

Unit 3

READING

The Death Trap

Saki

Saki was the pen name of Hector Hugh Munro (1870–1916), a British master of the short story genre. Munro's stories feature brilliantly comic characterisation; light, polished, witty dialogue; and finely judged narratives.

The Death Trap is a suspenseful one-act drama. A trio of officers plot to assassinate their young king, while the king's friend attempts to save his life. Who will succeed? The following extract contains the opening two-thirds of the play.

Characters

DIMITRI	<i>Reigning prince of Kedaria</i>
DR STRONETZ	<i>Physician to the prince</i>
COL. GIRINTZA	<i>Officer of the Kranitzki Regiment of Guards</i>
MAJOR VONTIEFF	<i>Officer of the Kranitzki Regiment of Guards</i>
CAPTAIN SHULTZ	<i>Officer of the Kranitzki Regiment of Guards</i>

Scene *An ante-chamber in the prince's castle at Tzern.*

Time *The present day. The scene opens about ten o'clock in the evening.*

An ante-chamber, rather sparsely furnished. Some rugs of Balkan manufacture on the walls. A narrow table in the centre of room, another table set with wine bottles and goblets near window, Some high-backed chairs set here and there round room. Tiled stove, L. Door in centre. Girintza, Vontieff, and Shultz are talking together as curtain rises.

Girintza. The Prince suspects something; I can see it in his manner.

Shultz. Let him suspect. He'll know for certain in half an hour's time.

Girintza. The moment the Andrieff Regiment has marched out of the town we are ready for him

Shultz (*drawing revolver from case and aiming it at an imaginary person*). And then—short shrift for your Royal Highness! I don't think many of my bullets will go astray.

Girintza. The revolver was never a favourite weapon of mine. I shall finish the job with this (*Half draws his sword and sends it back into its scabbard with a click.*)

Vontieff. Oh, we shall do for him right enough. It's a pity he's such a boy, though. I would rather we had a grown man to deal with.

Girintza. We must take our chance when we can find it. Grown men marry and breed heirs and then one has to massacre a whole family. When we've killed this boy we've killed the last of the dynasty, and laid the way clear for Prince Karl. As long as there was, one of this brood left, our good Karl could never win the throne.

Vontieff. Oh, I know this is our great chance. Still, I wish the boy could be cleared out of our path by the finger of Heaven rather than by our hands.

Shultz. Hush! Here he comes.

(Enter, by door, centre, Prince Dimitri, in undress cavalry uniform. He comes straight into the room, begins taking cigarette out of a case, and looks coldly at the three officers.)

Dimitri. You needn't wait.

(They bow and withdraw, Shultz going last and staring insolently at the Prince. He seats himself at table, centre. As door shuts he stares for a moment at it, then suddenly bows his head on his arms in attitude of despair. ... A knock is heard at the door. Dimitri leaps to his feet. Enter Stronetz in civilian attire.)

Dimitri (eagerly). Stronetz! My God, how glad I am to see you!

Stronetz. One wouldn't have thought so, judging by the difficulty I had in gaining admission. I had to invent a special order to see you on a matter of health. And they made me give up my revolver; they said it was some new regulation.

Dimitri (with a short laugh). They have taken away every weapon I possess, under some pretext or another. My sword has gone to be reset, my revolver is being cleaned, my hunting-knife has been mislaid.

Stronetz (horrified). My God, Dimitri! You don't mean—?

Dimitri. Yes, I do. I am trapped. Since I came to the throne three years ago as a boy of fourteen I have been watched and guarded against this moment, but it has caught me unawares.

Stronetz. But your guards!

Dimitri. Did you notice the uniforms? The Kranitzki Regiment. They are heart and soul for Prince Karl; the artillery are equally disaffected. The Andrieff Regiment was the only doubtful factor in their plans. And it marches out to camp tonight. The Lonyadi Regiment comes in to relieve it an hour or so later.

Stronetz. They are loyal, surely?

Dimitri. Yes, but their loyalty will arrive an hour or so too late.

Stronetz. Dimitri! You mustn't stay here to be killed! You must get out quick!

Dimitri. My dear good Stronetz, for more than a generation the Karl faction have been trying to stamp our line out of existence. I am the last of the lot; do you suppose that they are going to let me slip out of their claws now? They're not so damned silly.

Stronetz. But this is awful! You sit there and talk as if it were a move in a chess game.

Dimitri (*rising*). Oh, Stronetz! If you knew how I hate death! I'm not a coward, but I do so want to live. Life is so horribly fascinating when one is young, and I've tasted so little of it yet. (*Goes to window.*) Look out of the window at that fairyland of mountains with the forest running up and down all over it. You can just see Grodvitz where I shot all last autumn, up there on the left, and far away beyond it all is Vienna. Were you ever in Vienna, Stronetz? I've only been there once, and it seemed like a magic city to me. And there are other wonderful cities in the world that I've never seen. Oh, I do so want to live. Think of it; here I am alive, and talking to you, as we've talked dozens of times in this grey old room, and tomorrow a fat stupid servant will be washing up a red stain in that corner—I think it will probably be in that corner.

(*He points to corner near stove, L.*)

Stronetz. But you mustn't be butchered in cold blood like this, Dimitri. If they've left you nothing to fight which I can give you a drug from my case that will bring you a speedy death before they can touch you.

Dimitri. Thanks, no, old chap. You had better leave before it begins; they won't touch you. But I won't drug myself. I've never seen anyone killed before, and I shan't get another opportunity.

Stronetz. Then I won't leave you; you can see two men killed while you are about it.
(*A band is heard in distance playing a march.*)

Dimitri. The Andrieff Regiment marching out! Now they won't waste much time! (*He draws himself up tense in corner by stove.*) Hush, they are coming!

Stronetz (*rushing suddenly towards Dimitri.*) Quick! An idea! Tear open your tunic! (*He unfastens Dimitri's tunic and appears to be testing his heart. The door swings open and the three officers enter. Stronetz waves a hand commanding silence, and continues his testing. The officers stare at him.*)

Girintza. Dr Stronetz, will you have the goodness to leave the room? We have some business with His Royal Highness. Urgent business, Dr Stronetz.

Stronetz (*facing round*). Gentlemen, I fear my business is more grave. I have the saddest of duties to perform. I know you would all gladly lay down your lives for your Prince, but there are some perils which even your courage cannot avert.

Girintza (*puzzled*). What are you talking of, sir?

Stronetz. The Prince sent for me to prescribe for some disquieting symptoms that have declared themselves. I have made my examination. My duty is a cruel one... I cannot give him six days to live!

(Dimitri sinks into chair near table in pretended collapse. The officers turn to each other nonplussed.)

Girintza. You are certain? It is a grave thing you are saying. You are not making any mistake?

Stronetz (laying his hand on Dimitri's shoulder). Would to God I were!

(The officers again turn, whispering to each other.)

Girintza. It seems our business can wait.

Vontieff (to Dimitri). Sire, this is the finger of Heaven.

Dimitri (brokenly). Leave me.

(They salute and slowly withdraw. Dimitri slowly raises his head, then springs to his feet, rushes to door and listens, then turns round jubilantly to Stronetz.)

Dimitri. Spoofed them! Ye gods! That was an idea, Stronetz!

Stronetz (who stands quietly looking at Dimitri). It was not altogether an inspiration, Dimitri. A look in your eyes suggested it. I had seen men who were stricken with a mortal disease look like that.

Dimitri. Never mind what suggested it, you have saved me. The Lonyadi Regiment will be here at any moment and Girintza's gang daren't risk anything then. You've fooled them Stronetz, you've fooled them.

Stronetz (sadly). Boy, I haven't fooled them... (Dimitri stares at him for a long moment.) It was a real examination I made while those brutes were waiting there to kill you. It was a real report I made; the malady is there.

Dimitri (slowly). Was it *all* true, what you told them?

Stronetz. It was all true. You have not six days to live.

GLOSSARY

Kedaria, Tzern

regiment

ante-chamber

sparingly

goblet

a fictional country and its capital

a unit of the army

a small room or waiting area leading to a bigger room

in a scattered manner; not having too many items

a drinking glass in which the top part is shaped like a bowl

<i>short shrift</i>	quick and unsympathetic dismissal
<i>astray</i>	away from the correct path or behaviour
<i>scabbard</i>	a cover for a sword or a dagger
<i>brood</i>	children
<i>disaffected</i>	dissatisfied with people in control
<i>speedy</i>	quickly
<i>peril</i>	serious and immediate danger
<i>avert</i>	to prevent something bad from happening
<i>disquieting</i>	something that is worrying
<i>nonplussed</i>	so surprised that one does not know how to react
<i>grave</i>	serious
<i>Sire</i>	archaic form of 'sir'
<i>jubilantly</i>	triumphantly; with great joy
<i>spoofed</i>	tricked
<i>stricken</i>	affected by
<i>mortal</i>	liable to cause death; fatal
<i>brutes</i>	uncivilised; savage
<i>malady</i>	illness

COMPREHENSION

A. Choose the right answer from the following options.

1. Who is going to be killed?
 - a. Stronetz
 - b. Prince Dmitri
 - c. the Andrieff regiment

2. Which of the following ways are they planning to use to kill the prince?
 - a. sword
 - b. poison
 - c. blow to the head

3. Who is Stronetz?
 - a. a guard
 - b. a doctor
 - c. Dmitri's father

4. Why is the prince sad at the end of the extract?
- he is dying
 - he is betrayed by the doctor
 - he is killed by the doctor

B. Fill in the blanks with the appropriate words.

- Shultz's weapon of choice is
- The Andrieff Regiment is to the prince.
- The prince was when he took the throne.
- Vontieff feels the prince's illness is a sign from

C. Answer the following questions in 50–100 words.

- Why do Girintza, Shultz and Vontieff want to kill the prince?
- How has the prince been trapped?
- What does the prince not want to do?
- What does the doctor ask the prince to do as the conspirators are coming in?

D. Answer the following questions in 200–300 words.

- Describe the conversation between Stronetz and the prince. What do you understand from it?
- What can you tell about the prince's character from this extract? Use examples from the text to support your answer.
- Explain the meaning of the line 'Life is so horribly fascinating when one is young, and I've tasted so little of it yet'. Why do you think the prince feels this way? What are some of the things you would like to do before you die and why?
- How does the doctor stop the conspirators from killing the prince? What is the irony behind this trick?

GRAMMAR

Noun–Pronoun Agreement

Certain classes of words, such as pronouns and verbs, change their forms depending on the nouns that they are connected to. This is known as 'agreement'.

A pronoun must agree with its antecedent (i.e., the noun to which it refers or which it replaces) in terms of both number and gender. A singular antecedent requires a singular pronoun; a plural antecedent requires a plural pronoun; masculine and feminine antecedents require masculine and feminine pronouns respectively.

"Antecedent"

- Sumi raised *her* hand.

Since the noun 'Sumi' (the subject) is singular, the connected pronoun 'her' is also singular. Also, since the subject is feminine, the pronoun is also feminine.

- Sumi's parents praised *their* daughter.

Since the noun 'parents' (the subject) is plural, the connected pronoun 'their' is also plural.

- Sumi's uncle praised *his* niece.

Since the noun 'uncle' (the subject) is masculine, the connected pronoun 'his' is also masculine.

When the subjects are joined by 'and', use a plural pronoun.

- Sumi and Lata celebrated *their* victory.

When the subjects are joined by 'either ... or', 'neither ... nor', or 'not only ... but also', the pronoun will agree in number with the antecedent positioned closest to it in the sentence.

- Either Sumi or her parents will have *their* way.
- Either her parents or Sumi will have *her* way.

The words 'each' and 'every' require singular pronouns.

- Each girl contributed *her* share.
- Every man for *himself*.

When the following indefinite pronouns are used as the subject of a sentence (the antecedent) they require singular pronouns:

anybody	anyone	anything
everybody	everyone	everything
each	either	neither
nobody	no one	nothing
somebody	someone	something

- Everything had been moved from *its* place.
- Neither of the dogs returned to *its* master.

The above rule is the source of much confusion and awkwardness when the subject's gender is not known or if the subject refers to a group that might comprise both men and women. One could choose to use either the feminine singular or the masculine singular pronoun: 'Everyone should return to *his* seat' or 'Everyone should return to *her* seat'. However either construction may be deemed sexist. One could say 'Everyone should return to *his or her* seat'; however, this solution will soon sound clunky if used in several sentences within a passage. For these reasons the plural pronoun 'their' is increasingly being used as a gender-neutral pronoun: 'Everyone should return to *their* seat'. The most elegant solution is to re-write the sentence to a plural antecedent (keeping in mind the context): 'Students should return to *their* seats'.

When choosing a pronoun for collective nouns such as 'audience', 'class', 'committee', 'family', 'public', etc., look at the context. If the group is acting as a single unit, use a singular pronoun.

- The team celebrated *its* victory.

If the group is acting as individuals, use a plural pronoun.

- The team disagreed on *their* course of action.

Alternatively, replace the collective noun with a plural noun in order to use a plural pronoun.

- The players celebrated *their* victory.

Subject–Verb Agreement

Present tense forms of the verb must agree with the subject in number and person. This means that the form of the verb depends, in the case of some tenses, on whether its subject is in first, second or third person and on whether it is singular or plural. Study the examples below to understand how this happens.

1st person	singular	I <i>am</i> a student
	plural	We <i>are</i> students.
2nd person	singular	You <i>are</i> a student
	plural	You <i>are</i> students.
3rd person	singular	He/she <i>is</i> a student.
	plural	They <i>are</i> students.

In the sentences above, all of which are in *simple present tense*, the verb 'be' appears in *three* different forms—'am', 'is' and 'are'—depending on the number and person of the subject.

However, the verb 'be' appears in just *two* forms 'was' and 'were' when the sentence is in *simple past tense*.

1st person	singular	I <i>was</i> a student.
	plural	We <i>were</i> students.
2nd person	singular	You <i>were</i> a student.
	plural	You <i>were</i> students.
3rd person	singular	He/she <i>was</i> a student.
	plural	They <i>were</i> students.

The three forms of 'be' in the present tense and its two variants in the past tense are true of the verb whether it appears in a sentence as a main verb or as an auxiliary. The sentences below, where 'be' appears as an auxiliary verb, will make this clear.

I *am* working in Goa.

We *are* working in Goa.

They *are* working in Goa.

I *was* working in Goa.

We *were* working in Goa.

They *were* working in Goa.

In the case of all other verbs (including 'have' and 'do', which like the verb 'be' can be used as main verbs as well as auxiliaries), there are only *two* variant forms, known as 'singular' and 'plural', that are used in agreement with the number and person of the subject when the sentence is in simple present tense. The singular form of the verb is used with a subject in third person singular (he/she) and the plural form with all other kinds of subjects. Look at the examples below.

I walk to school every day.

You (sing.) walk to school every day.

He walks to school every day.

Vilas and I walk to school every day.

You (pl.) walk to school every day.

My sisters walk to school every day.

In the set of sentences above, the verb in the stem + *s* form ('walks') is said to be the singular form of the verb, and the verb in the stem form ('walk') is called the plural form of the verb. The choice of the verb form depends as said earlier on the number and person of the subject of a sentence in present tense. Look at some more examples of the use of the singular and plural forms of verbs in simple present tense.

Mr Anand teaches English.

Trains arrive on time here.

Note that the agreement rule is not followed if the verb is in the simple past tense. In other words, the form of the verb remains the same irrespective of the number and person of the subject.

The only exception to this is, as seen above, the verb 'be', which appears as 'was' or 'were' in the simple past, in its usage as both a main verb and an auxiliary. Look at the sentences below to understand this fully.

I gave her fruit.

We gave her fruit.

You (sing.) gave her fruit.

You (pl.) gave her fruit.

The girl gave her fruit.

The girls gave her fruit.

Although the agreement rule is applicable in most cases, it has to be used with care in some special cases, which we shall look at now.

- When the subject consists of two singular or plural nouns (or pronouns) joined by 'and', the plural form of the verb is normally used. For example:

The president and the vice president are coming to the meeting.

In the sentence above, the two nouns joined by 'and' refer to two different people.

- In case the two nouns refer to the same person, the singular form of the verb is used. For example:

The president and chief executive of the company has arrived.

Here the two nouns ('president' and 'chief executive') refer to the same person.

- If the two nouns joined together by 'and' are thought of as a single 'thing', the singular form of the verb is used. For example:

Idli and sambar *is* my favourite breakfast.

- When we refer to an amount or quantity of something (distance, money, etc.), it is used with the singular form of the verb. For example:

150 kilometres *is* not a great distance.

Ten thousand rupees *is* a fair price for this bike.

- The singular form of the verb is used if the subject consists of two singular nouns joined together by 'either ... or' and 'neither ... nor', as in the following examples.

Either the president or the secretary *has* signed this document.

Neither Robert nor Abdul *has* come to the meeting.

- However, if the nouns connected by 'either ... or'/'neither ... nor' are plural, the plural form of the verb is used. For example:

Either my children or their friends *have* written this letter.

Neither the girls nor the boys *have* any knowledge of this matter.

- When the subject of a sentence is a pronoun, such as 'everyone', 'someone' and 'no one', the singular form of the verb is used. For example:

Everyone *wants* to succeed.

No one *knows* the answer.

- Pronouns such as 'everyone', 'everybody', 'no one', 'nobody', 'someone' and 'somebody' are considered to be singular and therefore take the singular form of the verb. However, note that they are followed by plural pronouns such as 'they', 'them' and 'their'. For example:

Everyone *has* finished their work.

Nobody *is* allowed to drive unless they are eighteen.

- Some nouns ending in '-s' are considered plural in form and take plural verbs. These nouns do not have singular forms. For example:

His trousers *have* become too tight.

Where *are* your spectacles (glasses)?

Some other nouns of this kind are: 'arms' (meaning 'weapons'), 'belongings', 'congratulations', 'goods', 'surroundings', 'thanks' and 'troops'.

- Uncountable nouns, such as 'baggage', 'equipment', 'furniture' and 'luggage', are treated as singular nouns. Hence, they take singular verbs only. For example:

Your baggage *is* heavy.

The equipment *was* expensive.

- Collective nouns, such as 'government', 'public', 'team', 'party' and 'media' can take either a singular or a plural verb. For example:

The committee *is* investigating this matter.

The committee *are* of the view that the investigation should be completed quickly.

The first sentence refers to 'committee' as an undivided group, but the second refers to the individuals who form the committee.

EXERCISE

Fill in the blanks in the sentences below using the appropriate form of the verb in brackets.

Use the verbs in the tenses suggested. For example:

Bose speaks Kannada fluently. (speak: simple present)

- I ... work..... for an NGO in Gwalior. (work: simple present)
- There ... were..... three crows on the tree branch. (be: simple past)
- The boys ... were playing..... tennis. (play: past continuous)
- Stephen has cleared.... the table. (clear: present perfect)
- The planes are approaching..... the airport. (approach: present continuous)
- The young children in this school have..... yoga classes twice a week. (have: simple present)
- Both the rice and the curd were..... fresh and tasty. (be: simple past)
- The rice and curd which the restaurant serves is..... fresh and tasty. (be: simple present)
- Rs 10,000 a month is..... a good salary for a beginner. (be: simple present)
- Neither Murali nor Tara knows..... the answer to this question. (know: simple present)
- Either the boys or their parents have collected..... the report cards. (collect: present perfect)
- Thank you! The news you just gave me makes..... me very happy. (make: simple present)

VOCABULARY

Word Formation III

A prefix is a word fragment added in front of a word (e.g., *bi-*, *pre-*, *un-*). A suffix is a word fragment added at the end of a word (e.g., *-hood*, *-less*, *-y*). Combining roots with prefixes and suffixes produces new words. For example, prefix *un-* + root *able* = new word *unable*; root *able* + suffix *-y* = new word *ably*.

Breaking a word down into root, prefix, and suffix might help you determine its literal meaning. Given below, are some prefixes and suffixes that have been derived from Greek and Latin.

Prefixes

Greek prefix	Meaning	Examples
anti / ant	instead, against	antisocial, antacid
deca	ten	decade, decalogue
eco	environment, habitat	ecology, ecosystem
homo	like, similar	homogeneous, homonym
hyper	over, above, beyond	hyperactive, hyperbole
kilo	thousand	kilogram, kilometre
macro	large	macroscopic, macroeconomics
micro	small	microbe, microscope
neo	new	neoclassical, neophyte
octo	eight	octogenarian, octopus
para	beside, beyond, near	paradox, paranormal
proto	first	prototype, proton
pseudo	false	pseudonym, pseudo-science
syn / sym	together, with	symmetric, synopsis
Latin prefix	Meaning	Examples
a	not, without	amoral, apolitical
bi	two, double	bifurcate, biannual
contra	against	contradict, contrast
de	down, off, removal	deformed, descend
extra	outside of, beyond	extraordinary, extrovert
in / im	in, into, not, toward	incision, impure, impulse
infra	below, inferior, after	infrared, infrasonic
mal	evil, badly	malnourished, malevolent
non	not	non-resident, nonconformity
pre	before, early, toward	precedent, preposition
quadr	four times, fourfold	quadriceps, quadrangle
retro	backwards, behind	retrofit, retrograde
semi	half	semicircle, semivowel
tri	three	triangle, triceps
ultra	beyond, extremely	ultrasound, ultraconservative

The meaning of a word can be changed by either modifying the root, or adding a prefix or suffix.
 Word: *telephone* = Greek prefix *tele* (far) + Greek root *phone* (sound)
 Change root to *pathy* (Greek: feeling); new word: *telepathy*

EXERCISES

For each sentence below, study the word that is printed in bold. Try to identify the root word along with any prefix and/or suffix that is/are attached to it.

1. Salman watched a **preview** of the movie.

view *pre*
 Root: *view* Prefix: *pre*

2. The magician made the pigeon **disappear**.

appear *dis*
 Root: *appear* Prefix: *dis*

3. Radhika asked the actress for her **autograph**.

graph *auto*
 Root: *graph* Prefix: *auto*

4. Chandan **removed** the item from the box.

move *re* *ed*
 Root: *move* Prefix: *re* Suffix: *ed*

5. I stood on a balcony **overlooking** the park.

look *over* *ing*
 Root: *look* Prefix: *over* Suffix: *ing*

6. Himesh's story was **unbelievable**.

believe *un* *able*
 Root: *believe* Prefix: *un* Suffix: *able*

7. One should not dress **informally** in office.

formal *in* *ly*
 Root: *formal* Prefix: *in* Suffix: *ly*

Complete the following table, using the given clues.

Prefix	Root	Suffix	Word	Meaning
man	fact	o	manufacture	create or produce
un	for	tu	fortunate	not favoured by fortune
photo	graph	ic	photographic	relating to photography
auto	bio	graph	autobiograph	story of one's own life
sub	mar		submarine	underwater warship
exo	spac	ial	extraterrestrial	originating or located outside Earth

Fill in the blanks by modifying the words in the brackets as instructed.

1. Don't be (child + suffix)
2. He his strength. (prefix + estimate)
3. Our team won the hockey (champion + suffix)
4. It is to kill endangered animals. (prefix + legal)
5. She was given a of sweets. (hand + suffix)
6. He wants to me on Facebook. (prefix + friend)
7. You need a of hard work and determination to succeed. (combine + suffix)

WRITING

Principles of Good Writing

Writing is an important part of both your academic and professional life. It helps you communicate, explain, advise and record various things to people in a variety of ways. In order to communicate effectively through writing, one must learn how to write well. This chapter seeks to explain and illustrate some basic principles of good writing.

The first thing one must keep in mind is to know your goal. What is the *purpose* of your writing? Is it a scientific report, an essay, an informal letter, a job application? You have to make sure your language, formatting, vocabulary and tone is appropriate to whatever task your writing is supposed to achieve. For instance, a job application letter would be formatted differently from a scientific report. A descriptive essay would be much longer than a formal letter. An informal e-mail to a friend would be worded differently than a letter to the head of your university. You need to ask yourself who your reader is, what you want them to know and what is the most effective way to communicate that to them.

Once you know what and why you are writing, you need identify the *key points* you want to discuss. This is another fundamental step in learning to write well. Writing well is not simply writing a lot but learning to be organised in your writing. First, identify what is the main point of your message. For instance, it could be explaining how a windmill works. Then you need to put down all the main ideas associated with it in the right order. For instance, a report on how windmills work would have an objective, a description of a windmill and its working parts, a drawing or two to illustrate the windmill, the theory of how kinetic energy is converted to electricity, an explanation of how a windmill uses this process to produce electricity, how the electricity is stored and what its possible applications are. This ensures that you have covered all the important points and you have done so in a logical and orderly manner. A good way of coming up with ideas and organising them is to *brainstorm* or *mindmap* the topic and then arrange the ideas in bullet point form in order of importance and coherence.

The next step is to convert these ideas into paragraphs. A few points to remember here:

- Every paragraph should have unity of theme which means that it should be built around a single idea expressed in a topic sentence. For example, in a paragraph on global warming, the sentence 'Some governments are encouraging wind and solar energy production' would be out of place.
- The topic sentence can be placed at the beginning, somewhere within, or at the end of the paragraph. In texts relating to science and technology, the first position is most often preferred.
- Do not make your paragraphs too long. The best paragraphs ('best' in terms of the ease with which they can be understood) are never very long, except in scholarly or technical texts. This is because it is easy for a reader to understand what is said when the information is presented in short coherent bits.
- A paragraph must have the feature of coherence, which means that all the sentences in it must be arranged in a way that indicates a logical progression of thought.
- Coherence in a paragraph can be achieved by arranging its sentences according to chronological, spatial or logical order. Chronological order is useful in describing events; spatial order, in describing a scene; and logical order, in describing phenomena where a cause-and-effect relation needs to be presented.
- A second way of writing a coherent paragraph is by using connectives, such as 'therefore', 'however', 'also', 'thus', 'finally', 'firstly', etc.
- A third way of ensuring coherence in a paragraph is by the use of pronouns and other reference words.
- Remember that the best paragraphs are written in your own words, chosen carefully to express your observations, feelings and opinions.
- Paragraphs on personal topics can be based on actual experiences or be purely imaginary, while paragraphs on general topics call for an awareness of current affairs and the world we live in.
- When asked to compose a paragraph on a general topic, it is a good idea to refer to some books to collect facts.

Organising paragraphs

Paragraphs must be organised in a particular manner to ensure your document is understood by the reader. The most important way of doing this is to have an introduction and conclusion.

- An *introduction* is a paragraph or section where you introduce the topic of the document in a manner that allows the reader to know exactly what the rest of the document is about.
This should always come first.
- A *conclusion* is a paragraph or section which sums up the key points in your document and brings all your ideas together in a manner that brings your document to a definite close.
This should always come last.

The style in which these will be written depends on whether you are writing a descriptive essay, report, formal letter or informal letter. Here are some examples of introductions and conclusions.

Introduction to a job application

My name is Bharathi Kumar, and I am writing in reply to your advertisement for the post of assistant lab technician. I am currently based in Hyderabad, and have been working in Piramal Laboratories for the past one year as a junior lab technician.

Conclusion to a job application

My CV is attached. I hope that you will look upon my résumé and application favourably. I look forward to hearing from you.

Introduction to an essay on caste discrimination

There are different forms of discrimination practiced in our society today, even though we might say that we are an equitable society. Discriminations based on gender, age, class and socio-economic position are visible in every sphere of life. Caste is no different. Though more subtle, discrimination based on caste is a fact of life in India. From education to who is allowed to eat in our homes, caste-based discrimination permeates our outlook and the way we treat our fellow citizens.

Conclusion to an essay on caste discrimination

In conclusion, it is evident that caste-based discrimination has deep roots, having been a part of Indian society for a very long time. That does not mean it must continue to inform the way we live. It is our responsibility to ensure that future generations do not carry on the legacy of caste discrimination. We need to make every effort to ensure that caste does not continue to play a role in creating further divisions in our country.

Creating coherence

Once you have an introduction in place, you can arrange the paragraphs in your document according to the format of your document. Some of the ways you can organise paragraphs are as follows.

- *Order of importance:* Paragraphs with the most important ideas come first, and other paragraphs follow in descending order of importance.
- *Chronological order:* Paragraphs are arranged as per a sequence of events. Use connectors such as 'first', 'then', 'finally', etc., to structure your paragraphs. This method is useful while narrating a story or writing up procedures for an experiment.
- *Problem–solution:* Here, you state the problem in your introduction, and the rest of the paragraphs outline a solution in a logical, sequential manner.
- *Question–answer:* When you have to write an argumentative essay in which you take a stand for or against something, or you are asked to define something, you need to first state the question and then provide the answer in the following paragraphs.



Techniques for writing precisely

Apart from organising your writing, you also need to ensure that your writing itself is precise. This can be achieved in a number of ways. Some of the more important ones are:

- *Be brief:* No one likes reading long, meandering sentences unless it is a literary work. For all official and scientific writing, keep it short and to the point.
- *Be grammatical:* Keeping your sentences short does not mean resorting to ungrammatical constructions. Make sure you structure your sentences correctly.
- *Avoid jargon and abbreviations:* Unless absolutely necessary, do not use specialised technical terminology, unnecessarily complex words, or abbreviations that your reader might not understand. Use language that is appropriate to both the situation as well as your reader's level of comprehension. If you do not know the meaning of a word, look it up in a dictionary; if you still do not understand it, do not use it. It is always better to use correct vocabulary than vocabulary that looks impressive but is actually wrong.
- *Describe:* When talking about an object or event, describe it vividly. Use words that describe size, shape, texture, colour, smell, taste, weight, material, use, etc. When writing a descriptive essay or subjective piece, you can even describe the feelings the subject evokes in you, or your own reaction to the object/event being described. This gives your writing more immediacy and greater recall.
- *Define:* Define your objective/idea/object as fully as you can. This makes your writing clearer, and it also tells the reader that you know what you are talking about.
- *Classify:* Make sure you classify whatever it is you are writing according to what you need it to do. For instance, you would write a report on a class excursion differently from a report on laboratory experiment.
- *Provide examples/evidence:* Always present examples, evidence or data to support your claims. Backing up your opinions or ideas means that the reader will believe you and that your writing will be convincing.
- *Edit:* A very basic principle of good writing is to ensure that your writing is free of errors. This means that you need to be careful about using correct spelling, grammar, sentence structure, and appropriate vocabulary in all your writing. Always proof-read or check your writing before submitting it.

The tips and techniques given above will help you write more concisely and correctly. Practicing these principles will help you communicate more effectively.

EXERCISES

Answer the following questions in one or two sentences.

1. Name three techniques that will help you write more precisely.
2. Why should you edit your writing?
3. When can you use abbreviations in your writing?

Rearrange each group of jumbled sentences below so as to have well-written paragraphs.

1. a. It contains, of course, the meanings of 'difficult words'.
 b. One of the most important reference books that you must possess is a dictionary.
 c. It also gives you the pronunciation of the words.
 d. You do possess one, perhaps, but I doubt whether you are aware of the different kinds of information it contains.
 e. The dictionary can be referred to for the various grammatical forms of words as well.
 f. Every college dictionary should provide at least these four kinds of information about words, namely pronunciation, meaning, grammatical patterns and usage.
 g. Finally, a good dictionary contains illustrative sentences or phrases, showing how words are actually used.

2. a. They are chemistry, physics, physiology or medicine, literature and peace.
 b. It is awarded from funds bequeathed by Alfred Nobel, a Swedish inventor and philanthropist.
 c. In 1969, economics was added to the list.
 d. Nobel's will designated six areas for which prizes could be awarded.
 e. Prizes in these seven areas are presented in December every year, in the presence of the King of Sweden, as a fitting tribute to Alfred Nobel.
 f. The Nobel Prize is considered one of the most prestigious awards made to people whose work benefits humanity.
 g. The funds are administered by the Nobel Foundation in Stockholm.

Develop the following hints into a paragraph of your own. Write out the complete paragraph in your exercise book.

Where there's a will there's a way—resolution overcomes obstacles—half the battle—all walks of life—determination surest way to success—difficulties disappear—life of Napoleon—body and mind into goals—Alps stood in way of his armies—'There shall be no Alps'—road was made—heights previously inaccessible—'Impossible is a word only to be found in the dictionary of fools'—resolution a condition of success—beware of mistaking undisciplined energy for firmness and self-command

LIFE SKILLS

Time Management

The ability to manage time effectively is one of the biggest assets you can have on your side in all walks of life. Whether you are an artist or an engineer or even an intern, you need to learn how to do multiple things within a finite amount of time. As you grow older and move up the employment ladder, you will have to deal with many more responsibilities. The key to

managing these responsibilities without getting stressed or worried or anxious is to manage your time wisely.

Planning, prioritising, making schedules, multitasking and being able to adapt your schedule to emergencies are all valuable time management tools. If you can avoid procrastination, playing on your mobile phone too much, mindlessly surfing the internet, and other such distractions, you will find it easier to manage your time effectively. Once people see that you are able to manage your tasks on time and do it well, you will find them more willing to work with you, give you promotions, and help you grow in your career.

Time management has been regarded as a very important life skill throughout history. The following extract is from a letter written by the first-century Roman philosopher Seneca to his friend about the value of every minute.

On Saving Time

Seneca

[...] my dear Lucilius—set yourself free for your own sake; gather and save your time, which till lately has been forced from you, or filched away, or has merely slipped from your hands. Make yourself believe the truth of my words,—that certain moments are torn from us, that some are gently removed, and that others glide beyond our reach. The most disgraceful kind of loss, however, is that due to carelessness. Furthermore, if you will pay close heed to the problem, you will find that the largest portion of our life passes while we are doing ill, a goodly share while we are doing nothing, and the whole while we are doing that which is not to the purpose. What man can you show me who places any value on his time, who reckons the worth of each day, who understands that he is dying daily? For we are mistaken when we look forward to death; the major portion of death has already passed. Whatever years be behind us are in death's hands.

Therefore, Lucilius, [...]: hold every hour in your grasp. Lay hold of to-day's task, and you will not need to depend so much upon to-morrow's. While we are postponing, life speeds by. Nothing, Lucilius, is ours, except time. We were entrusted by nature with the ownership of this single thing, so fleeting and slippery that anyone who will can oust us from possession. What fools these mortals be! They allow the cheapest and most useless things, which can easily be replaced, to be charged in the reckoning, after they have acquired them; but they never regard themselves as in debt when they have received some of that precious commodity—time! And yet time is the one loan which even a grateful recipient cannot repay.

GLOSSARY

<i>filched</i>	stolen
<i>reckons</i>	understands, measures
<i> fleeting</i>	does not last long
<i>mortals</i>	humans
<i>commodity</i>	an object that can be bought or sold
<i>recipient</i>	a person who receives (something)

ACTIVITIES

Individual activity

In a notebook, jot down the following—

- Recall five ways in which you waste time every day.
- What can you do to rectify these things?

After completing the above exercise, note down the following—

- What are four productive things (apart from studying) you can do with your time every day?
- How would you go about doing these things?

Pair activity

Choose a partner. Write down your daily schedule and a list of goals you want to achieve in a month.

Now exchange your list with that of your partner's. Offer suggestions on how your partner can improve his daily schedule to manage time more effectively and let him/her do the same for you. Also offer suggestions on how each of you can achieve your monthly goals most effectively and in order of importance.

WRITING ACTIVITY