

# PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE

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**TASK 1: What are the 5 key features of a good paragraph? Discuss with a partner and make a list.**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

## TOPIC SENTENCES, BODY SENTENCES, CONCLUDING SENTENCES AND PATTERNS OF ORGANISATION

**TASK 2: Look at the following paragraph. Which sentence is the topic sentence? What is its purpose? Underline the body sentences and wavy underline the concluding sentence. What is the function of the concluding sentence?**

Although few people realize it, 1869 was a landmark year in genetic research, because it was the year in which Swiss physiological chemist Friedrich Miescher first identified what he called "nuclein" inside the nuclei of human white blood cells. (The term "nuclein" was later changed to "nucleic acid" and eventually to "deoxyribonucleic acid," or "DNA.") Miescher's plan was to isolate and characterize not the nuclein, (which nobody at that time realized existed) but instead the protein components of leukocytes (white blood cells). Miescher thus made arrangements for a local surgical clinic to send him used, pus-coated patient bandages; once he received the bandages, he planned to wash them, filter out the leukocytes, and extract and identify the various proteins within the white blood cells. But when he came across a substance from the cell nuclei that had chemical properties unlike any protein, including a much higher phosphorous content and resistance to proteolysis (protein digestion), Miescher realized that he had discovered a new substance (Dahm, 2008). Sensing the importance of his findings, Miescher wrote, "It seems probable to me that a whole family of such slightly varying phosphorous-containing substances will appear, as a group of nucleins, equivalent to proteins."

Paragraph from: Pray, L. (2008) Discovery of DNA structure and function: Watson and Crick. Nature Education 1(1):100; full article at <http://www.nature.com/scitable/topicpage/discovery-of-dna-structure-and-function-watson-397>

**A topic sentence** consists of a topic (a broad or general theme) and a main idea or controlling idea (which limits focus to one specific aspect of that theme).

**Complete the statement:**

In the above paragraph the topic is \_\_\_\_\_ and the main idea is \_\_\_\_\_.

**TASK 3: In each of the 2 paragraphs below**

- i. locate the topic sentence and identify the topic and main idea
- ii. underline the body sentences and state what type of organisational pattern is used (narrative, description, process, examples, definition, analysis, classification, comparison/contrast, cause/effect, analogy)
- iii. locate the concluding sentence and state its function.

### Paragraph 1

As you read this sentence, you are one of approximately 1.6 billion people – nearly one third of the world’s population – who will use English in some form today. Although English is the mother tongue of only 380 million people, it is the language of the lion’s share of the world’s books, academic papers, newspapers, and magazines. American radio, television, and blockbuster films export English-language pop culture worldwide. More than 80 percent of the content posted on the Internet is in English, even though an estimated 44 percent of online users speak another language at home. Not surprisingly, both the global supply of and the demand for English instruction are exploding. Whether we consider English a “killer language” or not, whether we regard its spread as benign globalization or linguistic imperialism, its expansive reach is undeniable and, for the time being, unstoppable. Never before in human history has one language been spoken (let alone semi-spoken) so widely and by so many.

Source: Joshua A. Fishman 1998; *The New Linguistic Order. Foreign Policy*, Winter 1998-99 p 26

### Paragraph 2

There is no reason to assume that English will always be necessary, as it is today, for technology, higher education, and social mobility, particularly after its regional rivals experience their own growth spurts. Civilization will not sink into the sea if and when that happens. The decline of French from its peak of influence has not irreparably harmed art, music, or diplomacy. The similar decline of German has not harmed the exact sciences. Ancient Greek, Aramaic, Latin and Sanskrit – once world languages representing military might, sophistication, commerce and spirituality – are mere relics in the modern world. The might of English will not long outlive the technical, commercial, and military ascendancy of its Anglo-American power base, particularly if a stronger power arises to challenge it. But just because the use of English around the world might decline does not mean the values associated today with its spread must also decline. Ultimately, democracy, international trade, and economic development can flourish in any tongue.

Source: Joshua A. Fishman 1998; *The New Linguistic Order. Foreign Policy*, Winter 1998-99 pp 29

**TASK 4: For each of the paragraphs that follow identify the pattern of organization used (narrative, description, process, examples, definition, analysis, classification, comparison/contrast, cause/effect, analogy). Notice how the paragraphs begin and end, how they are developed, and how many different sentence types are used.**

### Paragraph 1 - Pattern of organization : \_\_\_\_\_

Chemistry is that branch of science that has the task of investigating the materials out of which the universe is made. It is not concerned with the forms into which they may be fashioned. Such objects as chairs, tables, vases, bottles, or wires are of no significance in chemistry; but such substances as glass, wool, iron, sulfur, and clay, as the materials out of which they are made, are what it studies. Chemistry is concerned not only with the composition of such substances, but also with their inner structure.  
—John Arrend Timm, *General Chemistry*

### Paragraph 2 - Pattern of organization : \_\_\_\_\_

Because television is so wonderfully available as child amuser and child defuser, capable of rendering a volatile three-year-old harmless at the flick of a switch, parents grow to depend upon it in the course of their daily lives. And as they continue to utilize television day after day, its importance in their children’s lives increases. From a simple source of entertainment provided by parents when they need a break from childcare, television gradually changes into a powerful and disruptive presence in family life. But despite their increasing resentment of television’s intrusions into their family life, and despite their considerable guilt at not being able to control their children’s viewing, parents don’t take steps to extricate themselves from television’s domination. They can no longer cope without it.  
—Marie Winn, *The Plug-In Drug*

**Paragraph 3 - Pattern of organization :** \_\_\_\_\_

Casual dress, like casual speech, tends to be loose, relaxed, and colorful. It often contains what might be called “slang words”: blue jeans, sneakers, baseball caps, aprons, flowered cotton housedresses, and the like. These garments could not be worn on a formal occasion without causing disapproval, but in ordinary circumstances, they pass without remark. “Vulgar words” in dress, on the other hand, give emphasis and get immediate attention in almost any circumstances, just as they do in speech. Only the skillful can employ them without some loss of face, and even then, they must be used in the right way. A torn, unbuttoned shirt or wildly uncombed hair can signify strong emotions: passion, grief, rage, despair. They’re most effective if people already think of you as being neatly dressed, just as the curses of well-spoken persons count for more than those of the customarily foul-mouthed do.

—*Alison Lurie, The Language of Clothes*

**Paragraph 4 - Pattern of organization :** \_\_\_\_\_

A public health student, Marian Glaser, did a detailed analysis of 180 cases of building code violation. Each case represented a single building, almost all of which were multiple-unit dwellings. In these 180 buildings, there were an incredible total of 1,244 different recorded violations— about seven per building. What did the violations consist of? First of all, over one-third of the violations were exterior defects: broken doors and stairways, holes in the walls, sagging roofs, broken chimneys, damaged porches, and so on. Another one-third were interior violations that could scarcely be attributed to the most ingeniously destructive rural southern migrant in America. There were, for example, a total of 160 instances of defective wiring or other electrical hazards, a very common cause of the excessive number of fires and needless tragic deaths in the slums. There were 125 instances of inadequate, defective, or inoperable plumbing or heating. There were 34 instances of serious infestation by rats and roaches.

—*William Ryan, “Blaming the Victim*

**Paragraph 5 - Pattern of organization :** \_\_\_\_\_

Gordon Parks speculates that he might have spent his life as a waiter on the North Coast Limited train if he hadn’t strolled into one particular movie house during a stopover in Chicago. It was shortly before World War II began, and on the screen was a hair-raising newsreel of Japanese planes attacking a gunboat. When it was over the camera operator came out on stage and the audience cheered. From that moment on Parks was determined to become a photographer. During his next stopover, in Seattle, he went into a pawnshop and purchased his first camera for \$7.50. With that small sum, Parks later proclaimed, “I had bought what was to become my weapon against poverty and racism.” Eleven years later, he became the first black photographer at Life magazine.

—*Susan Howard, “Depth of Field”*

**Paragraph 6 - Pattern of organization :** \_\_\_\_\_

My husband and I constantly marvel at the fact that our two sons, born of the same parents and only two years apart in age, are such completely different human beings. The most obvious differences became apparent at their births. Our firstborn, Mark, was big and bold—his intense, already wise eyes, broad shoulders, huge and heavy hands, and powerful, chunky legs gave us the impression he could have walked out of the delivery room on his own. Our second son, Wayne, was delightfully different. Rather than having the football physique that Mark was born with, Wayne came into the world with a long, slim, wiry body more suited to running, jumping, and contorting. Wayne’s eyes, rather than being intense like Mark’s, were impish and innocent. When Mark was delivered, he cried only momentarily, and then seemed to settle into a state of intense concentration, as if trying to absorb everything he could about the strange, new environment he found himself in. Conversely, Wayne screamed from the moment he first appeared. There was nothing helpless or pathetic about his cry either—he was darn angry!

—*Rosanne Labonte, student*

**Paragraph 7 - Pattern of organization :** \_\_\_\_\_

The current revolution in zoo design—the landscape revolution—is driven by three kinds of change that have occurred during this century. First are great leaps in animal ecology, veterinary medicine, landscape design, and exhibit technology, making possible unprecedented realism in zoo exhibits. Second is the progressive disappearance of wilderness—the very subject of zoos—from the earth. Third is knowledge derived from market research and from environmental psychology, making possible a sophisticated focus on the zoo-goer.  
—Melissa Greene, “No Rms, Jungle Vu”

**Paragraph 8 - Pattern of organization :** \_\_\_\_\_

A wing design is a compromise. For example, if a designer wants a wing for an aircraft that will cruise at supersonic speeds, he must also design the wing to fly at subsonic speeds as well as for takeoffs and landings. Thus, the optimum cruise configuration is compromised to gain other necessary characteristics. Granted, devices such as ailerons, flaps, spoilers, and slats can partially compensate for deficiencies, but these still do not give the optimum performance of a wing designed for a particular flight regime.  
—Bill Siuru and John D. Busick, *The Next Generation of Aircraft Technology*

**Paragraph 9 - Pattern of organization :** \_\_\_\_\_

Making chocolate isn't as simple as grinding a bag of beans. The machinery in a chocolate factory towers over you, rumbling and whirring. A huge cleaner first blows the beans away from their accompanying debris—sticks and stones, coins and even bullets can fall among cocoa beans being bagged. Then they go into another machine for roasting. Next comes separation in a winnower, shells sliding out one side, beans falling from the other. Grinding follows, resulting in chocolate liquor. Fermentation, roasting, and “conching” all influence the flavor of chocolate. Chocolate is “conched”—rolled over and over against itself like pebbles in the sea—in enormous circular machines named conches for the shells they once resembled. Climbing a flight of steps to peer into this huge, slow-moving glacier, I was expecting something like molten mud but found myself forced to conclude it resembled nothing so much as chocolate.  
—Ruth Mehrrens Galvin, “Sybaritic to Some, Sinful to Others”

**Paragraph 10 - Pattern of organization :** \_\_\_\_\_

Walking to the ranch house from the shed, we saw the Northern Lights. They looked like talcum powder fallen from a woman's face. Rouge and blue eye shadow streaked the spires of a white light which exploded, then pulsated, shaking the colors down—like lives—until they faded from sight.  
—Gretel Ehrlich, “Other Lives”

Paragraphs from: <http://wps.pearsoncustom.com/wps/media/objects/3388/3469470/ch04.pdf>

**FOR REFERENCE AND PRACTICE ...**

**Paragraph structure**

- ✓ [https://www.dlsweb.rmit.edu.au/lsu/content/4\\_writingskills/writing\\_tuts/paragraphs\\_II/model.html](https://www.dlsweb.rmit.edu.au/lsu/content/4_writingskills/writing_tuts/paragraphs_II/model.html) (steps for paragraph writing)
- ✓ <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/engagement/2/1/29/> (about topic sentences)
- ✓ <http://www.uefap.com/writing/exercise/parag/paragex6.htm> (writing topic sentences)
- ✓ <http://www.studyzone.org/testprep/ela4/j/supportsentp.cfm> (supporting sentences)
- ✓ <http://www.uefap.com/writing/exercise/parag/paragex5.htm> (ordering support)
- ✓ [http://writesite.elearn.usyd.edu.au/m3/m3u2/m3u2s5/m3u2s5\\_1.htm](http://writesite.elearn.usyd.edu.au/m3/m3u2/m3u2s5/m3u2s5_1.htm) (concluding sentences)
- ✓ <http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/composition/organization.htm> (patterns of organisation)

## HOMEWORK

1. **READ** the article “Five myths about open access publishing at [http://expertedge.aje.com/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2013/08/AJE\\_Open\\_Access\\_Myths.pdf](http://expertedge.aje.com/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2013/08/AJE_Open_Access_Myths.pdf)
2. **ANALYSE** the five paragraphs, noticing topic and concluding sentences, body sentences and patterns of organization. Analyse the use of different sentence types and transitions between clauses and sentences. Which linking words signal contrast and concession?
3. **WRITE** a paragraph debunking a common myth or misconception about your profession or field of research. Include: a strong topic sentence, at least three supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence. Try to use a variety of sentence types.

### Don't forget ... the SEVEN STAGES of the WRITING PROCESS

<u>PLANNING</u>	<u>DRAFTING</u>	<u>REVISING</u>
1. Choose a topic 2. Generate ideas 3. Create an outline	4. Write the first draft	5. Edit and revise 6. Proofread 7. Submit

