

The Paragraph

Academic writing is divided into paragraphs with each focused on one main idea. All paragraphs have distinct parts: a topic sentence and supporting details. A good writer connects the ideas between sentences and between paragraphs by using cohesive devices.

Topic sentences

The topic sentence is very important because it announces the main idea of a paragraph. It is often the first or second sentence of a paragraph. Look at the topic sentence below.

Creating an international brand is an important strategy for modern businesses.

1. What is the topic of the paragraph?
2. What is the focus?
3. How do you expect the paragraph will be developed?

Topic:

Focus:

Expectation: *Why it is like that*

Supporting details

The supporting details follow the topic sentence. These details give more specific information about the idea you are focusing on. The supporting details explain why you hold a certain position or view. Use the following as supporting details:

- a. Facts
- b. Examples
- c. Statistics

It's important that all of your supporting details relate to the topic and focus that you expressed in the topic sentence. If the supporting details do not support the topic sentence, your paragraph will be confusing and hard for your reader to follow. A student has listed some possible supporting details for the topic sentence shown below and decided that two do not fit. *Why do you think he made the two deletions?*

Topic sentence:

The original recipe for Coca-Cola is behind the company's success.

Don't fit this part

Supporting details

1. The recipe was unchanged and well-known until 1985 when the company changed it.
2. ~~The recipe is kept secret so that competitors do not copy it.~~
3. When Coca-Cola changed its recipe, consumers were angry and protested.
4. Coca-Cola received 1500 complaints per day about the change to the recipe.
5. ~~Coca-Cola spent \$4 million developing the new recipe.~~
6. Coca-Cola brought back the original recipe; three months later, consumers were relieved and sales went up.

Building cohesion

When a paragraph is cohesive, it is unified. That means all the ideas are related to each other, and each idea connects to previous ideas and information. There are certain words, phrases, or techniques that we use to show the relationship between ideas. These are called cohesive devices. You can think of them as the glue that makes ideas stick together. There are three main cohesive devices:

- Transition signals
- Pronouns
- Repetition of key terms

Transition signals

Transition signals are words or phrases that link ideas together and show the relationship between them. Below are a few examples. See handout: *Connecting and Transition Words.pdf* for a more complete list.

Meaning	Transition Signal	Example
adding related information	in addition as well as not only . . . but also !	In addition to making a cola drink, Coca-Cola sells other soft drinks and juices.
showing similarities	likewise similarly in the same way equally	Coca-Cola produces a variety of beverages, including soft drinks and juices. Likewise , PepsiCo produces a range of beverages that includes soft drinks, teas and bottle water.
showing contrast	however although despite inspite of in contrast	In blind taste tests, people prefer Pepsi. However , people tend to choose Coke when they know which beverage they are drinking.
explain effect	as a result (of) consequently therefore for this reason because of that	As a result of its simplicity in marketing, Coca-Cola is one of the world's most valuable brands.
concluding	on the whole ultimately overall	On the whole , Coca-Cola is one of the world's most successful brands.

Tip

Pay close attention to using transition signals. Be sure that you understand how to use them correctly. The grammar patterns and common collocations for the transition words vary.

Also, it is important be aware that one can use too many transition words. As a rule of thumb avoid using a transition signal in every sentence.

Reflect

- ♥ Which transition signal words do you use already?
- ♥ Circle 3 transition signals words you would like to start using.

Pronouns

Using pronouns: Pronouns are words that are used in place of a noun. Use of pronouns helps you avoid unnecessary repetition. Writing is also made more cohesive by using pronouns because pronouns enable you to refer back to previously mentioned nouns or ideas. This helps you link ideas both within and between sentences, as a student writer has done in the sentences on the next page.

Read the following sentence. Circle all the pronouns.

Coca-Cola changed to a new recipe in 1985. It returned to its original recipe since consumers did not like the new one. They were relieved and sales increased.

What does each pronoun refer to?

1. CC
2. recipe
3. consumers

Repetition of key terms

To write cohesively and vary your language, use synonyms for key terms when appropriate.

What is a good online resource for finding synonyms?

In the paragraph below, there are three sets of repeated key terms. Can you identify them? How do they help to relate the sentences and ideas within the paragraph?

Coca-Cola's international marketing strategy has been a huge success. Coke is one of the most recognized words in the world. Coca-Cola is sold in many countries around the world. The company's logo is the best-known logo in the world. More than 10,000 bottles or cans of the soft drink are consumed each second. This beverage company is one of the most valuable brands in the world, worth over \$58 billion.

ANSWERS

- a.
- b.
- c.

Exercise

Match the terms on the left with the correct explanation on the right.

- | | | | |
|----------|-----------------------|----|--|
| <u>g</u> | 1. paragraph | a. | b. certain words, phrases or techniques that are used to show the relationship between ideas |
| <u>k</u> | 2. topic sentence | c. | d. the subject of a paragraph |
| <u>c</u> | 3. topic | e. | f. a word that is used in place of a noun or an idea |
| <u>q</u> | 4. focus | g. | h. a section of writing about one main idea |
| <u>m</u> | 5. supporting details | i. | j. important words and their synonyms used throughout a paragraph |
| <u>a</u> | 6. cohesive devices | k. | l. a sentence that announces the main idea of your paragraph details that give more specific information about the ideas you are focusing on |
| <u>o</u> | 7. transition signal | m. | n. details that give more specific information about the ideas you are focusing on |
| <u>e</u> | 8. pronoun | o. | p. a word or phrase that links ideas together and shows the relationship between them |
| <u>i</u> | 9. repeated key terms | q. | r. what the writer will say about the topic of a paragraph |

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