

Unit Three: Paragraph Development

Objectives of this Unit

At the end of this unit, the students will be able to:

- Define what a paragraph is,
- Identify organic elements of a paragraph,
- Identify qualities of an effective paragraph,
- Identify different transitional words and phrases in a paragraph,
- Explain the function of cohesive devices,
- Write unified , coherent, and complete paragraphs,
- Arrange ideas in a paragraph by using different sequencing techniques,
- Identify different types of paragraph development methods,
- Develop different paragraphs by using the different paragraph development methods.

3. Fundamentals of Paragraph Writing

3.1 Definition

Different scholars give their own definitions to the term paragraph. The following are some of these.

According to Morris H. Needleman (1998), a paragraph is defined as a group of related sentences expressing and developing a basic idea, or a series of related sentences so arranged as to explicate a single topic, dominant idea or particular phase of thought.

K. Ploeger (2000) also writes that a paragraph is a group of sentences related to one main idea, which is expressed in the topic sentence, usually the first sentence of the paragraph. The topic sentence is a summary sentence, informing the reader of a paragraph's topic, of main idea. All other sentences in the paragraph most help, show, prove, or explain that topic sentence.

In the same way Edwin and Lewis (1984) illustrate that a paragraph is a group of sentences that deal with the same subject or topic. One of the sentences tells the reader the main idea the topic. This statement is called the topic sentence. The other sentences in the paragraph give additional information about the idea stated in the topic sentence. These other sentences are called supporting sentences. Once a writer can recognize both types of sentences, it will be easier for him/her to use them to build paragraphs.

The definitions we have seen so far were given by foreign scholars. There are also some Ethiopian writers who defined a paragraph in different ways. For example, Solomon (1991) defines a paragraph as a group of sentences that form a distinct unit developing one major idea. It usually begins with an indentation, and its length varies according to the complexity of the main idea to be developed. A typical paragraph quite often has about one hundred words and seven to ten sentences in which every point in the paragraph having a useful role to play in fulfilling the purpose of the paragraph.

The central points in the above definitions are:

- A paragraph is a group of sentences.
- All sentences together in a paragraph talk about one idea.
- One of these sentences in a paragraph may contain the general idea of the paragraph.

3.2 Elements of a Paragraph

A formal academic paragraph should contain the following parts: Introduction, Body and Conclusion. We will begin our discussion with the introduction section of a paragraph.

3.2.1. Introduction

The introductory sentence is an opening sentence in a paragraph. This sentence identifies the topic for the reader and makes a statement of some kind about the topic. This sentence leaves the reader with the feeling that more information will follow. The reader expects that there will be some description or explanation within the paragraph that tells how many, which one, what kind of, when, where, how, why, etc. But what these always happen is when the introductory sentence is a topic sentence. [Note that the introductory sentence in a formal paragraph is usually a topic sentence.]

Example:

Suppose you want to write a paragraph about *Police Work*. The introductory part (topic sentence) of your paragraph might look like:

Police officers perform many important services. _____

Notice that this sentence is rather general as it stands. When we say general, the sentence by itself does not tell enough about: What are these services? Why are they important? Who performs them? When and where are they performed? And so on. But you should know that though this sentence doesn't answer such questions, it introduces an over all idea that you want to discuss later in the paragraph.

3.2.2 Body

The body section of a paragraph is the part of the paragraph which provides details that refer to the introductory sentence. The job of providing the specific information that answers questions about the introductory or topic sentence is carried out by the other sentences in the paragraph. These other sentences are usually called "supporting sentences". The information they give is commonly called "details" or "supporting details".

Supporting sentences can supply information about the topic in a number of ways. They may answer the question "what kind of?" by defining or explaining something in the topic sentence, or by offering examples or a description of it. They may answer the question why? by giving reasons that will help the reader to understand or agree with the idea suggested by the topic sentence. In answering some other questions, they may describe the causes or origins of the topic sentence, draw a conclusion from it, predict new events or ideas, or compare certain ideas with other ideas. They may also accomplish several of these purposes at the same time.

Let's refer to our example about police work to review more thoroughly how supporting sentences can add information. Notice how the writer has added some details after the opening (topic) sentence:

Police officers perform many important services. They may be involved in solving crimes. They may find themselves helping lost children. Often police officers are also called upon to calm frightened people or to assist someone who has been wronged. They may give aid to motorists whose cars have broken down or who have been in accidents.

The details the writer has added explain How? or In what ways? police officers can perform important services. A writer needs to be sure that most of the details that are included in the material refer directly back to the topic sentence. Other details may be indirectly related; that is, they may describe one of the directly related details.

If we go back to our sample paragraph on police work, for example, "helping children" is a directly related detail because it answers the question How? about police work. The word "lost" describes children, however, rather than police work, and is therefore an indirectly related detail. The details in this paragraph all refer back to the topic either directly or indirectly. So it is clear, as you read the entire paragraph, exactly what the topic is.

3.2.3 Conclusion

The **concluding sentence** draws the paragraph to a close, and reflects the ideas, expressed in the topic sentence. In formal paragraphs you will sometimes see a sentence at the end of the paragraph which summarizes the information that has been presented.

Here is a sample paragraph in which the concluding sentence summarizes the information presented by the supporting sentences.

There are three reasons why Canada is one of the best countries in the world. First, Canada has an excellent health care system. All Canadians have access to medical services at a reasonable price. Second, Canada has a high standard of education. Students are taught by well-trained teachers and are encouraged to continue studying at university. Finally, Canada's cities are clean and efficiently managed. Canadian cities have many parks and lots of space for people to live. As a result, Canada is a desirable place to live.

Note:

1. The concluding (clincher) sentence restates the main idea, rather than merely repeating it, in terms of the nature of the development of the paragraph.
2. Not all academic paragraphs contain concluding sentences, especially if the paragraph is very short. However, if your paragraph is very long, it is a good idea to use a concluding sentence.
3. A concluding sentence may not be the last sentence of a paragraph, as the writer may want to end within a sentence that leads to the point of the next paragraph.

Topic Sentence

Each paragraph has a clear topic sentence. The topic sentence alerts readers to the essence of the paragraph by stating the central idea and by expressing the writer's attitude toward it. A topic sentence is a sentence that expresses the main idea of a paragraph. It tells the reader what to expect about the information that will follow. Without the use of a topic sentence, developing a paragraph can be difficult.

Positions of Topic Sentences

As it has been said earlier, a topic sentence is a sentence whose main idea claims or controls the rest of the paragraph; the body of a paragraph explains, develops or supports with evidence the topic sentence's main idea or claim.

Topic sentence is usually the first sentence of a paragraph, but not necessarily. It may come, for example, after a transition sentence; it may even come at the end of a paragraph. In other words, topic sentences can appear at several points in a paragraph.

Position of a topic sentence in a paragraph can be:

- *the beginning of the paragraph*
- *the middle of the paragraph*
- *the end of the paragraph*

Here are some examples of a topic sentence in different positions of a paragraph (in bold print):

1. ***There are many reasons why people go to football games.*** Some of the fans go to games because they feel it would help their team to win the series. Others consider going to foot ball games is more exciting than watching them on TV. A few think that purchasing tickets to football games would ensure the financial success of the game and, thus, its continuance. And a very small number explain that going to football games is strictly a social occasion.
2. Coal has many advantages. It can use as a source of energy. Coal can be consumed directly, as in furnaces of homes and factories, or it can be converted into oil for automobiles, diesel locomotives, and airplanes. Coal is cheap as well as abundant, and all the technology necessary for extracting or converting it already exists. Exploiting coal recourses would make us totally independent of the producing nations for generations to come. ***Even though coal has many advantages, it has also disadvantages to the fact that it can injure our health and environment.*** Taking coal from beneath the earth's surface means leaving unsightly mines and shafts and striping away layers of terrain in areas of the continent that are now free of such blights. Also, coal's use produces ash and gas, no matter how effective our filtering technology has become; and such substances travel far away from the original source, soil every thing they touch, and creep into the lungs of humans and animals.
3. In Arab countries men commonly cut in front of women at ticket window. In Britain and the United States, where "first come, first served" is almost a norm, customers take numbers to ensure that "first come" is really "first served." By contrast, in southern Europe, where people don't like businesses regulating their behavior, lines are disorderly, with lots of pushing and shoving for the best position; the strongest or most aggressive win. ***This shows that the way people wait in line reflects cultural values about fairness.***

NOTE

Topic sentences are not the only way to organize a paragraph, and not all paragraphs need a topic sentence. For example, paragraphs that describe, narrate, or detail the steps in an experiment do not usually need topic sentences. Topic sentences are useful, however, in paragraphs that analyze and argue. Topic sentences are particularly useful for writers who have difficulty developing focused, unified paragraphs (i.e., writers who tend to sprawl). Topic sentences help these writers develop a main idea or claim for their paragraphs, and, perhaps most importantly, they help these writers stay focused and keep paragraphs manageable.

Summary

- 1) Topic sentence expresses the main idea of a paragraph
- 2) A topic sentence usually states a definite opinion or attitude.
- 3) A topic sentence provides the reader with a clear understanding of what a paragraph is about.
- 4) A topic sentence gives direction to a paragraph that both the writer and reader can follow.
- 5) A topic sentence often begins a paragraph or is found near the beginning of a paragraph.
- 6) Other sentences within a paragraph relate to the topic sentence
- 7) The final "wrap - up" sentence in a paragraph often reinforces the topic sentence

Exercise 1

Underline the topic sentence in each paragraph: the sentence that expresses the paragraph's main idea. [Remember: The topic sentence may not always be the first sentence in the paragraph.]

1. The weather in March was unpredictable. One day there was heavy ground fog, and the next day was clear. It rained for a few days and cleared up and then it rained again. One day the temperature ranged from 45 degrees to 75 degrees, and the next day the temperature stayed around 55 degrees all day long. It was difficult to plan activities or know what to wear with such un- predictable weather.

2. Your sweaters are quite colorful. I like the bright red one you wear to football games. I also like the purple turtleneck sweater you wear every Friday. My favorite is the red, white, and blue striped one you wear on holidays. But the wildest one has to be the fluorescent orange pullover with the pink and black polka dots. I couldn't believe that you wore it to church last Sunday.
3. Alemu is very shy. At parties he sits in a corner by himself all night. When he is in a crowd, you would never notice him. When you talk to him, he looks at the ground and stammers out one-word replies. He never speaks in class, and I've never seen him talk to a girl. He is reluctant to attend meetings where many people are present.
4. The sky is a clear blue. Sparrows chirp in the early mornings. The fruit trees in the backyard are beginning to bloom. The hills are turning green, and purple and yellow wildflowers are appearing in the fields. Farmers protect their crops in their farming from birds and other wild animals such as monkeys and apes. It must finally be spring.
5. The sidewalks in our neighborhood are dirty. A muddy layer has been left on the concrete. Garbage is piled up because of the collectors' strike. Packs of dogs have left their waste everywhere. Old newspapers carpet the sidewalks, and neighborhood drunks have left their bottles piled against the buildings. You can't walk anywhere without stepping on something.

Exercise 2

In the following paragraphs the important specific details that develop the topic sentence of the paragraphs are presented. However, the topic sentence that opens each of the paragraphs is missing. Supply this topic sentence.

1.
.....

He brings his wife roses at least once a week, and he likes to give them to express his love to her, and she always loves to get them. He is honest and he spends his leisure time with her. He doesn't smoke, nor does he drink. Since he comes home in time, he doesn't worry his wife waiting for a long time through the night. He helps his wife in the house works. Even when she prepares food in the kitchen, he makes her take rest and he himself prepares the food.

2.
.....

She worries when things are going badly, and when things go well, she worries that they will get worse. She worries about her health, her grades, her looks, and getting married. She worries that her cat will run away, that her boy friend will leave her, that her parents might get divorced, and that her cat will be stolen. She worries about nuclear war, world poverty, the president's health, pollution, overcrowded towns, crop failure in the country, and thirty-two species of endangered animals. When she vacationed in Langano, she worried about it falling in to the lake.

3.
.....

When you enter college, for example, some students are very wealthy, own mobile phones, leather jackets and precious golden bracelets and jewelries. And such students of rich families are given large allowances by their parents. There are also poor, who have a tired determined look from odd-hour jobs and too little sleep. Some students are tall; others are short. Some you will find quite handsome, while others will be ugly. Some will be very intelligent, and some will be dull. You will find that students come from all parts of the country and even from all parts of the world.

4.3. Principles of Paragraph Construction

4.3.1 Unity

A paragraph is a group of sentences that develops one main point or idea. One important feature of an effective paragraph is unity: all sentences within the paragraph are related to the main point. Here is an example of a unified paragraph. The first sentence expresses the main point of the paragraph and the rest of the sentences relate to the main point.

1. Your sister is an attractive woman. *Her large, dark eyes are beautiful. Her complexion is flawless, and she has a lovely big smile. Her long, black hair is full and shiny. She is tall and slender, and her every movement is graceful. She also dresses stylishly, and her assortment of passant skirts and loose- fitting blouses look great on her.*

The main point of the paragraph (*how attractive the woman is*) is supported by a number of specific details: beautiful eyes, flawless skin, a lovely smile, beautiful hair graceful movements, and stylish dress. Notice that there is even more specific detail to describe some of these features; large, dark eyes, full, shiny black hair, and passant skirts and loose- fitting blouses.

2. We had a terrible storm last night. *The winds blew up to fifty miles an hour and it rained very hard. Eucalyptus trees by the river blew over, and one tree hit a power line and blacked out the area for five hours. Downtown the main street was flooded; the cars were left stranded in the bumper- deep water. Before morning the river flooded its banks and people living nearby were forced to flee their homes with whatever belongings they could gather. It was the worst storm in the country since 1958.*

The main point of the paragraph is that the storm was terrible. The rest of the sentence relate to the main point by showing how bad the storm was. It knocked down trees, flooded Main Street, caused a blackout, and forced people from their homes. The paragraph is unified because all the sentences relate to the main point of the paragraph.

3. The price of houses in Addis Ababa is skyrocketing. *House sales are up 65 percent from two years ago. A house is sold immediately as soon as it is constructed. The average house price has actually increased 200,000 Birr this year. There have also been lots of new housing constructions within the city limits in the last six months. Many real estates have got much profit from their business, and the constructor's union has thousands of employed members. Lumber sales have increased over 75 percent, and the constructor's union has bought thousands of logging trucks and employed extra workers. It has been a golden age for the housing industry in over twenty years.*

The main point of the paragraph (the housing industry is doing well) is supported by a number of specific facts: sales are up, house prices are increased, construction has facilitated, more constructors are employed, and lumber sales are increased. The last sentence concludes the paragraph by reinforcing just how well the housing situation is facilitated.

However, the paragraphs in the following exercise have sentences that are not related to the main idea.

Exercise 1

Circle the letter of one sentence in each group that is not clearly related to the topic for that group of sentences.

1. Topic: I am sick of eating 'bread'.
 - a. I've been eating bread twice a day all semesters.
 - b. It is starting to taste like dog food
 - c. I love pizza very much.
 - d. I'm getting fat from eating bread.
 - e. I get a stomachache just thinking about eating another bread.

2. Topic: There are many ways to study for a test.
 - a. You can review a few hours the night before the test.
 - b. You can study an hour a night the week of the test
 - c. You can study with friends and help each other
 - d. You can get up early in the morning of the test and study
 - e. You can improve your grades by attending classes regularly
3. Topic: Bahir Dar is a pleasant place to live
 - a. There are three movie theaters in the town.
 - b. The people are friendly.
 - c. There is very little crime.
 - d. There is a bad smell coming from the town dump.
 - e. There are many places to shop for clothes.
4. Topic: The baby isn't hungry this morning.
 - a. She keeps spitting out her food.
 - b. She loves eating rice for lunch.
 - c. She keeps playing with her food.
 - d. She turns her head when I try to feed her
 - e. Her stomach looks stuffed.
5. Topic: Registration this semester was confusing.
 - a. Many of the departments I wanted were closed.
 - b. I had to go to six different buildings to register.
 - c. The computer for registration worked very well.
 - d. I couldn't find the teachers whose signatures I needed.
 - e. I had to fill out three different applications
- 6) Topic: The swimming pool in Textile factory is in bad condition.
 - a. The bottom surface is covered with a dirty layer.
 - b. Algae grow on the steps.
 - c. Leaves float on top of the water
 - d. The wall of the pool is cracking.
 - e. The water is shining blue.

7) Topic: Tokichaw is very strong.

- a. He has bulging arms and leg muscles
- b. He can lift eighty pound sacks of cement easily
- c. He can lift me over his head with not trouble
- d. He is an excellent piano player.
- e. He can push and move a car hundred meters far.

Exercise 2

Each of the following paragraphs contains one sentence that is not clearly related to the topic for that paragraph. Cross out the unrelated sentence so that the paragraph becomes unified.

1. We had a short spring this year. The weather was cold through March and into April due to storms moving down from Canada. There was still snow on the mountains in late April hugely. It is usually gone by the end of March. We had only two nice weeks in May with the temperatures in the low 70s. The winter was unusually mild. However, by Mid- May temperatures were in the 90s, and it was hot from then on.

2. The medical service, which was being offered by Felege Hiwot Hospital, is almost terminated. The building is in poor physical condition, and the town cannot afford to make urgently needed repairs to roofs, floors, and walls. Also doctors on the hospital staff have complained that surgical facilities are dangerously obsolete. Patients to the hospital can no longer reach it easily by public transportation because taxis serving the town run too infrequently. And, the hospital is efficient enough to give any services to its clients. Therefore, the hospital should be closed at once.

3. My brother is driving me crazy. First he borrows my razor and doesn't put it back. Then he sneaks into the kitchen and eats the pancakes I have cooked for myself. He helps me with my homework which I appreciate. Then he borrows my car and returns it with the gas tank empty. Finally, he borrows money from me and never pays it back. I become glad when he moves out of the house.

4. Children may play certain roles in the family depending on their birth order. The first child, who usually identifies with the father, takes on the family's more obvious social and career goals. The second child is tuned in to the family's emotional requirements and may act out the hidden needs of others, especially the mother. The behavior of the third child often reflects what is going on between the parents; for instance, if eating is the only activity the parents enjoy doing as a couple, the third child may be overweight. In general, families today have fewer children than in the past.

Exercise 3

Each of the following paragraph topics is followed by two sentences that relate to the topic. Add two more sentences of your own that are also related to the topic, and hence, would make a unified paragraph.

1. Topic: Hailu has bad behaviors

a. He steals money from his poor mother.

b. He insults anyone whom he meets.

c. _____

d. _____

2. Topic: I have a lot of things to do by the coming summer vacation.

a. I will visit my grandfather.

b. I will read different books.

c. _____

d. _____

3. Topic: War has many disadvantages.
 - a. It ruins infrastructures.
 - b. It causes migration.
 - c. _____
 - d. _____
4. Topic: My dormitory room is not suitable to study.
 - a. The table is not comfortable.
 - b. There are some noisy students.
 - c. _____
 - d. _____

3.3.2 Coherence

Literally, the word to cohere means to hold together. A paragraph is said to have coherence when its sentences are woven together or flow into each other. If a paragraph is coherent, the reader moves easily from one sentence to the next without feeling that there are gaps in the thought, puzzling jumps, or points not made. If a paragraph lacks coherence the reader will feel that he/she is reading a collection of separate statements rather than an integrated discussion. Therefore, the notion behind coherence is related to having natural flow of ideas in the paragraph.

You can achieve coherence in your paragraph by using several cohesive devices. The following are some of these devices.

3.3.2.1 Pronouns: Since a pronoun refers to an antecedent, the pronoun and its antecedent form a link. You can often make a paragraph coherent merely by using pronouns properly. On the other hand, incorrectly used pronouns can weaken coherence. In the following examples, notice how pronouns in the second sentence of each pair provide coherence by referring to the important subject in the first sentence.

Example:

- ***Self-help books*** continue to proliferate. ***They*** appeal to anxieties of our middle-aged society.
- ***Patients*** must fast for twelve hours before the test. ***They*** should also avoid red meats for seventy-two hours before coming in.

3.3.2.2 Repetition: Substituting a pronoun for a noun is actually a kind of repetition. There are two ways of repetitions, i.e., direct and indirect repetitions. A) Direct repetition of a word or expression will also produce a similar effect. In other words, you can achieve coherence by repeating some key words.

Example:

Exposure to too much sun can ***damage*** the skin. ***This damage*** is irreversible and can result in skin cancer.

- Use direct repetition with care. Overdoing it will give an awkward, immature ring to your writing.

Example:

Daily receipts are taken to the central office. ***Daily receipts*** are then tallied....

You can get much the same transitional affect by using synonyms or slightly altered forms of the repeated expressions.

Example 1:

Bill Clinton has been somewhat distant since leaving the White House. ***The former president*** has settled in to a life of privacy.

Example 2: (see the following careful repetition)

A **moderately** honest man with a **moderately** faithful life, **moderate** drinkers both, in a **moderately** healthy home: that is the true middle class unit.

B) Indirect repetition is a kind of repetition that comes to effect by using demonstrative pronouns like this, these, that, those and other determiners like 'such' and 'the' which serve as a bridge between two ideas. Using such linking devices as a substitute for a noun is actually a kind of repetition.

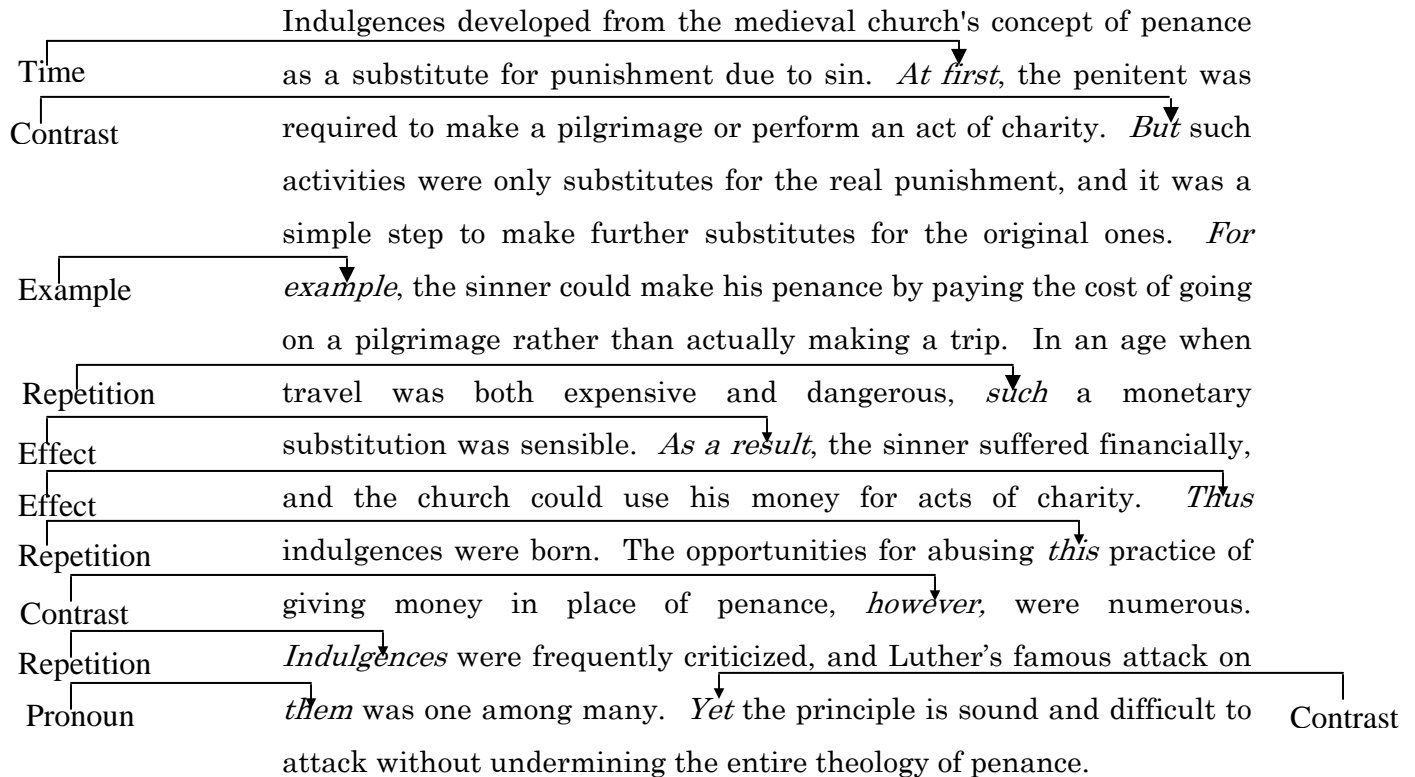
Example:

During the great famine of Niger, people were eating grass. **This** was unbelievable.

3.3.2.3 Transitional markers: Transitional terms make a paragraph coherent by relating ideas. They are referred to as the 'glue' to hold ideas together. Like pronouns, many of these terms come to mind automatically, but you should carefully choose among them. The commonest markers are the **simple connectives** such as 'and', or 'but', 'for', which serve as viaducts over which the reader may easily pass from one sentence or clause to the next. Others - sometimes called **transitional connectives** - indicate the direction, which the new sentence is about to take and to prepare the reader for what is to follow. Here is a partial list of common transitional terms:

- f. **Time**: next, then, after, before, during, while, following, shortly, thereafter, later on, the next day, secondly, finally
- g. **Place**: *over, above, inside, to the left, just behind, beyond*
- h. **Contrast**: however, but, on the other hand, nevertheless, nonetheless, notwithstanding, on the contrary, conversely, yet.
- i. **Cause - effect**: so, therefore, thus, accordingly, consequently, as a result, hence, because of this.
- j. **Addition**: and, furthermore, moreover, likewise, similarly, in a like manner, too, also
- k. **Emphasis**: indeed, in fact, especially, most important
- l. **Summary**: in other words, in short, to sum up, in conclusion, to conclude, all in all, in a nut shell, generally, in general, finally, at last, etc.
- m. **Example**: for instance, for example, that is, in particular

The following examples illustrate the use of transitional terms:



Common Transitional Words/ Phrases for Coherence

1. Addition

again	besides	further more	like wise
also	finally	in addition	more over
and	fourthly	in addition to this	secondly
and	then	further	in like manner
similarly	thirdly	too	then

2. Comparison

at the same time	In the same way
in like manner	Like X, Y [verb]....
in the same way	X and Y are similar in that (they).....
like wise	X is similar to Y in that (they).....
similarly	One way in which X is similar to Y is (that).....
	Another way in which X is similar to Y is (that).....

3. Concession

but	I know that	of course
granted that	to be sure	now

4. Contrast

otherwise	in contrast	where as /while	but
conversely	instead	not withstanding	yet
however	inversely	on the contrary	though
in another sense	never the less	on the one hand	to be sure
in contrast with this	nonetheless	on the other hand	still
yet at the same time	despite it	turning now to another matter	even so

5. Emphasis

above all	I repeat	likewise
add to this	in any event	moreover
and also	indeed	that is
besides	in fact	too
even more	in other words	

6. Enumeration

finally	further	second	then again
first	next	then	

7. Illustration

all things considered	incidentally	thus	thus it follows
as you will see	in connection with	that is	take the case of
for example	in this way	therefore	as an example of this
for instance	just as	to illustrate	in particular

8. Parenthesis

by the way	incidentally	to digress
coming back to	parenthetically	to resume

9. Progression

as (in consequence)	hence	on that account
for that reason	in the first place	therefore
further	in the next place	
further more	more over	

10. Retrospection

as has already been suggested	hitherto	up to this point
if what I have said is correct	so far	

11. Similarity

by the same token	in similar manner	similarly
in like manner	likewise	

12. Succession in time or place

after this (incident)	beyond	presently	to the left
afterwards	later	then	
before this (event or place)	next	to the right	

13. Time and Sequence

after this	while		
after wards	eventually	here up on	next
at last	formerly	in the mean time	now
at length	forth with	meanwhile	previously
at the same time	from now on	immediately	since then
subsequently	there after	there upon	where upon

14. Summary

as has been said	indeed	in short	in retrospect
for these reasons	in fine	in sum	to sum up
in a word	in general	we now see	
in brief	in other words	to recapitulate	

15. Result/ conclusion

accordingly	consequently	in fine	there up on
after all	finally	later	thus
as a consequence	hence	so	
as a result	in conclusion	then	
at last	in consequence	therefore	

3.3.2.4 Sequencing

Suppose you have many notes about your ideas for a writing assignment. How do you put all these ideas together in a logical way that will make sense to the reader? The sentences should follow each other in the most sensible order for developing the main idea of the paragraph. This process of putting things in their proper order is called paragraph sequencing.

There are several possible orders for sequencing: chronological sequencing, spatial sequencing, generality sequencing, and sequence in importance.

A. Time order (chronological order)

In telling about an event the clearest way to present the moment is to give the details in chronological order. You should use this sequence for related details or examples when you want to state them in the time order in which they occur. In other words, you will list the earliest details first in your paragraph and the latest or most recent details toward the end of your paragraph. This is a very common sequence for a series of events. The details in a paragraph of this kind tend to answer such questions as what happens first. And then what happens last? Paragraphs that relate either a series of incidents or steps in a process often

follow such chronological order; in this way is mostly used in narrative paragraphs or essays.

The following paragraph, for example, is narrative. (The details are arranged in chronological order)

- First: The most terrifying day in my life came in July of 1946. I was washing lunchtime dishes in our farmhouse in middle Georgia when my husband unexpectedly appeared at the door. "Appeared" is the best word that I can*
- Second: think to use, because he was not walking but crawling, dragging his left leg. I got out of him as quickly as possible that he had bitten by a copperhead of some three feet, a snake large enough for its venom to be fatal. We lived thirty miles from the nearest hospital, I did not have a driver's license (and*
- Third: , in fact, had never driven a car), but my husband was dying before my eyes. I pushed/ pulled him into the back seat of our Chevrolet and pointed the car toward Atlanta.*

Example 2

Sunday was a long day. I had to get up at 5:00 am to attend an Easter sunrise service .Then I had duties at the church the rest of the morning. In the afternoon, I visited the Manor Rest Home and talked to shut-ins who seldom has visitors. Then I went to my aunt's for dinner and played cards with Uncle Herman until about 9:00 pm. Then I drove up in to the hills with my family for a special Easter midnight chapel service in the pines. We stayed in a mountain cabin with ten other people that night and did not get to sleep until after 2:00 a. m. I was exhausted after twenty-one hours of activity.

Bridging thoughts through transitions, idea connectors, move the reader from place to place.

Connecting words – connecting through time

Later on	Third	Tomorrow	Further
Afterward	Suddenly	Then	Previously
Years ago	Now	In the past	When
Earlier	Sometime later	Thereafter	at last
Before	Once	Former	meanwhile
Next	Often	Latter	
First	Yesterday	In the first place	
Second	Today	In the next place	

B. Spatial Order

If you want your readers to be able to picture a scene or object you are describing, you could use a spatial sequencing of details. This sequence describes a scene or object by going from one part of it to another in an organized. For instance if you intended your details to describe a building of some kind you might want to sequence the details so that you went from the bottom to the top of the building by answering such questions as what is on the first floor ? the second floor ? the third floor? and soon, until you had covered all the floors .or you might wish to go in the opposite direction ,beginning at the top and proceeding down , floor by floor, to the lowest floor. Or you might describe the same building by going from side to side; answering questions like what is on one side of the building? the section in the middle ? the other side of the building ? And, of course ,you could move in any direction in side the building; left to right , north to south, up to down, side to side, near to far, or whatever.

Example 1:

As you enter the library, you are greeted by paintings on each side of the door. The painting on the right is of the town's high school, and on the left is a watercolor of the town's city hall. There are several other works of art in the main body of the building. As you face the archway on the left, you discover pieces of pottery enclosed in a glass case. A ceiling mural appears over the archway, and on the right a wall hanging has been hung. The entire library is filled with works of art.

Example 2:

*The kitchen was living room, dining room, and cooking room. There were two long narrow windows in one wall. An iron coal range was recessed in another wall. **Above** the stove the recess was made of coral-colored bricks and creamy white plaster. It had a stone mantelpiece and a slate hearthstone on which Martha could*

*draw pictures with chalk. **Next to** the stove was a water boiler which got hot when the fire was going. Often on a cold day, Martha came in chilled and put her arms around the boiler and pressed her frosty cheek gratefully against its warm silveriness. **Next to** the boiler was a pair of soapstone washtubs with a wooden cover. The partition could be removed and the two thrown into one for a bath tub. It didn't make a very good bath tub. Sometimes when Martha sat in it, the cover banged down on her head. **The bottom** was rubble and she came out of what should have been a refreshing bath, all sore from sitting on what wet roughness. Then there were four faucets to contend with. No matter how the child tried to remember that they were inflexibly there and wouldn't give way, she would jump up suddenly out of the soapy water and get her back whacked good on a faucet. Martha had a perpetual angry welt on her back.*

Expressions which help to answer the details question “where?” such as:

Over	On top (of)
Under	On bottom (of)
In front of	Along side (of)
Behind	Outside (of)
Near	Inside (of)
Far	

C. Generality Sequencing

1. Specific-to-General: Specific terms give more information than general ones. For example, surgeon implies doctor, but doctor does not identify a person as a surgeon. If you find yourself writing **people** when you mean *college students* or *taxi drivers*, you are not asking yourself this important question: am I identifying what I am referring to as specifically as I should? The following list shows how little effort it takes to become more specific.

Example 1

<u>General</u>	<u>Specific</u>	<u>More Specific</u>
vehicle	car	Toyota Cressida
religion	Christianity	Roman Catholicism
building	hotel	Sheraton Hotel

Example 2

General: The vegetables were prepared.

Specific: We chopped the tomato, diced the carrots, and sliced the onions.

Specific: We steamed the carrots and baked the Idaho potatoes.

Example 3 (*At paragraph level*).

*If a paragraph begins with specific details involving many layers of details and examples and if it is closed with a general statement at the end, it is reasonable to say that the paragraph is organized from **specific-to-general**.*

In Arab countries, where women do not have equal rights, men commonly cut in front of women at ticket window. In Britain and the United States, where “first come, first served” is almost an obsession, many businesses have customers take numbers to ensure that “first come” is really “first served.” By contrast, in southern Europe, where people don’t like businesses regulating their behavior, lines are disorderly, with lots of pushing and shoving for the best position; the strongest or most aggressive win. ***This shows that the way people wait in line reflects cultural values about fairness.***

Example 4

They should be good listeners. They should also be good talkers, since they have to sum up and restate what both sides say. They have to promise to keep private what is said at a mediation session. They also need to be able to encourage others to open up and say what is on their minds. *These are the qualities of good mediators.*

2. General-to-Specific

When writing about a topic that involves many layers of details, you can start the paragraph with a general statement, followed by supporting details and examples that become more and more specific.

*Example 1 When a paragraph begins with a general statement and followed by specific details, it is logical to say the paragraph is organized from **general-to-specific**.*

Dreams are common events during sleep. Dreams occur during rapid eye movement sleep. During these rapid eye movement sessions, the body is paralyzed to prevent harm coming to the sleeping person from unconscious muscle movements that occur in response to the images in the dream. Rapid eye movement sessions sleep takes place about every 90 minutes.

Example 2

In the future, a young woman trained to be an engineer will not only improve her own life but may also make our country a better place for everyone. She may, for instance, devise a new kind of automobile engine that does not require gasoline at all. That would make our country less dependent on other nations for oil imports. Her invention would also serve the cause of world peace, because our country truly free from pressure by other countries would be stronger politically, economically, and militarily and would be better able to resist threats to world peace. She also involves in any activities of the society as many women engineers of today step through factories' corridors in greater numbers than ever before.

D. Sequence in Importance

You generally sequence the points by their **importance**; you should use this sequence when you want to give several details or examples and wish to start your paragraph with the most important or more interesting ones. You may do this in order to attract the attention of your readers at the very start, especially readers who may be impressed for time or who may be uninterested in your subject.

To start with the least important and to lead to the most important , for example, a comparison of two cars might start with the engine and its importance , then work outward to the passenger compartment, its dimension and comfort, ending with the sporty exterior and sunroof. You must decide which sequencing method is best for your purpose and audience.

Example:

Suppose you wanted to write a paragraph for this topic sentence:

When I returned to my old neighborhood, I was sad to see how many things had changed.

-Mr. Lewis, my old history teacher, had died in a car accident.

-Mike's Pizzeria, a local hangout, was destroyed in a fire.

-The park bench where I spent hours reading was gone.

From the incidents, because it seems to be the most important would best be first in the paragraph, it would be best discussed first in the paragraph.

Example:

Our department needs lots of fixing-up. Though it may be difficult to fix-up all of them at the same time, we have got to fix the leaky roof **first** before the September rains come. **Next**, we need to patch the big holes in the bed room walls and then strip the peeling paint off the walls. **Then** we can repaint the apartment. **After** the walls are painted, we can work on replacing the linoleum squares in the kitchen that are loose or cracked. **Later**, the living room carpet needs shampooing, and we should replace that old swaybacked sofa. **Then** we won't be embarrassed to have company over once in a while.

Of course, only the writer himself could determine which was most or least significant.

The writer can follow the opposite approach, for example, the least important ones come first in the paragraph, the important next and the most important details come last. This arrangement allows you to build up your reader's interest gradually (to create suspense if it is in fiction writing), with your final details providing a climax.

4.3.3 Completeness

Completeness is relative. How much explanation an idea requires depends on how much the reader needs. This is a decision the writer must make out of knowledge of the subject and of the audience. It is an error to give either too much explanation or not enough. Usually the latter is the more serious. Giving a reader unnecessary explanation may be boring but giving too little may block communication. Consider the following example.

Pregnant women sometimes attempt to mold the character of an unborn child by studying poetry, art, or mathematics. What we know of prenatal development makes such attempts seem utterly impossible. How could such extremely complex influences pass from mother to child?

This statement is incomplete. If the writer stops here, all he has given his readers is an unsupported judgment that these attempts will have no influence on the child. But that is not enough. Readers still need to know why the attempts will not work. The rest of the paragraph explains why not.

There is no connection between their nervous systems. Even the blood vessels of mother and child do not join directly. They lie side by side and the chemicals are interchanged through the walls by a process that we call osmosis. An emotional shock to the mother will affect her child, because it changes the activity of her glands and so the chemistry of her blood. Any chemical change in the mother's blood will affect the child. But we can not see how a liking for mathematics or poetic genius can be dissolved in the blood and produce a similar liking or genius in the child.

(William H. Roberts, Psychology)

The following example illustrates the same fault and the way to correct it.

*Television programs can be classified into **three main categories**: Entertainers, cultural Enhancers, and Eye Openers. The Entertainers are created simply for Entertainment—nothing more. They make us laugh or cry, for a moment. Sitcoms are prime examples as we laugh at or with the characters as they struggle through life, and might even identify with the characters. For momentary pleasures, watch the Entertainers. Cultural Enhancers involve some kind of “culture” or highbrow activity, such as opera, theater, dance, or song. Also included here are the movies made from the classics or literary fiction, such as *Moby Dick* or any of Shakespeare’s plays. These programs are often concerned with universal themes or issues: love, evil, power. They can be found on “arts” cable stations such as A&E and Bravo, as well as the public Broadcasting system. For a taste of culture, watch Cultural Enhancers.*

As you observe in the above paragraph, the writer's intention was to classify the kinds of television programs grouping in to three. But he has mentioned only two of them. Since he didn't say anything about the third one, the paragraph is incomplete. To provide a fuller explanation, the following sentence gives the remaining information.

A third category, Eye Opener programs, includes topics about science and nature, history, true crime, and other information. They are often found on cable channels: the Discovery Channel, the Learning Channel, and the History Channel. The Public Broadcasting System, on the network side, also provides these programs. A viewer might learn about tornadoes, or the legend of Robin Hood, or the African crested crane. Often this information, such as programs about strong storm systems, is interesting because it is relevant to viewers' lives. Television has much to offer viewers, and it is our choice what we watch.

NOTE:

A good paragraph is fully developed. Here are the main qualities of a well-developed paragraph.

- It provides enough supporting points for the main idea expressed in the topic sentence to be clearly understood.
- It provides enough specific details and examples to be interesting and informative.
- It does not leave the readers with unanswered questions that could be cleared up with a little more detail or an additional example or two.
- It concludes with a sentence that clearly "wraps up" the paragraph and relates to the topic sentence in some manner.

4.3.4 Variety

Effective writers have the ability to use a variety of sentence structures to express their thoughts. Less experienced writers tend to use a few basic structures over and over, which weakens their expressive powers and leads to a monotonous writing style. The confidence and skill to use a variety of sentence structures helps you convey your ideas to readers. Consider the following paragraph and detect what the problem of the paragraph is:

I enjoy Christmas very much. I like shopping. I like decorating the tree. I like giving presents. I enjoy eating on Christmas Day. I enjoy eating turkey. I like a lot of dressing. I like pumpkin pie. I also like being with the family. I like seeing my grandmother. I like seeing my nieces.

The sentences in the paragraph are all of similar length (5, 3, 5, 4, 6, 4, 6, 4, 7, 5 and 5 words respectively). Moreover, they are all simple sentences of the same basic structure (subject + predicate). This lack of variety becomes monotonous.

Let us consider another example:

The horror movie at the drive-in was terrible. The acting was bad. The plot was bad. Every scene was filled with blood. There was blood on the bodies. There was blood on the walls. There was blood in the bathtub. The ending of the movie was the worst part. It was stupid. It was unbelievable. A six-year-old girl poisoned her mother, father, brother and dog with rat poison. She did it for fun. She did it to shock her friends. It was the worst movie I have seen in a long time. I went home. I didn't go to another movie for a month.

In general, a short or a long series of sentences identical or very similar in length and structure is monotonous. But a series of well-written, varied sentences provides the reader with more than mere absence of monotony. It reflects the writer's careful choice of length and structure to supply emphasis that creates meaning.

Consider the following paragraph. Notice the variety in length and structure of the seven sentences that make up the paragraph.

Complex	One of the great paradoxes in history is that the truest
	expression of Christianity is to be found not in the West but
Complex	in the East. In India countless millions of people are living
	out the ideas of Christ, though they do not call themselves
Simple	Christians and are unfamiliar with Christian theology. They
	are the poor, the meek, the merciful, and the pure in heart.
Compound	They regard life as sacred and they will not harm it in any
Simple	of its forms. They practice renunciation. They believe in
Compound- Complex	nonviolence and they worship the memory of a human
	being who perhaps has come closer to enacting Christianity
	than anyone in modern history. Interestingly enough,
Simple	Gandhi's struggle was directed against a Western Christian
	nation.

- Norman Cousins, Human Options

Notice how pleasing this paragraph is to the ear. By using a variety of sentence structures, the writer changes the tempo of the writing, avoiding monotony. Notice, too, how the changes in tempo lead to sentences of different length, ranging from three (they practice renunciation) to twenty-six words (They believe in nonviolence and they worship the memory of a human being who perhaps has come closer to enacting Christianity than anyone in modern history). Thus, the two strategies - varying sentence length and varying sentence structure -work together.

Consider the following paragraph. Notice the variety in length and structure of the eight sentences that make up the paragraph.

The trouble with the families many of us were born into is not that they consist of meddlesome ogres but they are too far away. In emergencies we rush across continents and if need be oceans to their sides, as they do to ours. Maybe we even make a habit of seeing them, once or twice a year, for the sheer pleasure of it. But blood ties seldom dictate our addresses. Our blood kin are often too remote to ease us from our Tuesdays to our Wednesdays. For this we must rely on our families of friends. If our relatives are not, do not wish to be, or for whatever reasons cannot be our friends, then by some complex alchemy we must try to transform our friends into our relatives. If blood and roots don't do the job, then we must look to water and branches.

Jane Howard, Families

The length of these eight sentences ranges from the seven- word ***But blood ties seldom dictate our addresses*** to the long thirty- three word sentence beginning ***If our relatives are not***. Structure varies from the simple subject - verb - object pattern of the crisp fourth, fifth, and sixth sentences of the much greater complexity of the opening twenty-six word sentence and the two closing sentences of thirty - three and sixteen words respectively.

NOTE:

Short, simple sentences and longer, more complex sentences can work together to achieve variety that enhances meaning

If you are effectively using coordination , subordination, parallelism, and other sentence structures, your writing will already contain a good deal of variety. you will have discovered, for instance, that short sentences are good for introducing a topic or summing up a point and that longer sentences lend themselves to elaboration , detailed explanation, or qualification of a main idea.

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