

THE START

I start with a topic sentence and a nugget from a source.

Topic sentence:

Beagles are the smartest dogs.

Paraphrase from source:

beagles in particular, canines prove their intelligence via instinctive abilities, adaptive problem-solving and memory, and obedience. Though beagle intelligence is usually equated with two-year-old children, selective breeding has produced higher levels of ability in some dogs (Chum 12).

STAGE TWO

Now, how do I get from the topic sentence to the source? I need “connective tissue.”

I need a signal phrase and some content to get from the topic to the information.

Beagles are the smartest dogs.

CONNECTIVE: Because I am the proud owner of a beagle mixed with Springer-Spaniel, I am biased, and I think of her as my child, like a human. Satchel (that’s her name) seems to understand everything I say and everything that is going on in our home.

SIGNAL: According to Marvin Chum, director of the Chum group, a non-profit that studies dogs, beagles in particular, canines prove their intelligence via instinctive abilities (sheep herding – 51% of their intelligence is genetic according to Chum), adaptive problem-solving and memory, and obedience (learned skills). Though beagle intelligence is usually equated with two-year-old children, selective breeding has produced higher levels of ability in some dogs (Chum 12).

I also added some additional material in the paraphrase for clarity.

STAGE THREE

It's growing, but it's not enough yet. That's a pretty big jump from the topic sentence to my personal experience/connection, and then, it would be extremely abrupt to jump right to the source. I need more connection, more detail, and better set up for the source. I need to share something about "smart," a keyword in the topic sentence, and then I need to expand on why Satchel is smart and connect to the source.

Beagles are the smartest dogs.

The concept of "smart" and dogs may not be quite the same as how we regard intelligence in human terms; however, I have trouble separating the two given how I regard dogs.

CONNECTIVE: Because I am the proud owner of a beagle mixed with Springer-Spaniel, I am biased, and I think of her as my child, like a human. Satchel (that's her name) seems to understand everything I say and everything that is going on in our home.

Though she's nearly eleven, from very early in her first year with us, she showed examples of her intelligence in understanding hundreds of words, problem-solving (especially when trying to get additional food), and even baiting and fooling other dogs that are not as intelligent. I like to joke that Satchel can do Calculus, but she just doesn't want to do it (or so she tells me). Though documentation of beagles solving Calculus problems is rare, examples of intelligence in beagles have been supported in studies by experts.

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MY REACTION TO WHAT I HAVE: That's better. I have expanded on smart following the topic sentence and set up "my regard for dogs," which leads in naturally to confessing that I own a dog. Then following what I wrote for stage two, I have expanded further with good detail and set up the source even better, all while maintaining my own personal voice and creative (I hope) writing style.

But I need more... I need more follow up to the source and maybe to use the source more as I expand.

STAGE FOUR

Beagles are the smartest dogs. The concept of “smart” and dogs may not be quite the same as how we regard intelligence in human terms; however, I have trouble separating the two given how I regard dogs. Because I am the proud owner of a beagle mixed with Springer-Spaniel, I am biased, and I think of her as my child, like a human. Satchel (that’s her name) seems to understand everything I say and everything that is going on in our home. Though she’s nearly eleven, from very early in her first year with us, she showed examples of her intelligence in understanding hundreds of words, problem-solving (especially when trying to get additional food), and even baiting and fooling other dogs that are not as intelligent. I like to joke that Satchel can do Calculus, but she just doesn’t want to do it (or so she tells me). Though documentation of beagles solving Calculus problems is rare, examples of intelligence in beagles have been supported in studies by experts.

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NEW AT THIS STAGE – EXPLANATION: Based on Chum’s descriptions of beagle intelligence, Satchel shows these high levels of intelligence: she remembers places where she has not been for years and shows an uncanny ability to figure out doggie doors or other maze-like structures for pets with very little study time. And though we have not taught her a large number of learned skills, everything we have taught her, she has remembered and can repeat for us or others.

MY REACTION: Cool! I feel like I have explained Chum’s findings fairly well, and I have added more detail about Satchel. In fact, I have tied the Chum source material to detail from my observations of Satchel. Still, I think I could flesh it all out more and maybe pull some more material from the source.

Next the finishing touches!!

STAGE FIVE

Beagles are the smartest dogs. The concept of “smart” and dogs may not be quite the same as how we regard intelligence in human terms; however, I have trouble separating the two given how I regard dogs. Because I am the proud owner of a beagle mixed with Springer-Spaniel, I am biased, and I think of her as my child, like a human. Satchel (that’s her name) seems to understand everything I say and everything that is going on in our home. Though she’s nearly eleven, from very early in her first year with us, she showed examples of her intelligence in understanding hundreds of words, problem-solving (especially when trying to get additional food), and even baiting and fooling other dogs that are not as intelligent. I like to joke that Satchel can do Calculus, but she just doesn’t want to do it (or so she tells me). Though documentation of beagles solving Calculus problems is rare, examples of intelligence in beagles have been supported in studies by experts. According to Marvin Chum, director of the Chum group, a non-profit that studies dogs, beagles in particular, canines prove their intelligence via instinctive abilities (sheep herding – 51% of their intelligence is genetic according to Chum), adaptive problem-solving and memory, and obedience (learned skills). Though beagle intelligence is usually equated with two-year-old children, selective breeding has produced higher levels of ability in some dogs (Chum 12). Based on Chum’s descriptions of beagle intelligence, Satchel shows these high levels of intelligence: she remembers places where she has not been for years and shows an uncanny ability to figure out doggie doors or other maze-like structures for pets with very little study time. And though we have not taught her a large number of learned skills, everything we have taught her, she has remembered and can repeat for us or others.

NEW: I am convinced that Satchel knows more than the 200 words that are typically the vocabulary levels of most very smart dogs; although some people believe that really smart dogs know 500+ individual words (Chum 15). Despite my bias, I would put Satchel next to any border collie, Australian Shepherd, or corgi in an IQ test, in which really smart dogs get answers right 70% of the time (Chum 15). I have seen no evidence that Satchel is not correct in her understanding and memory 100% of the time, but then I know that I am probably just seeing what I want to see.

REACTIONS: That’s pretty good. I have two more cites, and I continue to set Satchel information next to Chum’s material. “I am convinced” might not be needed, usually, but in this case, I feel I need to assert my belief with a qualifier, implying that though I am convinced of Satchel’s vocabulary, I am not stating a fact that I feel has been proven scientifically. I found that final sentence as I worked the text, revising and editing, and I feel it caps off the paragraph well.

Next, finished product!!

FINAL

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WORK CITED

Chum, Marvin. “An In-Depth Look at Beagle Intelligence: They Are Smarter Than You Think.” *The Journal of Popular Beliefs About Our Pets*, Vol. 43, no. 4, 2019, pp. 10-20.
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