is a place where it is acceptable to "pig-out" on junk food. **(3)** At the park, everyone is drinking soda and eating popcorn, ice-cream, or hot dogs. **(4)** No one seems to be on a diet, and so buying all the junk food you

can eat is a guilt-free experience. **(5)** Parks should provide stands where healthier food, such as salads or cold chicken, would be sold. **(6)** Another reason people visit amusement parks is to prove themselves. **(7)** They want to visit the park that has the newest, scariest ride in order to say that they went on the Parachute Drop, the seven-story Elevator, the Water Chute, or the Death Slide. **(8)** Going on a scary ride is a way to feel courageous and adventurous without taking much of a risk. **(9)** Some rides, however, can be dangerous. **(10)** Rides that are not properly inspected or maintained have killed people all over the

country. **(11)** A final reason people visit amusement parks is to escape from everyday pressures. **(12)** When people are poised at the top of a gigantic roller coaster, they are not thinking of bills, work, or personal problems. **(13)** A scary ride empties the mind of all worries--except making it to the bottom alive. **(14)** Adults at an amusement park may claim they have come for their children, but they are there for themselves as well.

**The numbers of the irrelevant sentences are** \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_

9. In #3, #5, and #7, the paragraphs are missing titles. Come up with one for each. Then, look at them closely and see what aspects (at least 3) of good writing are missing (ie something mentioned last week, perhaps?).

10. What is a good concluding sentence for paragraph #4?

11. Which is the best paragraph and which is the worst? Explain why.