

English of the earlier days has given way to the current trend of plain English, which is clear, concise, direct, unambiguous and fluent. The wallpaper English overloaded with official jargons is not the call of the day. Even among the native users of English, plain and direct language is regarded as a virtue in communication. “Good writing can be defined as having something to say and saying it well” says Edward Abbey. A good piece of writing should take into account the following points:

1. Getting the grammar right
2. Having a range of vocabulary
3. Punctuating meaningfully
4. Using a variety of sentence structures
5. Employing imagination and creativity
6. Developing and organizing the content clearly
7. Linking ideas and information to develop a topic
8. Implementing a suitable style and using a correct layout
9. Containing a sense of purpose, sense of audience and sense of direction
10. Encompassing directness, conciseness, plainness and fluency

While writing, be mindful of the fact that once something is in written form, it cannot be taken back. Communicating in this way is more concrete than verbal communications, with less room for errors.

## 9.2 Paragraph Writing

A paragraph is one of the central components of writing. The Oxford Advanced Learners’ Dictionary defines it as “a section of a piece of writing, usually consisting of several sentences dealing with a single subject.” The word ‘paragraph’ has been derived from the French word—*paragraphe*—and the Greek word—*paragraphos*—which mean “short strokes marking break in sense.” A paragraph, however, is “a group of sentences or a single sentence that forms a unit”. Ultimately, good paragraphs contain a sentence or sentences unified around one central, controlling idea.

A paragraph is a separate section of a piece of writing. It provides a break to the reader. Each paragraph tells the reader that one topic is over and now he/she is going to read the next one. There are no fixed rules about the ideal length of a paragraph. For instance, in some light journalism and advertising a paragraph can be one sentence. In serious writing, a paragraph can last for a page or more. In fact, it is not the number of sentences that construct a paragraph rather the unity and coherence of ideas among those sentences. Most of the paragraphs contain at least three sentences but occasionally a one-sentenced paragraph is refreshing to the reader. Nevertheless, two unlinked topics require two paragraphs.

A paragraph begins on a new line even if you have to leave most of the previous line empty. It is often ‘indented’ from the edge of the page or ‘blocked’ leaving one word space from the edge. In typing one extra line may be left in ‘indented’ style. When a paragraph reaches its completion, it should summarize what has been read.

### 9.2.1 Parts of a Paragraph

A paragraph is divided into three basic parts as listed below:

**1. Topic Sentence:** This is the first sentence of the paragraph. It conveys the main idea of the paragraph to the readers and helps them focus on the theme as well as enables him/her to know what is going to be conveyed in it. You should summarize the main points of your paragraph in the first sentence.

**2. Supporting Details:** The rest of the paragraph consists of a series of sentences that develop, support or explain the main idea. They come after the topic sentence, forming the supporting details or the body of a paragraph. They give detailed information about the main idea through examples, illustrations, facts or stories. The information given in this part should be reliable, convincing and trustworthy.

**3. The Concluding Sentence:** The concluding or closing sentence is the last sentence of a paragraph. It sums up and restates the main idea as well as the details supported in the paragraph. It is the closing sentence that reminds the readers what they should value. You should restate the main idea of the paragraph as well as summarize it using different words.

## 9.2.2 Writing a Good Paragraph

While writing a paragraph certain basic elements, such as those listed below, should be considered before, while and after writing the paragraph:

**(i) Pre-writing Stage:** At the pre-writing stage think carefully and organize your ideas for your paragraph before you begin writing:

**1. Consider the topic carefully:** Before writing specify your topic, ask yourself: What questions are you going to answer in the paragraph? How can you best answer those questions? What is the most important point you want to make? How can you make an introductory sentence? What facts, ideas or details can you use to support your topic sentence? How can you make your paragraph interesting? Where can you find more facts on this topic?

**2. Collect facts related to your topic:** Look for the facts that will help you answer your questions. To save time, make sure that the facts you are writing are related directly to the questions you are going to answer. Take a sheet of paper and start jotting down the points that come to your mind. You should not spend a lot of time doing this; just write enough to help you remember why and how you are going to write your paragraph. At this stage, word order or grammatical mistakes may be overlooked.

**4. Choose relevant and interesting points:** Think carefully on the points you have noted down. What else do you want to say about this topic? Why should people be interested in this topic? Why is this topic significant? Choose the most important point you are going to present. If you are not able to decide which point is most important or stimulating, just choose one point and stick to it throughout the paragraph.

**6. Organize your facts to develop your main idea:** Once you have chosen the most important point of your paragraph, you must find the best way to tell your readers about it. Look at the facts you have written and the most important point you have chosen. Decide which facts and ideas will best support the main idea. Once you have collected all relevant details, arrange the points in the order you want to present them in the paragraph. You may write them down on a piece of paper to guide yourself as you write your paragraph.

**(ii) Writing Stage:** This stage is when you turn your ideas into sentences. The topic sentence should be a tempting sentence that catches readers' attention and attract them to carry on with the reading of the paragraph. It will help the readers as well as the writer focus on the main points and not drift away from them. Supporting details should give information that reinforces or supports the main idea.

One should use all the techniques such as descriptions, elaborations, definitions, examples, quotations, etc to make the paragraph sustainable and eligible. The last sentence should sum up your paragraph and should echo your topic sentence in a way or another. Write clear and simple sentences to express your meaning. Focus on the main idea of your paragraph. Use dictionary to help you find additional words to express your ideas.

(iii) **Post Writing or Editing Stage:** The editing stage is when you check your paragraph for mistakes and correct them. At this stage, check all the words, spellings, grammar, punctuation, handwriting and form. There should be no long unwinding sentences, no repetitions, no complex examples or difficult terms. Instead of definitions, give examples and supporting details should not be excessive. No irrelevant information should be given. Read your paragraph again. Make sure each sentence has a subject. See if your subjects and verbs agree with each other. Check the verb tenses of each sentence. Make sure that each sentence makes sense, your paragraph has a topic sentence and your supporting sentences focus on the main idea. Be assured that you have a closing sentence. Finally see if your paragraph is interesting.

## 9.2.3 Characteristics of a Good Paragraph

A good paragraph is:

- **Unified**—A good paragraph should be unified. All of the sentences in a paragraph should be related to a single main idea expressed in the topic sentence of the paragraph. Anything that can distract the reader should not be included. The writer should focus on the central idea to unfold the theme logically.
- **Coherent**—Coherence means logical relationship between the ideas and the presentation. Unity means dealing with the single idea while coherence means linking them in an appropriate manner. The sentences should be arranged in a logical manner and should follow a definite plan for development. To achieve coherence in a paragraph, one should use the given pronouns and linking words appropriately:  
 Pronouns – *this/that/these/those* – should be used carefully to maintain continuity otherwise they will confuse the readers. Sentence linkers such as *first/meanwhile/later/afterwards/finally/at that time/at that very moment/next to/in front of/besides* and sequence words, *between/behind/after/then/now* are used to show chronological order or sequence. In the same way linking words – *thus/therefore/hence/however/as a result of/accordingly/due to/owing to/consequently/similarly/likewise/yet/nevertheless/on the other hand/on the contrary*, etc. – present the objects or situations in comparison or contrast to one another as well as explain them. Transition words – *furthermore/in fact/in addition to/for an example/as an illustration/for instance/in other words*, etc. – help the writer exemplify ideas or objects. While the use of words like *to conclude/to sum up/to summarize/in short/in a nut shell* concludes or summarizes the piece and words such as *definitely/certainly/of course/no doubt/undoubtedly* restate or reaffirm the ideas.
- **Well Developed**—A good paragraph should be well developed in a logical manner. Every idea discussed in the Paragraph should be adequately explained and supported through evidence and details. Ideas should be organized in such a way that one sentence leads to the next one naturally.

## 9.2.4 Sample Paragraphs

1. **Reading Books:** Books are the most lasting product of human thought. They are the best friends of a man in all circumstances. Man being a social animal depends upon others for his development, fulfilment as well as entertainment. For this purpose, he needs guidance, company and support at various stages of life. Books are the best philosophers, associates and guides of man at every stage

of life. Children enjoy them by colouring, solving puzzles and reading comics; young people find best companions in them while elderly persons pass their free time with them. Like true friends they remind us of our weaknesses and help us review our personality. In times of need, they directly talk to our mind and keep us fit. At the same time they are a vast storehouse of knowledge and learning. They supply us information, which can be stored in our memory for a long time and help us in mental as well as physical growth. We learn new words, ideas and expressions from them. Through books, we can share many things, which we cannot experience in reality. For instance, we can participate in sports events, beauty contests, quizzes, witness historical events, experience distant happenings, etc. They accompany us when we are alone. We can pass hours together reading, enjoying and learning them without getting tired of their company. They give us pleasure and joy for a long time. Therefore, it is rightly said, 'A world without books cannot be considered.'

**2. The Art of Conversation:** A good conversation is one of the greatest pleasures of mankind as well as an art. If we look at it seriously, we'll find that most of the people are lacking in this art. People are generally well versed in the art of speaking but they lack the initiative and deliberate purpose. It does not mean that people should converse seriously rather they should make their conversation more interesting and amusing. They should think over their mistakes and should try to improve them. They should practice conversation and should try to make it livelier like a game of cricket, hockey, football, shooting, etc. The ability to converse can be cultivated very well. To make our conversation meaningful, we should show genuine interest in the subject being discussed or the person we are talking to. We should not be too forceful or emphatic in asserting our feelings nor should we contradict or oppose the other person flatly. Even while giving advice, we should do it without imposing our wish on the listeners. On the whole, our conversation should generate positive feelings, it should not hurt anyone and people should enjoy it. Many people want to improve it but they keep on speaking and they hate listening. Silence plays an important role in a conversation. One can participate in a conversation effectively through listening as well as speaking. It must be done with natural zest and enjoyment; otherwise, it will not yield desired results. If learnt and practiced well, the art of conversation can be proved to be significant in winning the heart of the people.

**3. Examination Fever:** Examination fever is a common phenomenon among youngsters. Examinations are an essential part of the present education system. No one can pass a class in a school or a college or get admission in a reputed institute without appearing at the examination. Indispensability of the examinations has made it the most fearful aspect of a student's life. Dreams of failure keep haunting not only the students but also their parents and teachers. At the time of exams, young people and their parents have to postpone their engagements, give up pleasure loving activities—TV, computers, games, picnics, functions—and have to focus only on exams. This situation causes examination fever, which reaches at its peak one night before the exams. Students keep awake the whole night and revise the syllabus in a hurry. In the morning, they feel nervous and pray to God. If the paper is difficult, this nervousness leads to sickness. No doctor can cure this sickness. Rather, it can be cured through a thorough study of a subject. One should remain regular in his/her studies not only at the end of the session but also throughout the session. One day before the exams, he/she should revise the syllabus and should have sound sleep, nutritious food and good exercise. After receiving the question paper, he/she should read it carefully and answer appropriately. Before handing it to the teacher, one should revise it thoroughly. He/she will come out of the examination room relaxed not feverish. In fact, examination is an art. It teaches us to face challenges of life. No doubt, it causes anxiety; it is the landmark of success. One should learn how to face it confidently instead of fearing it.

**4. Co-Curricular Activities:** Co-curricular activities previously known as extracurricular activities are the backbone of the education system. Schools and colleges offer a variety of activities, which all the students must attend along with the standard study curriculum. Academic activities in the classroom education of an institute adhere to the requirements of global standard. On the other hand, co-curricular activities, which are meant for synchronizing and developing the mind as well as the body, also form an integral part of the curriculum. These activities are held outside the standard curriculum hours and participation in these activities depends upon the nature as well as the participants of the particular activity. Student groups do foot drills and team-building exercises, while with painting tools, children, are found busy in painting, drawing, sketching in the art rooms or learning dancing, singing, acting, etc. with musical instruments. Moreover, competitive sportspersons spend most of their time training and learning their respective sport techniques. A whole range of indoor and outdoor activities accompanying the course studies serves a twofold purpose in furthering the development of a student as well as in character building. 'All work and no play, makes Jack a dull boy' is an old saying. Recreation, is an essential part of a student's life and co-curricular activities help them in refreshing and rejuvenating young minds. Secondly, they pave way for nurturing the hidden talents. The students who do not excel in academics feel a sense of fulfillment, satisfaction and achievement through excelling in them. Besides this, co-curricular activities develop leadership, time management, teamwork, interpersonal communication and other useful skills which employers value the most when making hiring choices. To achieve the desired purpose, they should be planned, chosen and conducted fruitfully. No one can deny the fact that the activities outside the classroom are directly related to the career, personality and all round development of the students.

**5. All that glitters is not gold:** 'All that glitters is not gold' is an old proverb. It implies that appearances are often deceptive or in other words, the outward pomp, show, external glory and luxury may not be a true expression of one's personality, an object, a place or even one's personal life. A man may enjoy sunshine of wealth and prosperity but he may not be inwardly contented. For instance, a wealthy man may enjoy a lot of wealth, comforts and riches or all the possible luxuries but when he sleeps, in his unconscious mind he keeps brooding over how to accumulate more and more wealth the next day. He is always dissatisfied and mentally disturbed in planning ways to have more and more. He, therefore, proves the statement that things are different from how they appear to be. Similarly, a person may be very beautiful, handsome, smart or good looking but if he is not physically fit, mentally alert or socially respectable, his outward charms have no value. An object may be very attractive; however, its attractiveness has no value unless it has utility. In short, the proverb, 'All that glitters is not gold' enlivens us to the truth that only outward beauty or charms are not sufficient. The importance of outward glitter may be short-lived or temporary. We should care more for inward perfection, beauty of the soul and moral values, which have a lasting effect on mankind and society.

**6. Health is Wealth:** A healthy mind resides in a healthy body. Health is the basic source of human happiness. A man who is suffering from an ailment cannot enjoy anything in his life. He can have all the comforts in his life—a bungalow, car, good furniture, air conditioner, and expensive dresses but he can use them only if he is physically fit. His friends, neighbours and relatives can be very good but he can share his joys and grief with them only if he is in good health. There can be numerous opportunities in life but he can avail them with hard work and wisdom, which are not possible without health. One thing should be kept in mind: health is not just the physical aspect because man is not made of only flesh and blood but also with various organs forming different systems in a body. He/she also has a mental, social, and moral outlook. However, physical health is the base of human personality because a sick and poor person cannot be expected to follow any social norms. A physically fit man can do nothing without his mind.

Man is a social animal as no man can be an island in himself. A person should live peacefully in society and should cooperate with others. However, the most important thing, which makes a man human, is his moral outlook. Major evils like terrorism, corruption, anarchism exist in society because of lack of human values. Everybody talks of falling standard of education, students, losing interest in studies and growing materialism but no one thinks of providing a healthy moral atmosphere to the young generation or developing a sense of right and wrong. In this way a physically fit, mentally sound, socially healthy and morally strong people can be a real asset to a nation or in other words the real wealth of a nation.

## Task

Write a paragraph on the following topics:

1. Role of children in TV advertisements
2. Computer as a classroom teacher
3. Might is right
4. TV serials
5. Life in a college hostel
6. Brain drain
7. Mobile phones
8. Increasing crime in Indian society
9. Newspaper
10. My favourite TV show

### 9.3 Developing Outlines, Key Expressions and Situations

**W**ords are the symbols of ideas and images in our mind. They are verbal clues that can be used in the form of outlines, key expressions, situations and themes. First of all, we should understand what do they mean? How can we utilize them as guidelines to achieve our goal? How can they be used to develop written communication? Writing through outlines, key expressions and situations, undoubtedly, improves the speed and the quality of writing and the results simultaneously. Many writers use an outline to help them think through the various stages of the writing process. It is a kind of designing scheme or making a skeletal sketch of the organization of a written piece.

#### 9.3.1 Advantages

Preparing an outline will help you refer to your notes, think over them from several perspectives, and chalk out an organizational plan according to your topic, audience and assignment. It will keep you precise and help you stick to the topic along with imparting unity of thoughts as well as compactness to your composition. An outline accompanying the final draft of a report or a research paper also functions as a table of contents for the readers. You may prepare an outline when you want to show the hierarchical relationship or logical ordering of information. For research papers, an outline may help you keep track of large amounts of information. For creative writing, an outline may help organize the various plot threads and help keep track of character traits. Many people find that organizing an oral report or presentation in the form of an outline helps them speak more effectively in front of a crowd. In a nutshell, outlines aid us in the process of writing by organizing our ideas and material in a logical form, showing relationships among thoughts, constructing an ordered overview of the piece and defining boundaries and groups.