

Academic Writing Exercises

Section A

1. Read these sentences.

Waiting for news about the flight delay, Sam looked for a quiet place in the noisy terminal to make a phone call. Jordan tried to find an outlet where she could plug in her computer.

Which revision most clearly combines the two sentences?

- (a) Waiting for news about the flight delay, Sam, while Jordan tried to find an outlet where she could plug in her computer, looked for a quiet place in the noisy terminal to make a phone call.
- (b) Waiting for news about the flight delay, Sam and Jordan looked for a quiet place in the noisy terminal to make a phone call and tried to find an outlet where she could plug in her computer.
- (c) Waiting for news about the flight delay, Sam looked for a quiet place in the noisy terminal to make a phone call, while Jordan tried to find an outlet where she could plug in her computer.
- (d) Waiting for news about the flight delay, Sam looked for a quiet place in the noisy terminal to make a phone call, although Jordan tried to find an outlet where she could plug in her computer.

2. Read this sentence.

There was an effortlessness with which Barry played his guitar, and it was making it appear as if he and his instrument had—because of something almost impossible to describe—miraculously merged together into a single, music-producing unit.

Which revision of the sentence best expresses the idea precisely and concisely?

- (a) He and his instrument were a miraculous music-producing unit, impossible to describe.
- (b) Miraculously merged together, Barry played his guitar with an effortlessness as if he and his instrument were a single, music-producing unit.
- (c) The effortlessness with which Barry played his guitar made it appear as if he and his instrument had miraculously merged into a single, music-producing unit.
- (d) There was an effortlessness in how Barry played his guitar—because of something almost impossible to describe—and it was making it appear as if he and his instrument had miraculously merged together into a single, music-producing unit.

3. Read the paragraph.

An everyday hero is the average person who responds out of a sense of urgency to a situation that demands immediate action. The everyday hero

recognizes that complacency is not an option. Risk to self is considered, but generally only after the fact.

Which sentence best concludes this paragraph?

- (a) The world is filled with many different kinds of heroes.
- (b) The actions define the hero as a giver, touching humanity in the process.
- (c) The everyday hero is the next-door neighbour who rescues the child from the oncoming car.
- (d) The size of the risk is of no matter to the hero because there is little time to consider the consequences.

4. Read this excerpt of a draft of an essay. Then, answer the question.

All across the United States, there are cities known for their “specialty” dishes. Each dish has a unique flavor and story, and people travel from all across the country just to try it out. Chicago is famous for its deep-dish pizza. New York-style cheesecake is one of New York City’s claims to fame.

Pat and Harry were born in South Philadelphia. Pat was born in 1907, and Harry was born nine years later.⁷ When Harry was but a lad of three, the family Olivieri transported themselves to Italy. The family stayed in Italy a short time before returning to Philadelphia. Harry took up carpentry. He worked after school. He also worked at the Navy shipyard. Pat began building sleds. Harry and Pat wanted to earn a better living so they decided to open a hot dog stand and sell hot dogs at night. In 1930, the brothers opened a hot dog stand at the corners of 9th Street, Wharton Street, and Passyunk Avenue.

Which sentence best completes the first paragraph and creates a good transition between the two paragraphs?

- (a) Philly cheesesteaks were invented by the Olivieri brothers.
- (b) Pat and Harry Olivieri, who once lived in Philadelphia, invented the Philly cheesesteak.
- (c) The Olivieri brothers invented the Philly cheesesteak in order to bring publicity to the city they called home.
- (d) Thanks to two brothers, Pat and Harry Olivieri, Philadelphia has its own famous food as well: the Philly cheesesteak.

5. A student wishes to use an idea from the extract of an article below (in italics), in an essay whose topic is: Analyse the role of revision in producing a competent essay. The article was published in 2005 and examines the experiences of writing for native and non-native students in the United States. Diane Becket, the author of the article, concludes with these words:

For the students in this study, the factors that most influenced their progress are the extent to which they are able to balance the conflicting demands of their lives, the motivation to thoughtfully revise their essays, and their overall attitude to the class. These factors are more important for their progress than whether or not they were born in the United States.

Which of the following paraphrases is NOT a plagiarism of the above source?

- (a) Becket (2005) concludes that one of the most significant factors in student writing is the motivation to thoughtfully revise their essays.
- (b) Becket (2005) concludes that one of the most significant factors in student writing is the willingness to revise carefully as this is more important for their progress than whether or not they were born in the United States.
- (c) According to Becket (2005), one of the most significant factors in student writing is their motivation to thoughtfully revise anything they write.
- (d) Becket (2005) concludes that one of the most significant factors in student writing is the willingness to revise carefully.

- 6. You are writing an essay and want to use a quotation to show that all students meet challenges when they begin studying at university or college. Which would be the best way to use a quotation from the extract below (using the APA citation style)?**
The extract below is from page 60 of an article by Diane Becket published in 2005:

Although the native and non-native speakers share the same high school background, their attitudes, which have been affected by these experiences, are different. Memories from Indian schools influence the non-native speakers' attitude to American high schools, and they feel a pressure to succeed because of the efforts of their parents to give them a better life in the United States. The native speakers feel no such pressures, but they struggle with negative memories of high school. Both groups of students are, however, working in their own ways to adjust to the demands of college life.

- (a) According to Becket (2005), "memories from Indian schools influence the nonnative speakers' attitude to American high schools, and they feel a pressure to succeed because of the efforts of their parents to give them a better life in the United States" (p. 60).
- (b) According to Becket (2005), "the native speakers feel no such pressures" (p. 60).
- (c) According to Becket (2005), both native and non-native students need "to adjust to the demands of college life" (p. 60).
- (d) According to Becket (2005), "although the native and non-native speakers share the same high school background, their attitudes, which have been affected by these experiences, are different" (p. 60).

- 7. Below is a paragraph taken from an article published in 1999 by Lejk, Wyvill and Farrow**

There are a number of methods of getting around the problem of unequal contribution to groupwork. The most common is to use some form of peer assessment to arrive at an individual's contribution to the group effort and then use this assessment to apply a weighting to the group mark (e.g. Lejk et al., 1996). Although these methods are pragmatic and widely accepted, they do go against the ethos of team working in which the team works as a unit and is judged as a unit. In addition, there are still question marks over students' ability to objectively assess their peers in a group setting. Some methods of peer assessment appear to be more difficult for non-professional assessors than others (Schechtman, 1992) and the ability of students to assess themselves fairly in a group setting has been questioned (Falchikov, 1991).

Interviews with students at the University of Sunderland also cast doubt on the ability of some students to objectively assess their peers. All in all, assessment of groupwork is problematic.

It is a well written paragraph but the topic sentence has NOT been written as the first sentence. What topic sentence would YOU write as the first sentence of this paragraph if you wanted to maximise the impact of the argument?

- (a) There are a number of methods of getting around the problem of unequal contribution to groupwork.
- (b) Assessment of groupwork is problematic.
- (c) All in all, assessment of groupwork is problematic.
- (d) Interviews with students at the University of Sunderland also cast doubt on the ability of some students to objectively assess their peers.

8. Borrowing someone else's ideas or words, but failing to properly document the original source is called:

- (a) paraphrasing.
- (b) writer's block.
- (c) plagiarism.
- (d) editing.

9. Which of the following is not an error that will result in plagiarism?

- (a) Paraphrasing other people's information and citing the source of that information.
- (b) Failing to properly cite one's sources.
- (c) Over-relying on someone else's words.
- (d) Over-relying on someone else's organizational structure.

10. Which of the following is the best way to protect yourself against plagiarism?

- (a) Always cite your sources.
- (b) Paraphrase other people's information and cite the source of that information.
- (c) Include your own contributions, so you are not relying exclusively on the ideas of others.
- (d) All of the above are required in order to protect yourself against plagiarism.

Section B

Choose the most appropriate word/expression to fill in the sentences given to make it more academic:

1. The government has made _____ progress in solving the problem.

- (a) considerable
- (b) great
- (c) extensive
- (d) large

2. We _____ excellent results in the experiment.

- (a) got
- (b) change to
- (c) obtained
- (d) found

3. The results of _____ tests have been encouraging.

- (a) lots of
- (b) numerous
- (c) abundant
- (d) copious

4. A loss of jobs is one of the _____ if the process is automated.

- (a) concerns
- (b) things that will happen
- (c) magnitudes
- (d) consequences

5. The relationship between the management and workers is _____ important.

- (a) extremely
- (b) really
- (c) tremendously
- (d) enormously

6. Some suggestions _____ from the study will be presented.

- (a) springing up from
- (b) get up
- (c) arising
- (d) ascending

7. Researchers have been _____ the problem for 15 years.

- (a) looking into
- (b) investigating
- (c) probing
- (d) scrutinizing

8. This issue was _____ during the seminar.

- (a) raised
- (b) brought up
- (c) elevated
- (d) upraised

9. It is assumed that the management knows what is happening and will therefore _____ if there is a problem.

- (a) interfere
- (b) step in
- (c) intervene
- (d) mediate

10. Schools cannot altogether _____ the problem of truancy.

- (a) eradicate
- (b) exclude
- (c) get rid of
- (d) eliminate

Section C

Replace the following phrasal verbs with a more formal single word.

1. The locals could not **put up with** the visitors from the city.

- (a) Tolerate
- (b) Stand
- (c) Abide
- (d) Endure

2. The decline was **brought about** by cheap imports.

- (a) Affected
- (b) Caused
- (c) Instigated
- (d) Initiated

3. The university is **thinking about** installing CCTV.

- (a) Bearing
- (b) Reflecting
- (c) Considering
- (d) Pondering

4. Sales are likely to **drop off** in the third quarter.

- (a) Reduce
- (b) Decrease
- (c) shrink
- (d) Fall

5. He **went on** speaking for over an hour.

- (a) Continued

- (b) Sustained
- (c) Nonstop
- (d) Uninterrupted

6. The meeting was **put off** until December.

- (a) Demolished
- (b) Proposed
- (c) Postponed
- (d) Planned

7. The cinema was **pulled down** ten years ago.

- (a) Reduced
- (b) Planned
- (c) Destroyed
- (d) Demolished

8. The reaction of the officials was **sort of** negative.

- (a) Somewhat
- (b) Fairly
- (c) Nicely
- (d) Similarly

9. Car manufacturers are planning a **get together** to discuss their strategy.

- (a) Summit
- (b) Seminar
- (c) Assembly
- (d) Meeting

10. She was **given the sack** because of her poor record.

- (a) Dismissed
- (b) Discharged
- (c) Canned
- (d) Cleared

Section D

Read the following passage and fill in the blanks with appropriate connecting word/linkers:

McCourt uses symbolism to associate the grandfather with the whooping cranes. For example, the grandfather emphasizes that the cranes are nearly extinct: “Ain’t no whooping cranes nowadays [...] Boy I ain’t seen a whooper for forty years.” _____ 1 _____, he remembers them distinctly and nostalgically: “First you hear a sound far off and you figger it’s thunder—and it gits louder and nearer, and soon it’s like a freight train right over your head [...].” _____ 2 _____, Grandpa identifies with this extinct bird as is clear when he says “you feel like you want to go too [...] Breaks your heart almost, you want to go that bad, when you hear that thunder [...]” _____ 3 _____, Lee points out that the birds migrate south in the winter. _____ 4 _____, the grandfather responds, “I’m going south too [...] You can set in the sun all winter and see things beside flatness. Man gets mighty tired of flatness—after eighty years.” _____ 5 _____, when they finally see the crane, it is described in terms of a religious experience. _____ 6 _____, “They stood together, man and boy, held by an enchantment that was no part of the drab, flat world about them. The great bird rose steadily higher [...] He seemed to hang immobile, suspended in space beyond the limits of the world. Then the whiteness faded, blended with the pale of the sky and was gone.” _____ 7 _____, the grandfather exclaims, “Great God in heaven.” _____ 8 _____, McCourt prepares the reader for the grandfather’s death. _____ 9 _____, the flight of the birds is associated with darkness, and the darkness that comes to the grandfather as “the light in his eyes faded and went out” seems welcome. _____ 10 _____, both the bird and Grandpa have gone south.

Blank 1

- (a) In contrast
- (b) However
- (c) Instead
- (d) Contrastively

Blank 2

- (a) In fact
- (b) Consequently
- (c) Lastly
- (d) Finally

Blank 3

- (a) On the contrary
- (b) Instead
- (c) In addition
- (d) Additionally

Blank 4

- (a) Finally
- (b) Thus
- (c) So
- (d) Accordingly

Blank 5

- (a) Therefore
- (b) Finally
- (c) On the contrary
- (d) However

Blank 6

- (a) Formerly
- (b) Finally
- (c) Thus
- (d) In addition

Blank 7

- (a) However
- (b) Appropriately
- (c) On the contrary
- (d) Similarly

Blank 8

- (a) On the contrary
- (b) Instead
- (c) In addition
- (d) Furthermore

Blank 9

- (a) In particular
- (b) Nevertheless
- (c) Though
- (d) Yet

Blank 10

- (a) Even so
- (b) Finally
- (c) Lastly
- (d) Consequently