



جامعة ابن تفييل

UNIVERSITÉ IBN TOFAÏL

Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences

English Department

Composition S1



# **Boost Your Writing Skills**

**From Sentences to Paragraphs**

Course designed by Pr. Ali BEKOU

## Course Objectives

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### By the end of the semester, SWABT:

1. Identify topic sentences and main ideas.
2. Combine sentences using cohesive devices and correct punctuation.
3. Identify dependent or subordinate clauses.
4. Write strong topic sentences.
5. Develop ideas respecting the basic paragraph structure.
6. Use linking words appropriately.
7. Develop paragraphs with descriptive details.
8. Learn about process writing.



## Course Outline:

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## *To The Student*

Writing is a very important part of your school and university study. You will write assignments that may be one paragraph or several paragraphs, and you will write answers for tests and exams that may be a few sentences, a paragraph or two, or a complete essay.

Academic writing in English may be different not only from academic writing in your own language, but even from other writing in English. The purpose of this book is to help you recognize and produce the sort of paragraph writing that will be expected of you in academic situations.

During this course, you will have many opportunities to study and discuss examples of English academic paragraph writing. You will also have many opportunities to discuss your own paragraphs and the paragraphs of your classmates. You will learn how important the reader is to the writer, and how to express clearly and directly what you mean to communicate. We hope that what you learn in this course will help you throughout your academic studies and beyond.

You should come to your writing class every day with energy and a willingness to work and learn. Your instructor and your classmates have much to share with you, and you have much to share with them. By coming to class with your questions, taking chances and trying new ways, and expressing your ideas in another language, you will add not only to your own world, but to the world of those around you. Good luck!



# Part 1



## What is Writing?

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"Writing" is one of the four language skills. It is a core skill which impacts on learning in all subject areas. It is the process of using symbols (letters of the alphabet, punctuation, and spaces) to communicate thoughts and ideas in a readable form.

To write clearly it is essential to understand the basic system of a language. In English this includes knowledge of grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure. Vocabulary is also necessary, as is correct spelling and formatting.

A writer may write for personal enjoyment or use, or for an audience of one person or more. The audience may be known (targeted) or unknown. Taking notes for study purposes is an example of writing for one's self. Blogging publicly is an example of writing for an unknown audience. A letter to a friend is an example of writing for a targeted audience. As with speaking, it is important to consider your audience when writing. There are many different styles of writing, from informal to formal.

## How important is paragraph writing?

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Paragraph writing offers at least three benefits. First of all, mastering the structure of the paragraph will help make you a better writer. For other courses, you'll often do writing that will be variations on the paragraph form—for example, exam answers, summaries, response papers, and brief reports. In addition, paragraphs serve as the basic building blocks of essays, the most common form of writing in college. The basic structure of the traditional paragraph, with its emphasis on a clear point and well-organized, logical support, will help you write effective essays and almost every kind of paper that you will have to do.



Second, the discipline of writing a paragraph will strengthen your skills as a reader and listener. You'll become more critically aware of other writers' and speakers' ideas and the evidence they provide—or fail to provide—to support those ideas.

Most important, paragraph writing will make you a stronger thinker. Writing a solidly reasoned paragraph requires mental discipline and close attention to a set of logical rules. Creating a paragraph in which there is an overall topic sentence supported by well-reasoned, convincing evidence is more challenging than writing a free-form or expressive paper. Such a paragraph obliges you to carefully sort out, think through, and organize your ideas. You'll learn to discover and express just what your ideas are and to develop those ideas in a sound and logical way. Traditional paragraph writing, in short, will train your mind to think clearly, and that ability will prove to be of value in every phase of your life.

## Writing is a skill

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A sure way to ruin your chances of learning how to write competently is to believe that writing is a “natural gift” rather than a learned skill. People with such an attitude think that they are the only ones for whom writing is unbearably difficult. They feel that everyone else finds writing easy or at least tolerable. Such people typically say, “I’m not any good at writing” or “English was not one of my good subjects.” They imply that they simply do not have a talent for writing, while others do. The result of this attitude is that people try to avoid writing, and when they do write, they don’t try their best. Their attitude becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy: Their writing fails chiefly because they have brainwashed themselves



into thinking that they don't have the "natural talent" needed to write. Unless their attitude changes, they probably will not learn how to write effectively.

A realistic attitude about writing must build on the idea that writing is a skill. It is a skill like driving, typing, or cooking, and like any skill, it can be learned. If you have the determination to learn, this book will give you the extensive practice needed to develop your writing skills. Many people find it difficult to do the intense, active thinking that clear writing demands. (Perhaps television has made us all so passive that the active thinking necessary in both writing and reading now seems harder than ever.)

It is frightening to sit down before a blank sheet of paper or a computer screen and know that, an hour later, nothing on it may be worth keeping. It is frustrating to discover how much of a challenge it is to transfer thoughts and feelings from one's head into words. It is upsetting to find that an apparently simple writing subject often turns out to be complicated. But writing is not an automatic process: we will not get something for nothing—and we should not expect to. For almost everyone, competent writing comes from plain hard work—from determination, sweat, and head-on battle. The good news is that the skill of writing can be mastered, and if you are ready to work, you will learn what you need to know.



# Part 2



## What is a sentence?

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A sentence is a group of words that express a complete thought. For example:

- *Manal likes detective stories.*
- *The weather is hot today.*
- *I'm writing a sentence.*

*Words can go together to make sentences. Sentences can go together to make paragraphs. Finally, paragraphs can be combined into an essay.*

### ACTIVITY 1 Changing Words into Sentences

Unscramble the words to make correct sentences.

1. My name / Angela / is / . My name is Angela.
2. from Kearney, Nebraska / I / am / . \_\_\_\_\_
3. in the middle of the United States / a small city / Kearney / is / . \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. have / two parents / I / . \_\_\_\_\_
5. have / and one sister / I / three brothers / . \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. like to ride / I / horses / . \_\_\_\_\_
7. in the country / like to hike / I / . \_\_\_\_\_

### ACTIVITY 2 Writing Simple Sentences

*Write 5 sentences about yourself. Follow the examples in Activity 1.*

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_



## ***Grammar for writing a sentence:***

### **Parts of a sentence:**

#### **1. Subject:**

The subject is the person or thing that does the action. The subject:

- can be a noun or a pronoun.
- Can be two (or more) nouns or pronouns. However, the nouns/pronouns must share the same verb(s).

Example: **Nancy and Alan** go to the music club every week.

#### **2. Verb:** the verb tells what the subject is doing. The verb:

- is usually an action word such as *go, speak, write, jump, watch, and swim.*
- Sometimes doesn't have much action such as be (is, are, am, was, were), like want, need, seem ..)
- Can have two (or more) actions for one subject.

Example: The **create** and **play** beautiful music.

#### **3. Object (compliment):** the object is the thing or person after the main verb. The object:

- Receives the action of the verb.
- Can be a noun or a pronoun.
- Can be two (or more) nouns or pronouns.

Example: Maha's brother plays **the piano** and **the guitar**.

#### **4. Other information:** sentences can contain other information after the verb and the object such as the time words/phrases, place phrases. When a sentence has a time word/ phrase and a place phrase, the time word/phrase usually comes last.

Subject	Verb	Object	Other information
Kamal	sings		
He	plays	the guitar	
Kamal	practices		at home
He	sings	songs	In the morning



### ACTIVITY 3 Identifying Subjects, Verbs, and Objects

Read these sentences about making tuna salad. Underline each subject, circle each verb and put a box around any objects.

1. Tuna salad is easy to make.
2. The ingredients are simple and cheap.
3. Two ingredients are tuna fish and mayonnaise.
4. I also use onions, salt, and pepper.
5. First, I cut up the onion.
6. Then, I add the tuna fish and the mayonnaise
7. Finally, I add the salt and a lot of pepper.
8. Without a doubt, tuna salad is my favorite food.

### Clauses and phrases

*Sentences are made up of clauses and phrases. All sentences must have at least one independent clause.*

#### 1. Clauses :

A **clause** is a group of words which has:

- a **subject**, ie. the focus of the clause, or someone or thing which does something in the clause  
*and*
- a **complete finite verb**, ie. a verb which has a subject and a sense of time

*For example,*

Subject	Verb
<i>The lecture</i>	<i>finished at 3 pm</i>
<i>Pollution</i>	<i>causes cancer</i>
<i>New Zealand</i>	<i>is in the south Pacific</i>

There are **two** kinds of clauses: **independent** (or **main**) clauses and **dependent** (or **subordinate**) clauses.

#### **Independent**

An independent clause **expresses a complete thought and can stand on its own** as a sentence

*e.g. Learning a new language is often frustrating.*



## Dependent

A dependent clause does not express a complete thought and needs to be joined to an independent clause to become a sentence. It usually begins with a word such as *although, while, because, who, which, if*, etc.

e.g. Although learning a new language is often frustrating

### Practice

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*Find the subject and the verb in the following clauses. Then decide if each clause is dependent or independent.*

- Dairying is concentrated in districts with reliable summer grass.
- Although it started out with a similar fauna and flora to New Caledonia and Australia.
- Scarcity creates the need for a system to allocate the available resource among some of its potential users.
- Banks, insurance companies, and investment companies can now enter one another's markets.
- When layoffs become inevitable.
- These obvious contamination problems have long been known.

## 2. Phrases

A **phrase** is a group of words which either does not have a subject,

e.g. walks to work every day

or does not have a finite verb,

e.g. *The reason being their good design*

### Practice:

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*Identify the following as phrases or clauses.*

1. Trying to build up breeding herd numbers.
2. The relationship between predator and prey.
3. The development of technology allowed people to speed up evolutionary change.
4. Because humans are long-lived and reproduce slowly



## Types of Sentences:

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### *Simple, Compound, Complex, and Compound-Complex*

#### **1. Simple Sentences**

- A simple sentence contains a subject and a verb.
- It expresses a single complete thought that can stand on its own.

#### **Examples:**

1. *The baby cried for food.*

^There is a subject and a verb that expresses a complete thought.

2. *Professor Smith's intelligent students completed and turned in their homework.*

^ A simple sentence does not necessarily have to be short. It can have adjectives. In this case, there are two verbs "completed" and "turned in." However, the sentence expresses one complete thought and therefore is a simple sentence.

3. *Megan and Adam ate too much and felt sick.*

^Although there are two subjects and two verbs, it is still a simple sentence because both verbs share the same subjects and express one complete thought.

#### **2. Compound Sentences**

- A compound sentence has two independent clauses. An independent clause is a part of a sentence that can stand alone because it contains a subject and a verb and expresses a complete thought.
- Basically, a compound contains two simple sentences.
- These independent clauses are joined by a conjunction (*for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*).

#### **Examples:**

1. *The shoplifter had stolen clothes, so he ran once he saw the police.*



^Both sides of the conjunction “so” are complete sentences. “The shoplifter had stolen clothes” can stand alone and so can “he ran once he saw the police.” Therefore, this is a compound sentence.

2. *They spoke to him in Spanish, but he responded in English.*

^This is also a compound sentence that uses a conjunction to separate two individual clauses.

### 3. *Complex Sentences*

- A complex sentence is an independent clause joined by one or more dependent clauses. A dependent clause either lacks a subject or a verb or has both a subject and a verb that does not express a complete thought.

- A complex sentence always has a subordinator (*as, because, since, after, although, when*) or relative pronouns (*who, that, which*).

#### Examples:

1. *After eating lunch at The Cheesecake Factory, Tim went to the gym to exercise.*

^ The independent clause is “Tim went to the gym to exercise.” The subordinating clause before it is dependent on the main, independent clause. If one were to say “after eating lunch at The Cheesecake Factory,” it would be an incomplete thought.

2. *Opinionated women are given disadvantages in societies that privilege male accomplishments.*

^ The subject is “opinionated women” and the verb is “are given.” The first part of the sentence “*opinionated women are given disadvantages in societies*” is an independent clause that expresses a complete thought. The following “*that privilege male accomplishments*” is a relative clause that describes which types of societies.

3. The woman who taught Spanish Literature was fired for stealing school supplies.



4. ^ The dependent clause in this sentence is “who taught” because if removed, the rest of the sentence would stand as an independent clause. “Who taught Spanish Literature” is an adjective clause that provides necessary details about the subject, woman.

#### 4. Compound-Complex Sentences

- A compound-complex sentence has two independent clauses and at least one dependent clause.

##### Examples:

1. *After the two soccer players lost their game, they joined their other teammates for lunch, and they went to the movies.*

^ If we remove the dependent clause “after the two soccer players lost their game,” we have a compound sentence. The dependent clause makes this sentence compound-complex.

2. *The man believed in the system, and he knew that justice would prevail after the murderer was sent to jail.*

##### Practice:

Identify whether the sentences are **simple**, **complex**, **compound** or **compound-complex**. Please underline dependent clauses where it applies.

1. Vampires Dairies is my favorite television show, but I also love True Blood.
2. The student wiped the white board that was filthy with last week’s notes.
3. The trendy fashion designer released her new line on Wednesday.
4. Andrew and Maya went to a bar in Hollywood to celebrate their anniversary.
5. Wicked Regina cast a spell on the entire city, so the citizens decided to rebel.
6. While waiting for the paint to dry, Angela went to Home Depot, and Martin organized the kitchen appliances.
7. After listening to the Kanye West CD, I have new respect for his music.
8. After the teacher chose groups, John and Sara were selected as partners for a project, yet Sarah did most of the work.



## Rules for capitalization and punctuation

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### Capital Letter: 10 rules

Some people may tell you that there are far more than just ten rules of capitalization in English, and with everything that you have to remember, that may be true. Others may say that there are only three rules, and they are also correct. The truth is that, depending on how you organize the rules, the rules of capitalization may be many or few. Most of the things we capitalize in English are what we call proper nouns. They are the names of specific, unique things.

- If you are talking about one specific mountain (Mt. Everest), state (Oklahoma) or street (Atlantic Ave.), use a capital letter for every word in the name.

- However, when you are talking about a common thing of which there are many - like a mountain, a state or a street - don't use a capital letter for those words. Capitals are not used for articles (**a, an, the**) or prepositions (**of, on, for, in, to, with, etc.**).

#### Key Rules

##### 1. Names of people:

This one may seem obvious, but there is also a catch. Of course, you capitalize the first letters of a person's first, middle and last names (John Quincy Adams), but you also capitalize suffixes (Jr., the Great, Princess of Power, etc.) and titles.

Titles can be as simple as Mr., Mrs. or Dr., but they also apply to situations wherein you address a person by his or her position as though it's their first name. For example, when we talk about President Lincoln, we are using his role as though it were a part of his name. We don't always capitalize the word president. Indeed, we could say, "During the Civil War, President Lincoln was the president of the United States."



## **2. Names of mountains, mountain ranges, hills and volcanoes.**

Again, we're talking about specific places. The word 'hill' is not a proper noun, but Gellert Hill is because it's the name of one specific hill. Use a capital letter to begin each word in the name of a mountain (Mt. Olympus), mountain range (the Appalachians), hill (San Juan Hill) or volcano (Mt. Vesuvius).

## **3. Names of bodies of water (rivers, lakes, oceans, seas, streams and creeks).**

From here, it gets pretty easy. The same rules that apply to mountain names also apply to water names. A river is just a river, but the Mississippi River is a proper noun and must be capitalized, just like Lake Erie, the Indian Ocean, and the Dead Sea.

## **4. Names of buildings, monuments, bridges, and tunnels.**

Man-made structures also often have names. The White House, the Eiffel Tower, the Statue of Liberty, the Golden Gate Bridge, and the Lincoln Tunnel are a few good examples.

## **5. Street names.**

Capitalize both the actual name part of the name (Capital) and the road part of the name (Boulevard); both are necessary for forming the entire name of the street (Capital Boulevard).

## **6. Schools, colleges, and universities.**

All the words in the name of the educational institution should be capitalized. For example, Ibn Tofail University, Harvard University, Wilkesboro Elementary School, Cape Fear Community College.

## **7. Political divisions (continents, regions, countries, states, counties, cities, and towns)**

As is the case with regions of a country, the divisions may not always be political, but you get the idea. When you refer to New England, the Midwest, the Pacific Northwest or the South as a region (as opposed to a compass direction), you capitalize it. Also, continents (South America), countries (Belgium), states



(Wisconsin), counties (Prince William County), cities (London) and towns (Lizard Lick) get capitalized.

### **8. Titles of books, movies, magazines, newspapers, articles, songs, plays and works of art.**

This one is a little tricky when ‘and,’ articles or prepositions are involved. If ‘the’ is the first word in the given name of a work, it must be capitalized (The Washington Post, The Glass Menagerie). If ‘a’ or ‘an’ is the first word, it too is capitalized (A Few Good Men), and if a preposition leads the way, you guessed it: Capitalized (Of Mice and Men). However, if any of these words come in the middle of the title, it is not capitalized.

### **9. The first letter in a sentence.**

The last two rules are easy. Always capitalize the first letter of a sentence. If the sentence is a quotation within a larger sentence, capitalize it, but only if it’s a complete sentence. If it is merely a phrase that fits neatly into the larger sentence, it does not require capitalization. Study the following two examples for clarification:

- The waiter said, “My manager will be here shortly,” but he never came.
- The waiter told us that his manager would “be here shortly,” but he never came.

### **10. The pronoun I.**

It is only necessary to capitalize other pronouns when they begin a sentence, but ‘I’ is always capitalized

### ***Remembering the Rules:***

How can you possibly remember all these rules?

Well, first of all, you should ask yourself three questions:

- Is this the first letter in a sentence? If the answer is yes, capitalize.
- Is this the pronoun I? If yes, capitalize.
- Am I using a name that someone gave to this thing or person? If yes, capitalize.



And if you want to remember all the specific categories, try memorizing one of the following sentences.

- “For Bob Barker, the price is sometimes wrong,” mom says.
- Susan Sarandon bought my wife fancy toilet paper in Boston.

The first letter of each word stands for a category:

- **F - First letter in a sentence**
- **B - Buildings (and other man-made structures)**
- **B - Borders (of regions, states, countries, etc.)**
- **T - Titles**
- **P - People**
- **I - I**
- **S – Schools**
- **W - Water**
- **M - Mountains**
- **S - Streets**

And there you have it. Whether you think of English as having ten rules of capitalization, thirty, or just three, You should now be able to remember them all.

### Practice:

- *Find and correct the TEN mistakes below (one mistake per sentence).*
- *Put a check next to the SIX sentences that have NO MISTAKES.*

1. My classmate is from <sup>Sweden</sup>sweden.
2. Chris drove to the <sup>university</sup>University yesterday.
3. I study in the library every Tuesday afternoon. ✓



4. We saw lions, tigers and camels at the zoo.
  5. maybe Carla will see a movie tonight.
  6. My family and i live in an apartment building.
  7. Peru is located in south America.
  8. Did You talk to our teacher last week?
  9. Let's get out our telescope and look at the moon.
  10. I ordered a cheeseburger and soda at the school cafeteria.
  11. I can speak three languages, but I can't speak german.
  12. Cambridge University is one of the oldest universities in the world.
  13. Thomas really wants to see the new Star wars movie at the theater.
  14. Will you be able to come to the picnic on the weekend?
  15. Did you know that mr. Johnson is a policeman?
  16. They want to meet us at seven O'clock tomorrow night.
- 



- Find the 20 capitalization mistakes below. (The first one is done for you.)

**m**any of john's friends think he has a boring daily routine, but john likes it. he always gets up at six o'clock every morning and says, "good morning" to his wife and kids, and after breakfast he arrives at work around seven-thirty. he works at a small store called supersave supermarket. it's located in new york. after work, he says, "good-bye" to his boss, mr. smith, and then goes home. on weekends, he likes to play with his son, thomas, and his daughter, barbara. maybe john's routine really is a little boring, but he enjoys it!

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## Punctuation:

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### BASIC RULES OF PUNCTUATION

#### COMMA (,)

When to use:

- **Before a conjunction (and, but, or, nor, so, far, yet) to connect independent clauses**

*He frowned, but she did not understand why she was worried.*

- **After most introductory words, phrases or clauses**

*After the noisy party, the neighbors complained.*

- **Before and after extra (nonrestrictive) information included in a sentence ("extra commas for extra information")**

*My father, a computer programmer, works late at night.*



- **Around transitional expressions**

*The ending, however, is disappointing.*

- **To separate three or more items in a series**

*They ordered eggs, bacon, and potatoes.*

- **Between coordinate evaluative adjectives**

*We ate a delicious, well-prepared, and inexpensive meal.*

- **After a verb that introduces a quotation**

*She gasped, “We haven’t a moment to lose!”*

When **not** to use (\* highlighted comma shows incorrect usage)

Do not use a comma to:

- **To separate a verb from its subject**

*Interviewing so many women in the United States, helped the researcher understand the “American Dream”*

- **Within a compound structure when the second part of the compound is not an independent clause**

*Amy Tan has written novels, and adapted them for the screen.*

- **After a coordinating conjunction that connects two sentences (comma goes only before conjunction)**

*The Joy Luck Club is supposed to be good, but, I missed it when it came to my local theater.*

- **To connect two independent clauses when no coordinating conjunction is present**

*Amy Tan has written novels, they have been adapted for the big screen. (Use semicolon instead)*

- **To separate an independent clause from a following dependent clause introduced by after, before, because, if, since, unless, until, or when**

*The test results were good, because all the students had studied in groups.*



- **To separate a clause beginning with “that” from the rest of the sentence**  
*The girl in Tan’s story tried to convey to her mother, that she did not have to be a child prodigy.*

**Note:** *A comma can appear before a “that” clause when it is the second comma of a pair before and after extra information inserted as a nonrestrictive phrase.*

➤ *He skates so fast, despite his size, that he will probably break the world record.*

- **To separate a verb from its object or complement**  
*The qualities required for the job are, punctuality, efficiency, and the ability to work long hours.*

- **After “such as”**  
*They bought kitchen supplies such as, detergent, paper towels, and garbage bags.*

## **SEMICOLON (;)**

Use a semicolon instead of a period when the ideas in two independent clauses are very closely connected and you want readers to expect more.

### When to use

- **Connect two independent clauses with a semicolon to avoid a run-on sentence or a comma splice**  
*Biography tells us about the subject; biographers also tell us about themselves.*

- **To separate items in a list containing internal commas**  
*When I cleaned out the refrigerator, I found chocolate cake, half-eaten; some canned tomato paste, which had a blue fungus growing on the top; and some possibly edible meat loaf.*

### Do not use

- **Semicolons interchangeably with colons.**  
*They contributed a great deal of food; salad, chili and dessert. (Use a colon instead)*

- **After an introductory phrase or dependent clause, even if the phrase or clause is long.**



*Because the training period was so long and arduous for all the players; the manager allowed one visit by family and friends.* (Use a comma instead)

**Note:** Do not overuse semicolons. Use them in place of a period only when the link between the two independent clauses is strong.

## COLON (:)

Colons serve two functions: (1) that a writer is introducing a quotation or a list of items and (2) that a writer is separating two clauses of which the second expands or illustrates the first.

### When to use

- **After an independent clause to introduce a list**

*The students included three pieces of writing in their portfolios: a narrative, an argument, and a documented paper.*

- **After an independent clause to introduce an explanation or elaboration**

*The author has performed a remarkable feat: she has maintained suspense to the last page.*

**Note:** You may use a capital letter after a colon introducing an independent clause. Be consistent in your usage.

### Do not use

- **Directly after a verb (such as a form of *be* or *include*)**

*The two main effects were: the improvement of registration and an increase in the number of advisers.* (No punctuation necessary)

*The book includes: a preface, an introduction, an appendix, and an index.* (No punctuation necessary)

- **Directly after a preposition or “such as”**

*They packed many different items for the picnic, such as: salsa, pita bread and egg rolls.* (No punctuation necessary)



## DASH (—)

Dashes suggest a change of pace. They alert the reader to something unexpected, an interruption, or an abrupt change of thought. Form a dash by typing two hyphens, putting no extra space before, between, or after them.

- Armed with one weapon—her wit—she faced the crowd.
- The accused gasped, “But I never—” and fainted.

**Commas can be used to set off appositive phrases, but dashes are preferable when the phrase itself contains commas.**

- The contents of her closet—lightweight shirts, shorts, and sandals—made her reassess her readiness for winter in New England.

## Fragment and Run-on Sentences

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### 1. Sentence Fragment:

A **sentence fragment** is a word group that is incorrectly punctuated as if it were a complete sentence, beginning with an initial capital letter and ending with a period or other end punctuation. To be complete, a sentence must contain a subject, a predicate or complete verb, and function as an independent clause. A sentence fragment lacks one or more of these elements; as a result, it cannot stand alone or function as a sentence.

The subject of a sentence is the “who” or “what” the sentence is about. The word(s) that name the topic of the sentence is called the simple subject and must be a noun or pronoun. The complete subject is the simple subject plus its modifiers; the predicate or complete verb says something about the subject. An independent clause includes a subject and a predicate and can stand alone as a complete sentence.



## IDENTIFYING AND CORRECTING SENTENCE FRAGMENTS

In general, *sentence fragments* can be corrected by rewriting the fragment as a complete sentence or connecting the fragment to an independent clause.

### • Correcting a Sentence Fragment with a Missing Subject

Except for a command with an implied or understood subject, a word group punctuated as a sentence without a subject is a sentence fragment.

#### Example:

Michelle came into the room. Closed the door.

**How to:** Include an appropriate subject to form an independent clause.

**Correction:** Michelle came into the room. She closed the door.

**How to:** Turn the fragment into an “-ing” participle phrase attached to the independent clause.

**Correction:** Michelle came into the room, closing the door behind her.

*Note:* With a command, or imperative sentence, the subject (“you”) is implied and therefore omitted; for example, “Don’t leave the room!” is the equivalent of “[You] Don’t leave the room!”

### • Correcting a Sentence Fragment with a Missing or Incomplete Verb

In order for a sentence to be complete, it must contain a complete verb in an independent clause.

A word group punctuated as a sentence without a complete verb is a sentence fragment.

Example: The assembly person in our district.

**How to:** Include a predicate or complete verb to form an independent clause.

**Correction:** The assembly person in our district **works** diligently.

Example: The statue standing in the rotunda of the building.

**How to:** Add a helping verb to form a predicate or complete verb.



**Correction:** The statue **is standing** in the rotunda of the building.

**Note:** A finite verb is capable of making an assertion without the aid of a helping verb; in addition, it changes form to show the difference in present, past, and future tense. However, a verbal cannot function as the main verb of a clause. Verbals such as “working” and “to work” do not change to show tense and are not finite verbs.

Example: The statue located on the second floor of the museum.

**How to:** Add a helping verb to form a predicate or complete verb.

**Correction:** The statue **is located** on the second floor of the museum.

**Note:** Since the statue cannot locate itself, the verb form must be passive, indicating someone other than the subject of the sentence (the statue) placed it on the second floor of the museum. Passive voice is formed by using a helping verb (am, is, are, was, were) plus the past participle (“-d” or “-ed”); however, some verbs are irregular and take the “-t” or “-n” form.

Example: She caught by the authorities.

**How to:** Add a helping verb to form a predicate or complete verb.

**Correction:** She **was caught** by the authorities.

### • Correcting a Dependent Clause Fragment

A main or independent clause can stand alone as a complete sentence. However, a dependent or subordinate clause—*because it begins with a subordinating conjunction or relative pronoun*—needs to be attached to an independent clause.

Example: After Maria bought the biology book.

**How to:** Attach the dependent clause to an independent clause.

**Correction:** After Maria bought the biology book, she began studying for her exam.

In the above example, the subordinating conjunction “after” indicates a time relationship between the two clauses.

**How to:** Delete the subordinating conjunction.

Correction: Maria bought the biology book.



## Run-on sentences

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A run-on sentence occurs when two or more independent clauses are not joined correctly. An independent clause is a group of words that can stand alone as a sentence, as in, “the tiger runs.”

Your writing may be confusing or unclear if independent clauses are joined incorrectly.

There are two types of run-on sentences:

### **Fused sentences and Comma splices.**

A **fused sentence** occurs when independent clauses run together with no marks of punctuation or coordinating conjunctions to separate them.

Fused sentence: My professor read my paper she said it was excellent.

independent clause          independent clause

A **comma splice** occurs when two or more independent clauses are joined only by a comma.

Comma splice: My cat meowed angrily, I knew she wanted food.

independent clause    independent clause

### **Solution**

#### **REVISE RUN-ON SENTENCES in one of four ways:**

- **Use a comma and a coordinating conjunction** (*and, but, yet, so, or, nor, for*).

When you join two independent clauses with a coordinating conjunction, place a comma before the coordinating conjunction.

**Run-on:** My professor read my paper she said it was excellent.

**Correction:** My professor read my paper, **and** she said it was excellent.

- **Use a semicolon (or, in some cases, a colon or a dash)**. You can use a semicolon alone or with a transitional expression (e.g., however, at any rate, in contrast, as a result, etc.).

**Run-on:** My cat meowed angrily, I knew she wanted food.

**Correction:** My cat meowed angrily; I knew she wanted food.



### Correction with a transitional expression:

My cat meowed angrily; **therefore**, I knew she wanted food.

- **Separate the independent clauses into sentences.** This is an especially good technique when one of the independent clauses is very long.

**Run-on:** It seemed to Wanda that her daughter had more than enough crayons, they were strewn across the bedroom floor and some of them were broken, and, worse still, someone had used the stub of a red crayon to mark a sinister smiley face on the wall.

**Correction:** It seemed to Wanda that her daughter had more than enough crayons. They were strewn across the bedroom floor, and some of them were broken. Worse still, someone had used the stub of a red crayon to mark a sinister smiley face on the wall.

- **Restructure the sentence by subordinating one of the clauses.** You can subordinate a clause if one of the independent clauses seems less important than the other. Here are a few examples in which one of the clauses has been subordinated (indicated here by underlining). Note that a subordinated clause is no longer independent—it cannot stand on its own as a sentence.

**Run-on:** The largest tree by volume in the world is the General Sherman Sequoia, it is a little over 52,500 cubic feet.

**Correction:** The largest tree by volume in the world is the General Sherman Sequoia, which is a little over 52,500 cubic feet.

**Run-on:** Toni Morrison is a professor at Princeton University, she wrote the novel The Bluest Eye.

**Correction:** Toni Morrison, a professor at Princeton University, wrote The Bluest Eye.

**Run-on:** I told my roommate I would be late, she still locked me out.

**Correction:** Although I told my roommate I would be late, she still locked me out.



**Run-on:** I told the children I would read to them they said they wanted to sit by me so they could look at the pictures.

**Correction:** When I told the children I would read to them, they said they wanted to sit by me so they could look at the pictures.

## TYPES OF DEPENDENT OR SUBORDINATE CLAUSES

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A dependent or subordinate clause contains a subject and a predicate but cannot stand alone as a complete sentence. Using subordination, a dependent clause can be attached to an independent clause to provide information about the relationship between the two clauses. There are three types of dependent clauses according to their use in a particular sentence: *adverb, adjective, and noun clauses*.

- **Adverb clauses** modify verbs, adjectives, or adverbs in an independent clause. They usually tell **how, why, when, where**, under **what conditions**, or with **what result**, and they always begin with a subordinating conjunction.

**Example:** *After the final performance of the season*, the company celebrated with their families.

In the above example, the dependent clause (“*After the final performance of the season*,”) is attached to the independent clause (“the company celebrated with their families.”) and forms a complete sentence: “company” is the subject and “celebrated” is the verb.

**Example:** The play was extended *because it earned favorable reviews from the critics*.

**Example:** *Even though I needed to take a break*, I continued to study for the exam.

Note that in the examples above, when the dependent or subordinate clause precedes the independent clause, a comma is used to connect the two clauses; however, when the dependent clause comes after the independent clause, no comma is used.



Common subordinating conjunctions used to form dependent or subordinate clauses include the following:

- **time:** after, as long as, as soon as, before, once, until, when, whenever, while ..
- **place:** where, wherever
- **comparison:** as, as if, as though, than
- **contrast:** although, even though, though, whereas, while
- **cause:** as, because, since
- **condition:** even if, if, provided that, unless
- **purpose:** in order that, so that; and result: so . . . that, such . . . that
- **Adjective clauses** modify nouns and pronouns, providing necessary or helpful information. These clauses usually begin with a relative pronoun, such as **who, whom, whose, which, and that.**

Example: Diana is the girl **who always gets to class early.**

In the above example, the subject of the sentence is “*Diana*” and the dependent clause

(“**who always gets to class early**”) modifies the word “girl.”

Example: The area of study **that is most interesting to me** is marine biology.

Example: I finally read the book you recommended, **which I found very rewarding.**

- **Noun clauses** function as subjects, objects, and complements in sentences. They usually begin with either **that** or **what** or with **when, why, who, whom, whoever,** or **how.**

Example: It is very likely **that she will win the election.**

Example: **What the lecturer said** pleased the audience.

Example: Whoever answers the question first will be the winner.

Note that if the word group begins with when, why, who, whom, whoever, or how and introduces a question, it can stand alone as an independent clause and functions as a complete sentence.

Example: **When** will they announce the results of the survey?



## Parallel structure

To make the ideas in your **sentences** clear and understandable, you need to make your sentence structures grammatically balanced (i.e. parallel). This means that ideas in a sentence or paragraph that are similar should be expressed in parallel grammatical form (e.g. Jessie likes **running, swimming and painting** NOT Jessie likes **running, swimming and to paint**). Parallel grammatical form is needed for:

- Lists of words, phrases and clauses
- Parallel ideas presented as pairs
- Essay headings and tables of content

### 1. Lists of words, phrases and clauses

When ideas are presented in a series or a list, the same parts of speech should be used to ensure parallel structure. This applies whether the list consists of single words, phrases or clauses—single words should be balanced with single words, phrases with phrases and clauses with clauses.

#### **Examples:**

● **Rule 1: Single words** should be matched with single words of the same type (e.g. all nouns, all adverbs, all adjectives).

✗ The lecturer asked the students to speak in tutorials clearly, in a loud voice and not to be rude.  
(ADVERB) (ADVERBIAL PHRASE) (INFINITIVE)

✓ The lecturer asked the students to speak in tutorials clearly, loudly and politely.  
(ALL WORDS IN THE LIST ARE NOW ADVERBS)

● **Rule 2: Groups of words (phrases)** should be matched with word groups of the same pattern (e.g. noun phrases beginning with verb +ing, prepositional phrases).

✗ Success at university depends on attending classes, reviewing your notes and to keep up with your readings.  
(NOUN PHRASE -ING) (NOUN PHRASE -ING), (INFINITIVE VERB =TO + VERB)

✓ Success at university depends on attending classes, reviewing your notes and keeping up with your readings. (ALL WORDS IN THE LIST ARE NOW NOUN PHRASES BEGINNING WITH -ING WORDS)

● **Rule 3: Clauses** should be matched with clauses of the same pattern (e.g. noun clauses, adverbial clauses, adjectival clauses).

✗ The lecturer expected that the students would present the seminar, be using PowerPoint presentations and they would answer questions from the audience.  
(TWO PHRASES followed by a SENTENCE)

✓ The lecturer expected that the students would present the seminar, use a PowerPoint presentation and answer questions from the audience.  
(ALL THE ELEMENTS OF THE LIST ARE NOW PHRASES BEGINNING WITH A VERB)



## 2. Parallel ideas connected by conjunctions

Ideas that are joined with **conjunctions** need to be parallel in structure. By using similar grammatical forms to express equal ideas, your writing will be smooth and your writing style will improve.

### Examples:

**Type 1.** Like ideas joined by 'and', 'but', 'or', 'nor', 'for', 'so', 'yet'

- ✓ Your oral presentation should use PowerPoint slides **and** refer to handouts.
- ✓ She failed the essay **but** passed the final exam.
- ✓ Her oral presentation was good, **yet** her essay was poor.

**Type 2.** Comparisons joined by 'than' or 'as'

- ✓ Learning at university is more difficult **than** studying at high school.
- ✓ Writing assignments is **as** important **as** sitting for exams.

**Type 3.** Ideas joined by pairs of conjunctions 'both...and', 'either...or', 'neither...nor', 'not only...but also', 'whether...or'

- ✓ **Both** the lecturers **and** the students protested about the changes in assessment policy.
- ✓ The students were **not only** hard-working **but also** community-minded.
- ✓ The assignment tasks need to be **either** submitted electronically **or** posted to the university assessment centre.

### PRACTICE EXERCISE

Complete the exercises on the backside of this worksheet for more practice on using Parallel Structure.

1. Justin was excited about inviting friends over, eating a good meal, and \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. ...a game of cards.
  - b. ...to play cards.
  - c. ...playing a game of cards.
2. I have always enjoyed reading the book more than \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. ...I watched the movie version.
  - b. ...watching the movie.
  - c. ...to watch the movie.
3. When the weather outside is cold and \_\_\_\_\_, I like to be indoors.
  - a. ...starting to get windy...
  - b. ...windy...
  - c. ...getting windy...
4. Running, lifting, and \_\_\_\_\_ are three of Ashley's favorite exercises.
  - a. ...racquetball...
  - b. ...a spinning class...
  - c. ...bicycling...



# Part 3



## What is a paragraph?

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A paragraph is a group of related sentences that develop a main thought, or idea, about a single topic. The structure of a paragraph is not complex. There are usually three basic elements: (1) a topic, (2) a topic sentence, and (3) supporting details. The topic sentence states the main, or controlling, idea. The sentences that explain this main point are called supporting details. These details may be facts, reasons, or examples that provide further information about the topic sentence. As a writer, these paragraph elements provide you with an easy-to-follow structure for expressing your ideas clearly and effectively. As a reader, these same elements help you know what to look for and ensure that you will understand and remember what you read.

Length and appearance do not determine whether a section in a paper is a paragraph. For instance, in some styles of writing, particularly journalistic styles, a paragraph can be just one sentence long. Ultimately, a paragraph is a sentence or group of sentences that support one main idea. In this handout, we will refer to this as the “controlling idea,” because it controls what happens in the rest of the paragraph.

In brief, A **paragraph** is a distinct section of your writing that deals with a single topic or point. It is indicated by a new line and an indentation. They usually start with a main idea and then give evidence to support that main idea.

### Remember!

## Paragraph Construction

**To be a good writer, you have to understand how paragraphs are constructed. A single paragraph is a group of sentences that has one central idea or *topic*. Usually, one of the sentences presents the topic to be discussed. This sentence is called the *topic sentence*. The topic sentence is the *focus* of the paragraph. All of the other sentences in the paragraph support, or explain, the idea expressed in the topic sentence. These are called *supporting sentences*.**



## Types of paragraphs: (nonfiction writing)

There are four types that are ideally suited for this genre. Each type has different characteristics and fulfills a different purpose:

### Expository Paragraph Type:

*This type is used to inform and educate the reader (however, it's not meant for you to express your opinion).*

### Descriptive Paragraph Type:

*This type is used to paint a picture in the reader's mind.*

### Narrative Paragraph Type:

*This type is used to bring the reader along your character's emotional journey.*

### Persuasive Paragraph Type:

*This type is used to convince the reader to side with you and your beliefs.*

Each one of the four paragraph types fulfills a different purpose:

- The expository paragraph type is used to convey well-researched findings to back up your solution in a way that *establishes you as an expert* in the reader's eyes.
- The descriptive paragraph type is used to *paint vivid pictures* in your reader's mind of someone like them, both before and after they apply your solution.
- The narrative paragraph type is used to take your reader through an emotional journey from problem to solution, as lived by the characters in your case studies.
- The persuasive paragraph type is used to convince your reader why your solution will be different than any other than they might have tried in the past.



## Practice:

Read each paragraph carefully and decide whether it is a narrative, descriptive, expository, or persuasive paragraph. Label it appropriately in the blank.

1. **Paragraph Type (narrative, descriptive, expository, or persuasive)** \_\_\_\_\_  
 To be healthy, teens can exercise, eat nutritious foods, and keep themselves safe. First, participating in various kinds of fitness can keep them in shape. This can include walking, riding their bikes, and playing sports. Next, maintaining a nutrient-rich diet can help teens stay well. Three balanced meals and two wholesome snacks a day can keep their health on track. Finally, staying out of dangerous situations can keep teens healthy. Avoiding strangers, wearing seatbelts in cars, and checking smoke detectors are all great ways to accomplish this task. Teens who follow these tips will keep their bodies unharmed and in good physical shape.
  
2. **Paragraph Type (narrative, descriptive, expository, or persuasive)** \_\_\_\_\_  
 One of the oddest coincidences in my life happened when I left America to visit Seoul, South Korea. A friend and I wanted to visit a castle in Seoul, so we found some locals who agreed to take us to see it. As we were walking up some steps from one part of the grounds to another, I saw some people watching us from the top of the steps. When I got to the top, someone I had never seen before mentioned my sister's name and asked if I was her sister. I almost couldn't talk! How could these people know my sister, who lived in Australia? They explained that they were my sister's neighbors in Australia and that I looked just like her. It was the strangest experience in my life!
  
3. **Paragraph Type (narrative, descriptive, expository, or persuasive)** \_\_\_\_\_  
 Pets should be allowed in school for a number of reasons. First, they help students feel more comfortable. Some students feel very uncomfortable in a school setting, but taking along a pet gerbil or gecko might help students relax. Also, students can make friends more easily with a pet. A pet frog or tarantula can gather quite a crowd; and when students see what pets they have in common, they can unite around their common interests. Finally, pets can keep students safe. Who wants to bully a student who has a protective dog with him? For all of these reasons, students should be allowed to take their pets to school.



4. **Paragraph Type (narrative, descriptive, expository, or persuasive) \_\_\_\_\_**

Hanging on my bedroom wall is a picture of a train. Sometimes, when I'm lying on my bed, I take a closer look. The front of the train has a number of flags, but they don't look like today's American flag. Instead, these flags have stripes and a circle of stars. The train is at a station, and the conductor is walking toward the tracks in front of the train. Is he preparing to speak to all of the hat-wearing men and children behind him, or is he checking out the tracks? I can't decide. The clock on the post outside the station says it is about six fifteen, and I'm guessing that it's evening and not morning since it doesn't look dark. I can just imagine the smell of coal and hear the sound of the train as it snorts and breathes, chomping at the bit to get moving. The picture always makes me think about life in the past.

5. **Paragraph Type (narrative, descriptive, expository, or persuasive) \_\_\_\_\_**

All students should be required to learn how to use the internet. First, because the web gives students access to a tremendous amount of research from the comfort of school or home, they can save time doing research if they learn to use this resource. For example, if students want to write about poodles, they can easily go to a search engine and find all of the resources they could possibly want or need on the topic. Next, the internet allows instant communication with access to everything from email to Skype. Students who have access to the web can communicate with parents and friends during breaks, resolving issues or letting parents know about a schedule change. Finally, learning to use the internet will help students compete in the highly-competitive and technologically-savvy world. Many jobs today require employees to use the internet, and if students don't know how to do this, they will be stuck in lower-paying jobs. Clearly, the internet is a necessity in today's world, so all students should learn how to use it.

**Paragraph Organization:**

**Read the paragraph. Then label the formatting elements of the paragraph. Use the words in the box.**

a. margin    b. double spacing    c. indent    d. title

1. \_\_\_\_\_ → **Red**
2. \_\_\_\_\_ → I love the color red. No other color symbolizes so many different emotions and experiences. Life would be very boring without the color
3. \_\_\_\_\_ → red. Fires would not burn in the same way. The sunset would not be interesting, and blood would not be so surprisingly beautiful. Red is powerful when it appears in nature, and it is also powerful when it
4. \_\_\_\_\_ → appears in our emotions. Red is love. Red is anger. Red is beauty. I like to live life in a strong way, so I think I will always admire the color red.



A paragraph is a group of sentences that convey an idea. Each sentence works together as part of a unit to create an overall thought or impression. A paragraph is the smallest unit or cluster of sentences in which *one idea* can be developed adequately. Paragraphs can stand alone or function as part of an essay, but each paragraph covers only *one main idea*.

The most important sentence in your paragraph is the **topic sentence**, which clearly states the subject of the whole paragraph. The topic sentence is usually the first sentence of the paragraph because it gives an overview of the sentences to follow. The *supporting sentences* after the topic sentence help to develop the main idea. These sentences give specific details related to the topic sentence. A final or *concluding* sentence often restates or summarizes the main idea of the topic sentence.

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**A good paragraph has:**

- a topic sentence stating the main point of the paragraph,
- supporting sentences with details and specific examples as proof of your point,
- logical, coherent thoughts that are developed in order from one sentence to the next, and
- a concluding idea that wraps up the point of the paragraph.

Read the following paragraph model. Look at the topic sentence, concrete details and examples in the supporting sentences, and see how the writer sums up the point of the paragraph with a concluding sentence. (Also, because this is academic writing, the writer indents the first line five spaces to mark the beginning of a paragraph. This practice is not always followed in commercial or instructive writing or in business letters or memos.)

### My First Day

**My first day of college was a disaster.** First, I went to the wrong classroom for math. I was sitting in the class, surrounded by people taking notes and paying attention to how to do equations, which would have been okay if I was supposed to be in an algebra class. In reality, I was supposed to be in geometry, and when I discovered my error, I had already missed the first twenty minutes of a one-hour class. When I got to the correct class, all twenty-five students turned and looked at



me as the teacher said, “You’re late.” That would have been bad enough, but in my next class my history teacher spoke so fast I could not follow most of what he said. The only thing I did hear was that we were having a quiz tomorrow over today’s lecture. My day seemed to be going better during botany class, that is, until we visited the lab. I had a sneezing fit because of one of the plants in the lab and had to leave the room. When I finally finished my classes for the day, I discovered I had locked my keys in the car and had to wait for my brother to bring another set. *My first day of school was so bad that I know the rest will have to be better.*

In the above paragraph, the topic sentence appears in **bold** and the concluding sentence in *italics*. Notice how the sentences in between support and develop the topic sentence by giving specific examples and details. These examples are the writer’s “proof” of his bad first day of school.

### A good topic sentence:

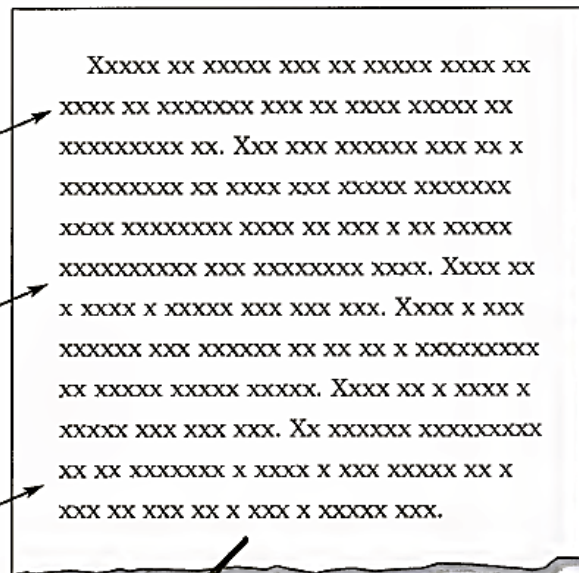
- informs the reader of the subject that will be discussed in the paragraph,
- asserts the writer’s point of view or attitude,
- intrigues the reader to continue reading,
- creates a sense of action, and
- is not vague, rambling, too narrow or too broad.

### Paragraph organisation

#### ○ What makes a paragraph?

A paragraph has three basic parts:

1. **The topic sentence.** This is the main idea of the paragraph. It is usually the first sentence of the paragraph, and it is the most general sentence of the paragraph.
2. **The supporting sentences.** These are sentences that talk about or explain the topic sentence. They are more detailed ideas that follow the topic sentence.
3. **The concluding sentence.** This may be found as the last sentence of a paragraph. It can finish a paragraph by repeating the main idea or just giving a final comment about the topic.



## Remember!

### Paragraph Organization

A typical paragraph has a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence.

- The **topic sentence** introduces the topic and tells what the writer will say about the topic.
- The sentences that follow further explain and support the topic sentence. They are called **supporting sentences**.
- The **concluding sentence** often repeats the information in the topic sentence in a different way.

### Diagram of a Paragraph

The following diagram shows you at a glance the different parts of a standard college paragraph. The diagram will serve as a helpful guide when you are writing or evaluating paragraphs.

Topic sentence	The <i>topic sentence</i> states the main idea advanced in the paragraph.
Support point 1 Specific evidence	The <i>support point</i> advances the first point for the main idea and provides <i>specific evidence</i> that develops that point.
Support point 2 Specific evidence	The <i>support point</i> advances the second point for the main idea and provides <i>specific evidence</i> that develops that point.
Support point 3 Specific evidence	The <i>support point</i> advances the third point for the main idea and provides <i>specific evidence</i> that develops that point.
Concluding sentence	The <i>concluding sentence</i> is the final thought that stems from and reinforces the topic of the paragraph.



**Exercise 1:** What is a topic sentence?

Read the paragraph.

Look at the underlined sentence.

This is the topic sentence.

My favourite drink is tea and I drink a lot of it. I always have tea in the morning for breakfast. I make a pot of tea and then I drink it all myself. Sometimes I have another pot before lunch. At four o'clock, I make a cup of mint tea. Mint tea is good for waking up and studying.

Tick (✓) the correct information about topic sentences.

A topic sentence is:

- at or near the start of the paragraph.
- at the end of the paragraph.
- the main idea of the paragraph.
- a small detail from the paragraph.
- one or two words.
- a complete sentence.

**Exercise 2:**

Read the paragraphs. Underline the topic sentences.

I would like to tell you about my uncle. His name is Juma and he is thirty-nine years old. He is my father's youngest brother. I really like Uncle Juma because he is very kind and very funny. He also tells us interesting stories about the places he visits.

I love football! I loved football when I was a small boy, and I love it now. My favourite team is Manchester United. I go to see our local club team every weekend, and now I play for the college three times a week.

My brothers all have jobs. My oldest brother, Edward, is a doctor at the hospital in the centre of the city, and the second oldest, Daniel, is an accountant in an office near our home. My youngest brother is a policeman. I am the only brother who is still at school.

I like most types of books. However, the books I enjoy the most are travel books. I like reading about different countries and the famous places there. When I go on holiday, I always buy lots of books about the place I am visiting. Travel books help you to understand a place.



## How do you write a paragraph?

A basic paragraph structure usually consists of five sentences: the topic sentence, three supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence. But the secrets to paragraph writing lay in four essential elements, which when used correctly, can make an *okay* paragraph into a *great* paragraph.

1. **Element #1: Unity.** Unity in a paragraph begins with the topic sentence. Every paragraph has one single, controlling idea that is expressed in its topic sentence, which is typically the first sentence of the paragraph. A paragraph is unified around this main idea, with the supporting sentences providing detail and discussion. In order to write a good topic sentence, think about your theme and all the points you want to make. Decide which point drives the rest, and then write it as your topic sentence.
2. **Element #2: Order.** Order refers to the way you organize your supporting sentences. Whether you choose chronological order, order of importance, or another logical presentation of detail, a solid paragraph always has a definite organization. In a well-ordered paragraph, the reader follows along easily, aided by the pattern you've established. Order helps the reader grasp your meaning and avoid confusion.
3. **Element #3: Coherence.** Coherence is the quality that makes your writing understandable. Sentences within a paragraph need to connect to each other and work together as a whole. One of the best ways to achieve coherency is to use transition words. These words create bridges from one sentence to the next. You can use transition words that show order (first, second, third); spatial relationships (above, below) or logic (furthermore, in addition, in fact). Also, in writing a paragraph, using a consistent verb tense and point of view are important ingredients for coherency.
4. **Element #4: Completeness.** Completeness means a paragraph is well-developed. If all sentences clearly and sufficiently support the main idea, then your paragraph is complete. If there are not enough sentences or enough information to prove your thesis, then the paragraph is incomplete. Usually three supporting sentences, in addition to a topic sentence and concluding sentence, are needed for a paragraph to be complete. The concluding sentence or last sentence of the paragraph should summarize your main idea by reinforcing your topic sentence.



## Writing Paragraph Prompts: Using the Four Essential Elements

Writing paragraphs takes practice, but what should students write about? Good paragraph writing prompts allow students to write about what they know and like, so their focus can be on the writing process and using the four essential elements. Paragraph writing prompts, such as *Explain why \_\_\_\_\_ is your favorite activity*, encourage students to develop a topic sentence, write supporting sentences in a proper order, use transition words to achieve coherency, and conclude their paragraphs for completeness.

### Brainstorming:

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The decision about what to put into your paragraphs begins with the germination of a seed of ideas; this “germination process” is better known as brainstorming. There are many techniques for brainstorming; whichever one you choose; this stage of paragraph development cannot be skipped. Building paragraphs can be like building a skyscraper: there must be a well-planned foundation that supports what you are building. Any cracks, inconsistencies, or other corruptions of the foundation can cause your whole paper to crumble.

So, let us suppose that you have done some brainstorming to develop your thesis / topic. What else should you keep in mind as you begin to create paragraphs?

#### **Every paragraph in a paper/essay should be:**

- **Unified:** All of the sentences in a single paragraph should be related to a single controlling idea (often expressed in the topic sentence of the paragraph).
- **Clearly related to the thesis/ topic:** The sentences should all refer to the central idea, or thesis, of the paper (Rosen and Behrens 119).
- **Coherent:** The sentences should be arranged in a logical manner and should follow a definite plan for development (Rosen and Behrens 119).
- **Well-developed:** Every idea discussed in the paragraph should be adequately explained and supported through evidence and details that work together to explain the paragraph’s controlling idea (Rosen and Behrens 119).



## Cohesive devices

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### Cohesion: linking words and phrases

You can use words or short phrases which help to guide your reader through your writing, and to link sentences, paragraphs and sections both forwards and backwards. Good use will make what you have written easy to follow; bad use might mean your style is disjointed, probably with too many short sentences, and consequently difficult to follow. Your mark could be affected either way.

The best way to "get a feel" for these words is through your reading. Most textbooks and articles are well-written and will probably include a lot of these cohesive devices. Note how they are used and try to emulate what you have read. Do make sure though that you fully understand their meaning: incorrect use could change completely what you're trying to say. Try to use a variety of expressions, particularly in longer pieces of writing.

Don't forget "AND"! Two short sentences are often best connected together with this little word.

There follows a list of words and phrases that can be used. The list is not exhaustive, and BE CAREFUL: although grouped together, none is totally synonymous. Their position in the sentence can also vary; this is where your reading and dictionary come in.

Listing	Giving examples	Generalising
first, second, third	for example	in general
first, furthermore, finally	for instance	Generally
to begin, to conclude	as follows:	on the whole
Next	that is	as a rule
Reinforcement	in this case	for the most part
Also	Namely	in most cases
Furthermore	in other words	Usually
Moreover	Result/consequence	Highlighting
what is more	So	in particular
in addition	Therefore	Particularly



Besides	as a result/consequence	Especially
above all	Accordingly	Mainly
as well (as)	Consequently	<b>Reformulation</b>
in the same way	because of this/that	in other words
not only ... but also	Thus	Rather
<b>Similarity</b>	Hence	to put it more simply
Equally	for this/that reason	<b>Expressing an alternative</b>
Likewise	so that	Alternatively
Similarly	in that case	Rather
Correspondingly	under these circumstances	on the other hand
in the same way	<b>Deduction</b>	the alternative is
<b>Transition to new point</b>	Then	another possibility would be
now,	in other words	<b>Contrast</b>
as far as <i>x</i> is concerned	in that case	Instead
with regard/reference to	Otherwise	Conversely
as for ...	this implies that ...	on the contrary
it follows that	if so/not	in contrast
turning to	<b>Stating the obvious</b>	in comparison
<b>Summary</b>	Obviously	<b>Concession (sth unexpected)</b>
in conclusion	Clearly	However
to conclude	Naturally	even though
in brief	of course	however much
to summarise	as can be expected	Nevertheless
Overall	Surely	Still
Therefore	after all	Yet

Here are just a few examples of some of the words in action:

## REINFORCEMENT

*Desktop computers are cheaper and more reliable than laptops; **furthermore**, they are more flexible.*



**RESULT/CONSEQUENCE**

*Prices fell by more than 20% last year. As **a result**, sales increased by 15%.*

**GENERALISING**

*On the whole, his speech was well received, **despite** some complaints from new members.*

**CONTRAST**

*The South East of the UK often has the coldest weather in the winter. **Conversely**, the North West of Scotland frequently has the mildest temperatures.*

**CONCESSION**

*It was a very expensive holiday, the weather was bad and the people weren't very friendly. **Nevertheless**, we would probably go back to the same place.*



## Descriptive and Process Paragraphs

### Describing people, places and processes:

A *descriptive paragraph* explains how someone or something looks or feels. A *process paragraph* explains how something is done.

#### A descriptive paragraph:

When you write a descriptive paragraph, you are describing something. When you do this, you must use wording that will allow your readers to be able to see what you are writing about without being able to actually “see” it.

The types of words to use are strong verbs and colorful adjectives. Verbs are action words such as **run, leap, shout,** and **fly**. Adjectives are words that describe nouns. Examples of colorful adjectives are: **smelly, disgusting, gorgeous, radiant, brilliant,** and **gigantic**.

<b>shape and size</b>	<b>atmosphere</b>	<b>how you feel</b>	<b>appearance</b>
large / small	cosy	amazed	colourful
wide / narrow	comfortable	surprised	unforgettable
round	warm / cool	happy	beautiful
rectangular	cold / hot	nostalgic	unattractive

A description of a place may answer some of these questions:

1. Where is the place?
2. How big is it?
3. How warm or cold is the place?
4. How does the place make you feel?
5. What things can you see in this place?
6. What colours do you see?



Read this description from a travel brochure and underline all the adjectives.

**N** **Niagara Falls**, a popular destination for thousands of visitors each year, is a beautiful place. When you stand at the edge and look down at the 188 feet of white waterfalls, you feel amazed at the power of nature. The tree-lined river that leads into the falls is fast-moving, pouring over the edge of

the falls and crashing to the bottom in a loud roar. If you want to experience the falls close up, go for a boat ride. You'll come near enough to look up at the roaring streams of water flowing over the edge and feel the cool mist that rises as the water hits the rocks below. Seeing Niagara Falls is an unforgettable experience!

### ***Describing the place around you***

#### ➤ **Using prepositions**

Prepositions tell us how a space is organised. These are some common and useful prepositions:

in front of / behind

on top of / on the bottom of

next to

above / below, underneath

to the right of / to the left of

in the middle of

around

between

### ***Describing a character***

#### ➤ **Describing people**

Here are some common adjectives for describing people:

##### *Personality*

happy, satisfied

relaxed

exciting

nervous

angry

serious

sad, depressed

outgoing

##### *Physical characteristics*

big, large, tall

small, tiny, short

thin

heavy

strong

weak

brown-, black-, blond-, red-haired

light-, dark-skinned



A description of a person may answer these questions:

1. Who is the person?
2. What does the person do?
3. What does he or she look like?
4. How does the person act \_\_\_ what is his or her personality like?
5. How does he or she make others feel?

**A Process Paragraph:**

A process paragraph is a description of how to do something. It explains the step you need to follow to complete an activity.

Ingredients

two cups of brown rice  
 one tablespoon of cooking  
 oil  
 three tablespoons of chilli  
 sauce  
 three cloves of garlic  
 one green pepper  
 one red pepper  
 one onion  
 two tomatoes  
 two spring onions  
 salt  
 pepper

Mike's Brown Rice and Vegetables

Brown rice and vegetables is a simple and delicious meal to make. First, cook the rice, following the directions on the packet. Then, cut the vegetables into one-inch pieces. Next, heat the oil, chilli sauce, and garlic in a frying pan. After that, add the vegetables and fry them until they are soft, but still a little bit crunchy. Now it's time to stir in the cooked rice. After stirring the rice and vegetables together, add salt and pepper to your own taste. Finally, put the rice and vegetables into a large bowl and serve it with freshly chopped tomatoes and spring onions on top. Now you are ready to enjoy your delicious brown rice and vegetables!



## Transitions

### ○ What are transitions?

Transitions are words that connect the steps in a paragraph. Transition words and phrases show the relationships between the ideas in a paragraph. They are not used between every sentence, but are used often enough to make the order clear. Here are some common transition words and phrases that show time order or the order of steps:

first, second, third, etc.	finally	.....
next	the last step	.....
then	before	.....
after, after that	while	.....

**Choose appropriate transition words to connect the steps in this paragraph about preparing for a trip.**

Planning a holiday abroad? Here are some suggestions to make your trip successful.

a. ...., find out if you need a visa for the country that you want to visit. Make sure you have enough time to apply for it b. .... you buy your ticket.

c. .... you've found out about visas, you should research airfares and timetables.

d. ...., look for the best flight for you. Remember, the cheapest flight may stop over in several cities and reduce the amount of time you have to spend at your destination. You might want to fly direct. e. .... you're researching flights, you can also ask your travel agent about getting a good deal on a hotel. It's a good idea to book your flight and hotel early if you're sure of your destination. If you haven't already done it, the f. .... step is to learn about places to visit, the weather, the food, and other details about the country. The Internet can be a very useful source of information. g. ...., on the day of your flight, make sure you go to the airport at least two hours before your flight. Now you are ready to start enjoying your holiday!



**More Practice:****1) Capitalization**

Directions Write each sentence below. Capitalize each one correctly.

*Example: Mr. birkway was my middle school english teacher.*

*Answer: Mr. Birkway was my middle school English teacher.*

1) the class was ready to go on the field trip to the new york zoo.

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2) ms washington was an excellent helper at the school.

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3) we went to the grand canyon for vacation during the summer.

-----

4) my friends love to go to disneyland during the winter.

-----

5) students get restless in the month of may.

-----

6) lebron james is one of the greatest basketball players in the nba.

-----

7) italian food is one my favorite types of food for dinner.

-----

8) the olympics will be held in the country of brazil next year.

-----

**B. Punctuation marks:****Q. Punctuate the following sentences.**

- a. i like playing with my friends sandy sunny sameer
- b. we went through the smoky mountains, near shimla on our way to leh
- c. myfavourite soap is pears and my favourite toothpaste is pepsodent
- d. i'm a catholic and that's why i go to st.joseph's school



- e. my friend priya speaks german and she is teaching me some words
- f. he was honest sincere hard working
- g. hindusmuslimssikhschristians live together in India
- h. long ago in a town in Switzerland there lived a famous man called william
- i. akbar the greatest of the mughal emperors ruled wisely
- j. tanya said to ila rahul is a nice guy

### C. Topic Sentence:

#### Exercise 1:

Read the paragraph and tick (✓) the best topic sentence.

<p><b>Topic sentences:</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> A: Japan is a very beautiful country.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> B: Japan, for example, makes computers.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> C: Japan is a very important country.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> D: Japan makes cars.</p>	<p><b>Paragraph:</b></p> <p>_____ It produces many cars, such as Toyotas and Nissans, which it sells all over the world. It also produces electrical goods such as televisions and DVDs. Tokyo, the capital of Japan, is one of the biggest and most modern cities in the world.</p>
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What is wrong with the other topic sentences? Match them to the problems.

<p><b>Problems:</b></p> <p>It is an example.</p> <p>It is a smaller idea, not the main idea.</p> <p>It is about something different from the other sentences.</p>	<p><b>Topic sentence:</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
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**Exercise 2:**

Read the two topic sentences. Write the other sentences in order below the correct topic sentences.

1. Computers are very useful for learning English.	1. I need to buy a new computer.
2. ....	2. ....
3. ....	3. ....
4. ....	4. ....
.....	.....

I am going to give my old computer to my younger sister.	You can also use online dictionaries and play games in English.
You can do your homework on them.	I need a faster one for my college work.
You can use them in different ways.	My computer is very slow.

**Exercise 1 Reading a student paragraph**

Read the paragraph below and note the topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentence. What was it that scared the barefoot boy?

### Barefoot Boy

I had a scary experience when I was a young boy. One evening while my parents were eating dinner, I was playing barefoot in the yard with my toys. Even now I still remember the perfume of the flowers and the moisture of the grass. While I was sitting on the grass and playing with a truck, I looked up at the sky, and my attention was distracted by the beauty of the stars. Then I felt something cold and smooth slide over my feet. I stayed perfectly still, but I looked down at my feet. Then I saw a snake slowly slithering over my toes. I felt terrible and afraid, so my heart beat very fast. After the snake moved away, I screamed to my parents for help, and they captured the snake and took it away. The experience frightened me, and I never went outside barefoot again.

**topic sentence** → I had a scary experience when I was a young boy.

→ supporting sentences

→ concluding sentence



**Exercise 2 Analyzing the student paragraph**

Examine the organization of the paragraph by answering the questions.

1. What is the topic sentence? Write it below.

\_\_\_\_\_

2. How many supporting sentences are there? \_\_\_\_\_

3. In your opinion, do the supporting sentences explain the topic sentence? \_\_\_\_\_

4. Write the concluding sentence below.

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Does the concluding sentence repeat the information in the topic sentence in a new way? \_\_\_\_\_



## Understanding a paragraph

- 1 Read this paragraph. It is the beginning of an article about Switzerland in a student newspaper. Then answer the questions.

### Switzerland — Something Interesting at Every Turn

By Ken Jones

If you dream of travelling to a country with beautiful mountains, delicious food, wonderful places to go sight-seeing and polite people, you should visit Switzerland. If you look at the map, the first thing you notice is that



Switzerland has many mountains, including some of the highest in Europe. Climbing or skiing down the mountains is great fun. Another thing you will notice is that Switzerland shares its borders with five different countries: France, Germany, Italy, Austria and Liechtenstein. In fact, there are four official languages in Switzerland: German, French, Italian and Romansch. All these groups of people make Swiss culture very interesting. Finally, Switzerland has many cities and interesting places to visit. Cities such as Bern have modern buildings like the Paul Klee Zentrum, yet the traditional alpine refuges in the mountains show that the country's old traditions are still alive. All the people, places and things to see definitely make Switzerland a great place for a holiday.

1. what is the topic of the paragraph?

.....

2. What is the main idea about the topic?

.....

3. What ideas help explain the main idea?

.....

.....

.....



### D. Sentence Fragment:

Decide whether each of the following groups of words is a **sentence** or a **sentence fragment**. If the word group is a sentence, underline the subject once and the verb twice, and write **S** for sentence on the line provided. If the subject *you* is understood, write *you* in parentheses at the end of the item. If the word group is a sentence fragment, write **F** for fragment.

EXAMPLES      S      1. The director is looking for talented, hard-working performers.

  F      2. Kneeling near the edge of the stage.

  S      3. Raise the curtain. (*you*)

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. The audience moved by his dramatic performance.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Mrs. Linares, the director of this classic tragedy.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Near the end of the first act.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Was playing the part of Lady Macbeth.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Walking aimlessly about and rubbing her hands.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. At the final curtain came a loud burst of applause.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. The actors staying in character during five curtain calls.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. The most successful performance of the season.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. What is the director planning next?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. In the spring she will direct the well-known musical *West Side Story*.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. That story based on *Romeo and Juliet*?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Are you interested in musicals?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. Hoping for the role of Bernardo?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. Practice the part now, and memorize the lines in time for the audition.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. Who will play Maria?



## E. Paragraphs

Read each paragraph carefully. There are two sentences that do not belong. Underline the unrelated sentences.

### The New States

Four U.S. states begin with the word *new*. New Hampshire, New Jersey, and New York are in the Northeast, but New Mexico is in the Southwest. Arizona is also in the Southwest. New Hampshire is a small state with just over one million people. New Jersey is also a small state, but its population is almost nine million people. The most **well-known** of the *new* states is New York. With twenty million people, its population is the largest of all the *new* states. Finally, there is New Mexico. It is the largest in size of these four states, but its population is really quite small with a little over two million people. There are no states that begin with the word *old*. Although all these states begin with *new*, they are all very different.

### An Incredible Neighbor

My neighbor Mrs. Wills is an **amazing** person. She is 96 years old. My grandmother lived to be 87. Mrs. Wills lives alone, and she takes care of herself. In the morning, she works in her beautiful garden. She also does all of her own cooking. She does not like to cook rice. She cleans her own house. She even puts her heavy garbage can by the street for trash collection. She pulls it slowly to the **curb**, and she goes up and down the steps to her door without help. I hope to have that much energy and ability when I am 96 years old.



**Read the paragraph and choose the best concluding sentence:**

### Monday

I hate Monday for many reasons. One reason is work. I get up early to go to work on Monday. After a weekend of fun and relaxation, I do not like to do this. Another reason that I do not like Monday is that I have three meetings every Monday. These meetings last a long time, and they are **extremely** boring. Traffic is also a big problem on Monday. There are more cars on the road on Monday. Drivers are in a bad **mood**, and I must be more careful than usual. \_\_\_\_\_

- 
- a. Monday is worse than Tuesday, but it is better than Sunday.
  - b. I do not like meetings on Monday.
  - c. These are just a few reasons why I do not like Monday.

### Buying a Car

Buying a car **requires** careful planning. Do you want a new or a used car? This depends on how much money you can spend. Sometimes a used car needs repairs. What style of car do you want? You can look at many different models to help you decide. Next, do you want extra **features** in your new car? Adding lots of extra features makes a car more expensive. Finally, you have to decide where you will buy your car. \_\_\_\_\_

- 
- a. It is important to think about all of these things when you are buying a car.
  - b. The most important thing is the kind of car that you want to buy.
  - c. Will you buy your new car from a friend or a car dealer?



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