Paragraph Development

Every paragraph should begin with a topic sentence that identifies the single main point that will be addressed in that paragraph. The other sentences in the paragraph need to be more specific than the topic sentence. They support the topic sentence by giving facts, examples, definitions, illustrations, and other kinds of explanation.

Effective development of paragraph:

All leaders of expeditions into unexplored areas have faced the same set of interpersonal problems. The leader must get the most from his followers, often under unpleasant and dangerous conditions, but must not drive them to the point of collapse or mutiny. There is a fine line between motivating people so that they give their best and manipulating them so that they feel deceived. Furthermore, many expedition members possess specialized knowledge that the leader lacks and requires. A leader must know not only how to give orders, but also how to elicit and evaluate advice. Hence, there is another fine line to recognize between honest and dishonest advice.

Topic Sentence: All leaders of expeditions into unexplored areas have faced the same set of interpersonal problems.

1st Issue: The leader must get the most from his followers, but must not drive them to the point of collapse or mutiny.

2nd Issue: A leader must know not only how to give orders, but also how to elicit and evaluate advice.

3rd Issue: A leader must be able to recognize between honest and dishonest advice.

A less effective paragraph:

Some people really thrive on excitement. They think it makes them feel more alive. One form of pure excitement can be found in the sport of skydiving. This sport involves jumping from an airplane with a parachute. The amount of excitement I get from skydiving is surpassed by no other, and I have been in a number of varsity sports all through school. Nothing is quite like the thrill of jumping and falling. It is true excitement.

Problems:

“Some people really thrive on excitement.”
As a topic sentence, this is not adequate. It is too general and does not engage the reader.

“This sport involves jumping from an airplane with a parachute.”
This sentence is too obvious.

“The amount of excitement I get from skydiving…”

This sentence does not explain how much excitement the author gets.

“…I have been in a number of varsity sports all through school.”
Skydiving really isn’t comparable to varsity sports.

“It is true excitement.”
The author should define what excitement means to him or her.