

## COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

## PORTFOLIO PRESENTATION

Ask students to prepare to hand in their portfolios by making an oral presentation to their regular revision group. Each student can briefly describe the pieces she has chosen to include in her portfolio and explain how each piece has contributed to her progress. Revision group members can often remind writers of noticeable overall strengths that they might have overlooked.



Please visit MyCompLab at [www.mycomplab.com](http://www.mycomplab.com) for more on the writing process.

## HIGHLIGHTS

The writing some American high school students do is no more than a paragraph in length, and even older or nontraditional students may have had little writing experience. So learning to think of paragraphs as units in larger pieces of discourse may be a challenge for your students. If they have written longer essays, these probably have been in the familiar “five-paragraph theme” pattern of introduction, three paragraphs of development, and conclusion. ESL students may conceptualize and shape paragraphs differently or may not be used to writing in paragraphs at all. Don’t be surprised, then, if learning to use paragraphs in different ways presents a challenge for your students.

Here we present a strategy of developing paragraphs as mini-essays, each with a general-

## COMPANION WEB SITE

See page IAE-51 for companion Web site content description.

An assignment to assemble a writing portfolio will probably also provide guidelines for what to include, how the portfolio will be evaluated, and how (or whether) it will be weighted for a grade. Be sure you understand the purpose of the portfolio and who will read it. For instance, if your composition teacher will be the only reader and her guidelines urge you to show evidence of progress, you might include a paper that took big risks but never entirely succeeded. In contrast, if a committee of teachers will read your work and the guidelines urge you to demonstrate your competence as a writer, you might include only papers that did succeed.

Unless the guidelines specify otherwise, provide error-free copies of your final drafts, label all your samples with your name, and assemble them all in a folder. Add a cover letter or memo that lists the samples, explains why you’ve included each one, and evaluates your progress as a writer. The self-evaluation involved should be a learning experience for you and will help your teacher assess your development as a writer.

## CHAPTER 4

## Writing and Revising Paragraphs

A **paragraph** is a group of related sentences set off by a beginning indentation or, sometimes, by extra space. For you and your readers, paragraphs provide breathers from long stretches of text and indicate key changes in the development of your thesis. They help to organize and clarify ideas.

In the body of an essay, you may use paragraphs for any of these purposes:

- To introduce and give evidence for a main point supporting your essay’s central idea (its thesis). See pages 27–31 for a discussion of an essay’s thesis.

<http://www.ablongman.com/littlebrown>

Visit the companion Web site for more help and additional exercises on paragraphs.

- Within a group of paragraphs centering on one main point, to develop a key example or other important evidence.
- To shift approach—for instance, from pros to cons, from problem to solution, from questions to answers.
- To mark movement in a sequence, such as from one reason or step to another.

In addition, you will use paragraphs for special purposes:

- To introduce or to conclude an essay. See pages 102 and 106.
- To emphasize an important point or to mark a significant transition between points. See page 108.
- In dialog, to indicate that a new person has begun speaking. See pages 108–09.

The following paragraph illustrates simply how an effective body paragraph works to help both writer and reader. The thesis of the essay in which this paragraph appears is that a Texas chili championship gives undue attention to an unpleasant food.

Some people really like chili, apparently, but nobody can agree how the stuff should be made. C. V. Wood, twice winner at Terlingua, uses flank steak, pork chops, chicken, and green chilis. My friend Hughes Rudd of CBS News, who imported five hundred pounds of chili powder into Russia as a condition of accepting employment as Moscow correspondent, favors coarse-ground beef. Isadore Bleckman, the cameraman I must live with on the road, insists upon one-inch cubes of stew beef and puts garlic in his chili, an Illinois affectation. An Indian of my acquaintance, Mr. Fulton Batisse, who eats chili for breakfast when he can, uses buffalo meat and plays an Indian drum while it's cooking. I ask you.

—Charles Kuralt, *Dateline America*

General statement relating to thesis: announces topic of paragraph

Four specific examples, all providing evidence for general statement

While you are drafting, conscious attention to the requirements of the paragraph may sometimes help pull ideas out of you or help you forge relationships. But don't expect effective paragraphs like Kuralt's to flow from your fingertips while you are grappling with what you want to say. Instead, use the checklist on the next page to guide your revision of paragraphs so that they work to your and your readers' advantage.

**Note** On the Web the paragraphing conventions described here do not always apply. Web readers sometimes skim text instead of reading word for word, and they are accustomed to embedded links that may take them from the paragraph to another page. Writing

ization (topic sentence) supported by limitations and evidence. Practicing these essays-in-miniature can help students develop longer essays as they gain more skill. Of course, not all paragraphs in professional writing conform in length, structure, or purpose to the models this chapter provides.

The chapter reviews strategies for improving paragraph unity, achieving paragraph coherence, developing paragraph content, and writing special-purpose paragraphs. It concludes by showing how paragraphs can be linked within the larger context of the essay. Helping students learn and practice the standard paragraphing strategies elaborated in this chapter can be a good way to help them improve their writing. The annotations provided for sample paragraphs help students see the strategies explained in the chapter "in practice."

#### A WRITER'S PERSPECTIVE

*The purpose of paragraphing is to give the reader a rest. The writer is saying [. . .]: "Have you got that? If so, I'll go on."*

—H. W. FOWLER

## TRANSPARENCY MASTER 4.1

## COMPUTER ACTIVITY

Have students print out Web pages and bring them into class. Individually or as a class, they can evaluate the paragraphs for unity, coherence, and development. Students can make suggestions for how to revise each page's paragraphs and for where to position links to other pages.

## RESOURCES AND IDEAS

Rhetorical scholarship is split on a number of the "givens" of paragraphing: whether paragraphs are self-contained units or building blocks of larger discourses, whether topic sentences are needed, and so on. These references offer you a fairly mainstream view of research into paragraphing.

Knoblauch, C. H. "The Rhetoric of the Paragraph." *Journal of Advanced Composition* 2 (1981): 53–61.

Stern, Arthur A. "When Is a Paragraph?" *College Composition and Communication* 27 (1976): 253–57. Stern argues for the rhetorical flexibility of paragraphs as development devices.

## HIGHLIGHTS

Section 4a of this chapter addresses the need for a paragraph to focus on a topic and to make the focus clear to the reader through an explicit statement in the form of a topic sentence. It introduces the basic form of the expository paragraph—topic sentence, illustrations, and details—and indicates how this pattern can be varied to suit a writer's purpose and to fit within the context created by the surrounding paragraphs.

The concept of a clearly stated and variously placed topic sentence that controls the shape of a paragraph is an oversimplification. But it ap-

## Checklist for revising paragraphs

- **Is the paragraph unified?** Does it adhere to one general idea that is either stated in a topic sentence or otherwise apparent? (See below.)
- **Is the paragraph coherent?** Do the sentences follow a clear sequence? Are the sentences linked as needed by parallelism, repetition or restatement, pronouns, consistency, and transitional expressions? (See p. 77.)
- **Is the paragraph developed?** Is the general idea of the paragraph well supported with specific evidence such as details, facts, examples, and reasons? (See p. 90.)

for the Web, you may want to write shorter paragraphs than you would in printed documents, and save embedded links for the ends of paragraphs lest readers miss important information. (For more on composing for the Web, see pp. 832–38.)



Not all cultures share the paragraphing conventions of American academic writing. The conventions are not universal even among users of standard American English: for instance, US newspaper writers compose very short paragraphs that will break up text in narrow columns. In some other languages, writing moves differently from English—not from left to right, but from right to left or down rows from top to bottom. Even in languages that move as English does, writers may not use paragraphs at all. Or they may use paragraphs but not state the central ideas or provide transitional expressions to show readers how sentences relate. If your native language is not English and you have difficulty with paragraphs, don't worry about paragraphing during drafting. Instead, during a separate step of revision, divide your text into parts that develop your main points. Mark those parts with indentions.

## 4a Maintaining paragraph unity

Readers generally expect a paragraph to explore a single idea. They will be alert for that idea and will patiently follow its development. In other words, they will seek and appreciate paragraph unity: clear identification and clear elaboration of one idea and of that idea only.

In an essay the thesis statement often asserts the main idea as a commitment to readers (see p. 27). In a paragraph a **topic sentence** often alerts readers to the essence of the paragraph by asserting the central idea and expressing the writer's attitude toward it. In a brief essay each body paragraph will likely treat one main point support-

ing the essay's thesis statement; the topic sentences simply elaborate on parts of the thesis. In longer essays paragraphs tend to work in groups, each group treating one main point. Then the topic sentences will tie into that main point, and all the points together will support the thesis.

### 1 Focusing on the central idea

Like the thesis sentence, the topic sentence is a commitment to readers, and the rest of the paragraph delivers on that commitment. Look again at Kuralt's paragraph on chili on page 71: the opening statement conveys the author's promise that he will describe various ways to make chili, and the following sentences keep the promise. But what if Kuralt had written this paragraph instead?

Some people really like chili, apparently, but nobody can agree how the stuff should be made. C. V. Wood, twice winner at Terlingua, uses flank steak, pork chops, chicken, and green chilis. My friend Hughes Rudd, who imported five hundred pounds of chili powder into Russia as a condition of accepting employment as Moscow correspondent, favors coarse-ground beef. He had some trouble finding the beef in Moscow, though. He sometimes had to scour all the markets and wait in long lines. For any American used to overstocked supermarkets and department stores, Russia can be quite a shock.

Topic sentence:  
general statement

Two examples supporting  
statement

Digression

By wandering off from chili ingredients to consumer deprivation in Russia, the paragraph fails to deliver on the commitment of its topic sentence.

You should expect digressions while you are drafting: if you allow yourself to explore ideas, as you should, then of course every paragraph will not be tightly woven, perfectly unified. But spare your readers the challenge and frustration of repeatedly shifting focus to follow your rough explorations: revise each paragraph so that it develops a single idea.

While revising your paragraphs for unity, you may want to highlight the central idea of each paragraph to be sure it's stated and then focus on it. On paper you can bracket or circle the idea. On a computer you can format the idea in color or highlight it with a color background. Just be sure to remove the color or highlighting before printing the final draft.

### 2 Placing the topic sentence

The topic sentence of a paragraph and its supporting details may be arranged variously, depending on how you want to direct

pears to help students a great deal to think of the paragraph as a unit dominated and controlled by an expressly stated generalization. Students can see the topic sentence as a commitment they make to the reader, with the rest of the paragraph following through on the commitment. Seeing the obvious parallel between the paragraph's topic sentence and the essay's thesis statement is also helpful to many students. Finally, stating a central point in a single sentence and marshaling support for it enables students to see more clearly what is required for unity.

The exercises for this section ask students to identify the central idea in unified paragraphs, to revise paragraphs, to build a paragraph by combining and revising kernel sentences, and to write their own paragraphs. These exercises can be easily adapted to small-group work: in coming to understand how others view paragraphs, students may more readily understand the influence of paragraph structure and unity on readers.

## COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

### USING STUDENT WRITING

Ask students to choose key paragraphs from their work-in-progress and read them aloud to their groups. The listeners should take notes on the effectiveness of the various unity strategies they hear in each paragraph. If students have trouble responding without seeing a written text, you can have them work in pairs to critique and revise the unity of each other's paragraphs.

### COLORING PARAGRAPHS

Bring in copies of sample paragraphs and felt-tipped pens or pencils in two colors. Split the class into groups and ask each group to underline topic sentences in one color and examples and details in another color. Students should then be able to discover the arrangement of each paragraph, the placement of the topic sentence, and the way the parts fit together to form a unified whole. Students working in a computer classroom can use the Bold feature and designated fonts instead of pens to identify each of these elements.

### USING STUDENT WRITING

Ask students to bring in paragraphs from writings in other classes or other disciplines to use in the "coloring paragraphs" activity. They will find it instructive to note how different writers decide to place, emphasize, or omit topic sentences. They can also perform this exercise on the paragraphs in their drafts.

### SEEING PARAGRAPHS

Visually, students may find it easier to understand topic sentence placement and paragraph arrangement by using these diagrams as guides:

- Topic sentence at the beginning:     △
- Topic sentence at the  
beginning and in the middle:     △
- Topic sentence at the end:     ▽
- Topic sentence at the  
beginning and the end:     ◇

### TOPIC SENTENCE OMISSION

Some research suggests that the necessity of a topic sentence is determined by the author's relation

readers' attention and how complex your central idea is. In the most common arrangements, the topic sentence comes at the beginning of the paragraph, comes at the end, or is not stated at all but is nonetheless apparent. The advantages of each approach are described on these two pages. If you write on a computer, you can easily experiment with the position of the topic sentence by moving the sentence around (or deleting it) to see the effect. (The sentence will probably take some editing to work smoothly into various positions.)

#### ■ Topic sentence at the beginning

When the topic sentence appears first in a paragraph, it can help you select the details that follow. For readers, the topic-first model establishes an initial context in which all the supporting details can be understood. Reading Kuralt's paragraph on page 71, we easily relate each detail or example back to the point made in the first sentence.

The topic-first model is common not only in expository paragraphs, such as Kuralt's, but also in argument paragraphs, such as the one following:

It is a misunderstanding of the American retail store to think we go there necessarily to buy. Some of us shop. There's a difference. Shopping has many purposes, the least interesting of which is to acquire new articles. We shop to cheer ourselves up. We shop to practice decision-making. We shop to be useful and productive members of our class and society. We shop to remind ourselves how much is available to us. We shop to remind ourselves how much is to be striven for. We shop to assert our superiority to the material objects that spread themselves before us.

—Phyllis Rose, "Shopping and Other Spiritual Adventures"

Topic sentence: statement of misconception

Correction of misconception

#### ■ Topic sentence at the end

In some paragraphs the central idea may be stated at the end, after supporting sentences have made a case for the general statement. Since this model leads the reader to a conclusion by presenting all the evidence first, it can prove effective in argument. And because the point of the paragraph is withheld until the end, this model can be dramatic in exposition, too, as illustrated by the following example from an essay about William Tecumseh Sherman, a Union general during the US Civil War:

Sherman is considered by some to be the inventor of "total war": the first general in human history to carry the logic of war to its ultimate extreme, the first to scorch the earth, the first to consciously demoralize the hostile civilian population in order to subdue its army, the first to wreck an economy in order to starve its soldiers. He has been called our first "merchant of terror" and seen as the spiritual father of our Vietnam War concepts of "search and destroy," "pacification," "strategic hamlets," and "free-fire zones." As such, he remains a cardboard figure of our history: a monstrous arch-villain to unreconstructed Southerners, and an embarrassment to Northerners.

Information supporting and building to topic sentence

Topic sentence

—Adapted from James Reston, Jr.,  
"You Cannot Refine It"

Expressing the central idea at the end of the paragraph does not eliminate the need to unify the paragraph. The idea in the topic sentence must still govern the selection of all the preceding details.

■ **Central idea not stated**

Occasionally, a paragraph's central idea will be stated in the previous paragraph or will be so obvious that it need not be stated at all. The following is from an essay on the actor Humphrey Bogart:

Usually he wore the trench coat unbuttoned, just tied with the belt, and a slouch hat, rarely tilted. Sometimes it was a captain's cap and a yachting jacket. Almost always his trousers were held up by a cowboy belt. You know the kind: one an Easterner waiting for a plane out of Phoenix buys just as a joke and then takes a liking to. Occasionally, he'd hitch up his slacks with it, and he often jabbed his thumbs behind it, his hands ready for a fight or a dame.

Details adding up to the unstated idea that Bogart's character could be seen in his clothing

—Peter Bogdanovich, "Bogie in Excelsis"

Paragraphs in descriptive writing (like the one above) and in narrative writing (relating a sequence of events) often lack stated topic sentences. But a paragraph without a topic sentence still should have a central idea, and its details should develop that idea.

**EXERCISE 4.1 Finding the central idea**

What is the central idea of each of the following paragraphs? In what sentence or sentences is it expressed? (You can do this exercise online at [ablongman.com/littlebrown/](http://ablongman.com/littlebrown/).)

to his or her readers; a writer writing to less expert or more expert readers is more likely to use a topic sentence than one writing for peers, for instance. Ask students to work in groups to collect examples of topic sentence use and omission, then analyze the different author-reader relationships implied in each example. Encourage students to collect samples from their own journals and papers, but also from various kinds of published writing, to get the best results from this survey.

**COMPUTER ACTIVITY**

**REORGANIZING PARAGRAPHS**

For students working on computers, the reorganization of paragraphs is particularly easy. Encourage students to select one or two paragraphs from their drafts and reorganize them with the controlling idea at the end, as Reston does. Then ask them to judge whether they gain any rhetorical advantage from such a rearrangement. Leonard A. Podis suggests some other exercises of this nature in "Teaching Arrangement: Defining a More Practical Approach," *College Composition and Communication* 31 (1980): 197–204, and JoAnne M. Podis and Leonard A. Podis present more exercises in "Identifying and Teaching Rhetorical Plans for Arrangement," *College Composition and Communication* 41 (1990): 430–42.

**COLLABORATIVE LEARNING**

Ask students to work in groups to complete Exercise 4.1. Ask each group to discuss what effect the particular placement of each topic sentence has, and then report back to the class on the sentences that best express the central idea of each paragraph.

## ANSWERS: EXERCISE 4.1

1. The central idea is sentence 8: The black bourgeoisie feel a sense of shame about their own identity.
2. The central idea is sentence 1: Scientists know something about the song of the humpback whale.

## COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

Have students work in groups to complete Exercise 4.2. Ask groups to consider how they might revise and expand the deleted material to include it in a follow-up paragraph.

## ANSWERS: EXERCISE 4.2

The topic sentence is sentence 1. Unrelated are sentences 4 and 7.

## ANSWERS: EXERCISE 4.3

Individual response.

1. Today many black Americans enjoy a measure of economic security beyond any we have known in the history of black America. But if they remain in a nasty blue funk, it's because their very existence seems an affront to the swelling ranks of the poor. Nor have black intellectuals ever quite made peace with the concept of the black bourgeoisie, a group that is typically seen as devoid of cultural authenticity, doomed to mimicry and pallid assimilation. I once gave a talk before an audience of black academics and educators, in the course of which I referred to black middle-class culture. Afterward, one of the academics in the audience, deeply affronted, had a question for me. "Professor Gates," he asked rhetorically, his voice dripping with sarcasm, "what is black middle-class culture?" I suggested that if he really wanted to know, he need only look around the room. But perhaps I should just have handed him a mirror: for just as nothing is more American than anti-Americanism, nothing is more characteristic of the black bourgeoisie than the sense of shame and denial that the identity inspires.

—Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "Two Nations . . . Both Black"

2. Though they do not know why the humpback whale sings, scientists do know something about the song itself. They have measured the length of a whale's song: from a few minutes to over half an hour. They have recorded and studied the variety and complex arrangements of low moans, high squeaks, and sliding squeals that make up the song. And they have learned that each whale sings in its own unique pattern.

—Janet Lieber (student), "Whales' Songs"

## EXERCISE 4.2 Revising a paragraph for unity

The following paragraph contains ideas or details that do not support its central idea. Identify the topic sentence in the paragraph and delete the unrelated material. (You can do this exercise online at [ablongman.com/littlebrown](http://ablongman.com/littlebrown).)

In the southern part of the state, some people still live much as they did a century ago. They use coal- or wood-burning stoves for heating and cooking. Their homes do not have electricity or indoor bathrooms or running water. The towns they live in don't receive adequate funding from the state and federal governments, so the schools are poor and in bad shape. Beside most homes there is a garden where fresh vegetables are gathered for canning. Small pastures nearby support livestock, including cattle, pigs, horses, and chickens. Most of the people have cars or trucks, but the vehicles are old and beat-up from traveling on unpaved roads.

## EXERCISE 4.3 Considering your past work: Paragraph unity

For a continuing exercise in this chapter, choose a paper you've written in the past year. Examine the body paragraphs for unity. Do they have clear topic sentences? If not, are the paragraphs' central ideas still clear? Are the paragraphs unified around their central ideas? Should any details be deleted for unity? Should other, more relevant details be added in their stead?

**EXERCISE 4.4 Writing a unified paragraph**

Develop the following topic sentence into a unified paragraph by using the relevant information in the supporting statements. Delete each statement that does not relate directly to the topic, and then rewrite and combine sentences as appropriate. Place the topic sentence in the position that seems most effective to you. (You can do this exercise online at [ablongman.com/littlebrown](http://ablongman.com/littlebrown).)

**Topic sentence**

Mozart's accomplishments in music seem remarkable even today.

**Supporting information**

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was born in 1756 in Salzburg, Austria.

He began composing music at the age of five.

He lived most of his life in Salzburg and Vienna.

His first concert tour of Europe was at the age of six.

On his first tour he played harpsichord, organ, and violin.

He published numerous compositions before reaching adolescence.

He married in 1782.

Mozart and his wife were both poor managers of money.

They were plagued by debts.

Mozart composed over six hundred musical compositions.

His most notable works are his operas, symphonies, quartets, and piano concertos.

He died at the age of thirty-five.

**EXERCISE 4.5 Turning topic sentences into unified paragraphs**

Develop three of the following topic sentences into detailed and unified paragraphs. (You can do this exercise online at [ablongman.com/littlebrown](http://ablongman.com/littlebrown).)

1. Men and women are different in at least one important respect.
2. The best Web search engine is [name].
3. Fans of \_\_\_\_\_ music [country, classical, rock, rap, jazz, or another kind] come in [number] varieties.
4. Professional sports have [or have not] been helped by extending the regular season with championship play-offs.
5. Working for good grades can interfere with learning.

**4b Achieving paragraph coherence**

A paragraph is unified if it holds together—if all its details and examples support the central idea. A paragraph is **coherent** if readers can see *how* the paragraph holds together—how the sentences relate to each other—without having to stop and reread.

Incoherence gives readers the feeling of being yanked around, as the following example shows.

**ANSWERS: EXERCISE 4.4**

Delete statements not pertaining to Mozart's accomplishments: when he was born, where he lived, when he married, his debts. Possible paragraph:

Mozart's accomplishments in music seem remarkable even today. At the age of six he made his first concert tour of Europe, playing harpsichord, organ, and violin. He had begun composing music at the age of five, and by adolescence he had published numerous musical compositions. When he died at thirty-five, his work included over six hundred compositions, most notably operas, symphonies, quartets, and piano concertos.

**COMPUTER ACTIVITY****REARRANGING PARAGRAPHS**

Exercises 4.4 and 4.5 work well in a computer classroom because students have the flexibility to rearrange sentences multiple times without retyping them. Students can print out the results in order to compare their differing responses in groups. Students might also e-mail their responses to a partner in the class, or you could post several volunteer responses on the class Web site for the whole class to read and discuss.

**ANSWERS: EXERCISE 4.5**

Individual response.

**RESOURCES AND IDEAS**

Becker, A. L. "A Tagmemic Approach to Paragraph Analysis." *College Composition and Communication* 16 (1965): 237–42. Becker observes that expository paragraphs generally follow a variation of one of two patterns: topic-restriction-illustration (TRI) or problem-solution (PS).

Wiener, Harvey S. "The Single Narrative Paragraph and College Remediation." *College English* 33 (1972): 660–69. Wiener suggests using paragraph-length narrative themes to help students develop both paragraph and essay skills.

**HIGHLIGHTS**

This section of the chapter deals with paragraph coherence, addressing it from the reader's



## TRANSPARENCY MASTER 4.2

perspective as well as the writer's. Students are shown how the devices they use to achieve paragraph coherence help readers to follow the arguments or information being presented.

The discussion emphasizes the need to maintain a clear organizational pattern as one of the principal ways to ensure coherence, and it presents examples of two basic ways of organizing paragraphs: organizing by space or time and organizing for emphasis. Students who have difficulty organizing their own writing can usually see the pattern of organization in a well-made example from another writer's work.

Following the discussion of patterns, the section takes up and illustrates other methods of achieving coherence: parallelism; repetition of words; careful use of pronouns; consistency in person, tense, and number; and transitional expressions. Analysis of paragraphs can help students understand these explicit and implicit means by which individual sentences are held together so that the reader effortlessly follows the flow of ideas and information. As in the preceding section, the exercises move from analysis to revision to production and are useful in small-group activities as well as in individual work.

## Ways to achieve paragraph coherence

- Organize effectively (p. 79).
- Repeat or restate key words and word groups (p. 83).
- Use parallel structures (p. 83).
- Use pronouns (p. 84).
- Be consistent in nouns, pronouns, and verbs (p. 84).
- Use transitional expressions (p. 85).

The ancient Egyptians were masters of preserving dead people's bodies by making mummies of them. Mummies several thousand years old have been discovered nearly intact. The skin, hair, teeth, finger- and toenails, and facial features of the mummies were evident. One can diagnose the diseases they suffered in life, such as smallpox, arthritis, and nutritional deficiencies. The process was remarkably effective. Sometimes apparent were the fatal afflictions of the dead people: a middle-aged king died from a blow on the head, and polio killed a child king. Mummification consisted of removing the internal organs, applying natural preservatives inside and out, and then wrapping the body in layers of bandages.

Topic sentence

Sentences related to topic sentence but disconnected from each other

The paragraph as it was actually written appears below. It is much clearer because the writer arranged information differently and also built links into his sentences so that they would flow smoothly:

- After stating the central idea in a topic sentence, the writer moves to two more specific explanations and illustrates the second with four sentences of examples.
- **Circled** words repeat or restate key terms or concepts.
- **Boxed** words link sentences and clarify relationships.
- **Underlined** phrases are in parallel grammatical form to reflect their parallel content.

The ancient Egyptians were masters of preserving dead people's bodies by making mummies of them. Basically, mummification consisted of removing the internal organs, applying natural preservatives inside and out, and then wrapping the body in layers of bandages. And the process was remarkably effective.

Topic sentence

Explanation 1: What mummification is

Indeed, mummies several thousand years old have been discovered nearly intact. Their skin, hair, teeth, finger- and toenails, and facial features are still evident. Their diseases in life, such as smallpox, arthritis, and nutritional deficiencies, are still diagnosable. Even their fatal afflictions are still apparent: a middle-aged king died from a blow on the head; a child king died from polio.

Explanation 2: Why the Egyptians were masters

Specific examples of explanation 2

—Mitchell Rosenbaum (student),  
“Lost Arts of the Egyptians”

Though some of the connections in this paragraph were added in revision, the writer attended to them while drafting as well. Not only superficial coherence but also an underlying clarity of relationships can be achieved by tying each sentence to the one before—generalizing from it, clarifying it, qualifying it, adding to it, illustrating it. Each sentence in a paragraph creates an expectation of some sort in the mind of the reader, a question such as “How was a mummy made?” or “How intact are the mummies?” or “What’s another example?” When you recognize these expectations and try to fulfill them, readers are likely to understand relationships without struggle.

### 1 Organizing the paragraph

The paragraphs on mummies illustrate an essential element of coherence: information must be arranged in an order that readers can follow easily and that corresponds to their expectations. The common organizations for paragraphs correspond to those for entire essays: by space, by time, and for emphasis. (In addition, the patterns of development also suggest certain arrangements. See pp. 91–100.)

**Note** On a computer you can experiment with different paragraph organizations and emphases. Copy a paragraph, paste the copy into your document, and then try moving sentences around. To evaluate the versions, you’ll need to edit each one so that sentences flow smoothly, attending to repetition, parallelism, transitions, and the other techniques discussed in this section.

#### ■ Organizing by space or time

A paragraph organized **spatially** focuses readers’ attention on one point and scans a person, object, or scene from that point. The movement usually parallels the way people actually look at things, from top to bottom, from side to side, from near to far. Virginia Woolf follows the last pattern in the following paragraph:

### PICTURING THE PARAGRAPH

A good metaphor to use with students is that of cinematography and film. Remind them how in movies the camera can give wide shots, pan in for close-ups, or sweep across a scene for effect. A writer chooses similar “shots” (i.e., positions from which to view the material) in order to organize paragraphs.

### PARAGRAPH PATTERNS I

Give students a topic sentence and a set of assertions, facts, and details in undeveloped form. Tell them to use the material to write a coherent paragraph, following one of the patterns described in the handbook: spatial, chronological, general-to-specific, specific-to-general, problem-solution, climactic, most familiar to least familiar, or simplest to most complex. Students can manipulate the material however they wish to achieve an effect that is appropriate to the pattern. You may want to ask for several paragraphs, each using the same content but a different pattern.

## PARAGRAPH PATTERNS II

Write a paragraph following one of the basic organizational schemes discussed in 4b-1. Leave the subject and content of the paragraph up to the individual student. If they wish, students may make up information, as long as they keep it plausible. Students can compare results in group, then work together to revise one of those responses into a paragraph to be “published” on the class computer network or printed out and distributed.

## EXTRA EXAMPLES

The following examples illustrate the specific-to-general pattern in a sentence and may be extended to short sample paragraphs:

- (specific) + good study habits
- (specific) + consistent effort
- (specific) + curiosity
- (general) = good grades

Good study habits, consistent effort, and intellectual curiosity will result in good grades.

- (specific) + seeds
- (specific) + soil
- (specific) + sunlight
- (specific) + water
- (general) = good vegetable crop

A combination of fresh seeds, well-balanced soil, and adequate sunlight and water results in a good vegetable crop.

## Spatial organization

The sun struck straight upon the house, making the white walls glare between the dark windows. Their panes, woven thickly with green branches, held circles of impenetrable darkness. Sharp-edged wedges of light lay upon the window-sill and showed inside the room plates with blue rings, cups with curved handles, the bulge of a great bowl, the criss-cross pattern in the rug, and the formidable corners and lines of cabinets and bookcases. Behind their conglomeration hung a zone of shadow in which might be a further shape to be disencumbered of shadow or still denser depths of darkness.

—Virginia Woolf, *The Waves*

Description moving from outside (closer) to inside (farther)

Unstated central idea: Sunlight barely penetrated the house's secrets.

Another familiar way of organizing the elements of a paragraph is **chronologically**—that is, in order of their occurrence in time. In a chronological paragraph, as in experience, the earliest events come first, followed by more recent ones.

## Chronological organization

Nor can a tree live without soil. A hurricane-born mangrove island may bring its own soil to the sea. But other mangrove trees make their own soil—and their own islands—from scratch. These are the ones which interest me. The seeds germinate in the fruit on the tree. The germinated embryo can drop anywhere—say, onto a dab of floating muck. The heavy root end sinks; a leafy plumule unfurls. The tiny seedling, afloat, is on its way. Soon aerial roots shooting out in all directions trap debris. The sapling's networks twine, the interstices narrow, and water calms in the lee. Bacteria thrive on organic broth; amphipods swarm. These creatures grow and die at the tree's wet feet. The soil thickens, accumulating rainwater, leaf rot, seashells, and guano; the island spreads.

—Annie Dillard, “Sojourner”

Topic sentence

Details in order of their occurrence

### ■ Organizing for emphasis

Some organizational schemes are imposed on paragraphs to achieve a certain emphasis. The most common is the **general-to-specific** scheme, in which the topic sentence often comes first and then the following sentences become increasingly specific. The paragraph on mummies (pp. 78–79) illustrates this organization: each sentence is either more specific than the one before it or at the same level of generality. Here is another illustration:

## General-to-specific organization

Perhaps the simplest fact about sleep is that individual needs for it vary widely. Most adults sleep between seven and nine hours, but occasionally people turn up who need twelve hours or so, while some rare types can get by on three or four. Rarest of all are those legendary types who require almost no sleep at all; respected researchers have recently studied three such people. One of them—a healthy, happy woman in her seventies—sleeps about an hour every two or three days. The other two are men in early middle age, who get by on a few minutes a night. One of them complains about the daily fifteen minutes or so he's forced to “waste” in sleeping.

—Lawrence A. Mayer,  
“The Confounding Enemy of Sleep”

Topic sentence

Supporting examples,  
increasingly specific

In the less common **specific-to-general** organization, the elements of the paragraph build to a general conclusion:

## Specific-to-general organization

It's disconcerting that so many college women, when asked how their children will be cared for if they themselves work, refer with vague confidence to “the day care center” as though there were some great amorphous kiddie watcher out there that the state provides. But such places, adequately funded, well run, and available to all, are still scarce in this country, particularly for middle-class women. And figures show that when she takes time off for family-connected reasons (births, child care), a woman's chances for career advancement plummet. In a job market that's steadily tightening and getting more competitive, these obstacles bode the kind of danger ahead that can shatter not only professions, but egos. A hard reality is that there's not much more support for our daughters who have family-plus-career goals than there was for us; there's simply a great deal more self and societal pressure.

—Judith Wax,  
*Starting in the Middle*

Common belief

Actual situation

General conclusion:  
topic sentence

As its name implies, the **problem-solution** arrangement introduces a problem and then proposes or explains a solution. The next paragraph explains how to gain from Internet newsgroups despite their limitations:

## PARAGRAPH SCRAMBLES

These activities are suitable for students working individually; when assigned to small groups, however, the activities work even better by encouraging considerable discussion and discovery.

1. Take a good paragraph, by either a student or a professional, and rearrange the sentences. Then ask students to unscramble the sentences and make a clear, coherent paragraph. This exercise will make students aware of the flow of a coherent paragraph and will alert them to the number of examples and details found in a well-developed paragraph.

2. Choose a paragraph that lacks coherence and rearrange the sentences. Tell students to unscramble the sentences to form a coherent paragraph. Indicate that students are free to add any transitions, sentences, illustrations, or details they feel are necessary to make the paragraph both coherent and well developed. Students will quickly spot any coherence problems in the original paragraph, and unless the topic of the paragraph is quite unusual, they will be able to add any necessary content.

## DRAMATIC EXAMPLES

Climactic order is a form of structuring that moves from least to most important. To help explain this strategy you may wish to draw examples from drama, particularly from the structure of tragedy. Othello provides an obvious example of structuring that moves from least dramatic/tension-filled to most dramatic/tension-filled.

Least dramatic—Othello marries Desdemona

More dramatic—Othello suspects Desdemona of infidelity

More dramatic—Desdemona defends her chastity and argues for her life

Most dramatic (climax)—Othello kills Desdemona and then realizes that she has been faithful to him

## Problem-solution organization

Even when you do find a newsgroup with apparently useful material, you have no assurance of a correspondent's authority because of e-mail's inherent anonymity. Many people don't cite their credentials. Besides, anyone can pose as an expert. The best information you can get initially is apt to be a reference to something of which you were not aware but can then investigate for yourself. Internet newsgroups can be valuable for that alone. I have been directed to software-problem solutions, owners of out-of-print books, and important people who know nothing about communicating through electronic communities. It is best to start with the assumption that you are conversing with peers, people who know things that you don't, while you probably know things that they don't. Gradually, by trading information, you develop some virtual relationships and can assess the relative validity of your sources. Meanwhile, you will probably have learned a few things along the way.

—Adapted from John A. Butler,  
*Cybersearch*

Topic sentence and clarification: statement of the problem

Solution to the problem

When your details vary in significance, you can arrange them in a **climactic order**, from least to most important or dramatic:

## Climactic organization

Nature has put many strange tongues into the heads of her creatures. There is the frog's tongue, rooted at the front of the mouth so it can be protruded an extra distance for nabbing prey. There is the gecko lizard's tongue, so long and agile that the lizard uses it to wash its eyes. But the ultimate lingual whopper has been achieved in the anteater. The anteater's head, long as it is, is not long enough to contain the tremendous tongue which licks deep into ant-hills. Its tongue is not rooted in the mouth or throat: it is fastened to the breastbone.

—Alan Devoe, "Nature's Utmost"

Topic sentence

Least dramatic example

Most dramatic example

In other organizations, you can arrange details according to how you think readers are likely to understand them. In discussing the virtues of public television, for instance, you might proceed from **most familiar to least familiar**, from a well-known program your readers have probably seen to less well-known programs they may not have seen. Or in defending the right of government em-

ployees to strike, you might arrange your reasons from **simplest to most complex**, from the employees' need to be able to redress grievances to more subtle consequences for relations between employers and employees.

## 2 Repeating or restating key words

Repeating or restating the important words in a paragraph binds the sentences together and keeps the paragraph's topic uppermost in readers' minds. In the next example, notice how the circled words relate the sentences and stress the important ideas of the paragraph:

Having listened to both **Chinese** and **English**, I also tend to be suspicious of any **comparisons** between the two **languages**. Typically, one **language**—that of the person doing the **comparing**—is often used as the standard, the benchmark for a logical form of expression. And so the **language** being **compared** is always in danger of being judged deficient or superfluous, simplistic or unnecessarily complex, melodious or cacophonous. **English** speakers point out that **Chinese** is **extremely difficult** because it relies on variations in tone barely discernible to the human ear. By the same token, **Chinese** speakers tell me **English** is **extremely difficult** because it is inconsistent, a language of too many broken rules, of Mickey Mice and Donald Ducks.

—Amy Tan, “The Language of Discretion”

This paragraph links sentences through their structure, too, because the subject of each one picks up on key words used earlier:

*Sentence 1:* Having listened to both **Chinese** and **English**, I tend to be suspicious of any **comparisons** between the two **languages**.

*Sentence 2:* Typically, one **language** . . .

*Sentence 3:* And so the **language** . . .

*Sentence 4:* **English speakers** . . .

*Sentence 5:* **Chinese speakers** . . .

In many incoherent paragraphs, such as the one on mummification on page 78, each sentence subject introduces a topic new to the paragraph so that readers have trouble following the thread. (See pp. 386–87 for more on linking sentences through their subjects.)

## 3 Using parallel structures

Another way to achieve coherence is through **parallelism**—the use of similar grammatical structures for similar elements of meaning

## LISTENING TO THE MUSIC

To recognize the power of repetition, students need only turn to rock music. Have them begin by listing the titles of popular songs whose lyrics they know by heart. Then ask them to identify words and phrases that they remember best from the songs or that they learned first. Chances are that they will identify the chorus because it is the element of the song most often repeated. You might point out that choruses help unify songs. Students may also note that the considerable amount of repetition in many songs makes them easy to remember and helps create a unified effect. This exercise may also be used to point out the difference between effective use of repetition and overuse.

## RESOURCES AND IDEAS

These two sources draw on current linguistic and rhetorical theory to provide frameworks for describing patterns of coherence and development in paragraphs:

Coe, Richard M. *Toward a Grammar of Passages*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1988.

Markels, Robin Bell. *A New Perspective on Coherence in Expository Paragraphs*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1984.

Other good readings on paragraph coherence include the following:

Brostoff, Anita. “Coherence: ‘Next to’ Is Not ‘Connected to.’” *College Composition and Communication* 32 (1981): 278–94. Brostoff discusses the causes of lack of coherence in writing and describes a program for helping students achieve coherence.

Christensen, Francis. “A Generative Rhetoric of the Paragraph.” In *Notes Toward a New Rhetoric: Nine Essays for Teachers*, 2nd ed. Ed. Francis Christensen and Bonniejean Christensen. New York: Harper & Row, 1978. 74–103. Christensen views paragraphs as a series of statements on differing levels of generality, often moving from more general toward the specific.

Sloan, Gary. "The Frequency of Transitional Markers in Discursive Prose." *College English* 46 (1984): 158–79. Sloan shows how infrequently explicit transition markers are used by either professional or student writers.

Smith, Rochelle. "Paragraphing for Coherence: Writing as Implied Dialogue." *College English* 46 (1984): 8–21. Smith uses reader-response theory and the notion of author-reader dialogue to improve paragraph cohesion.

Witte, Stephen, and Lester Faigley. "Coherence, Cohesion, and Writing Quality." *College Composition and Communication* 32 (1981): 189–204. Students need to learn the features of coherence that extend across sentence boundaries; the article stresses ways to make them aware of coherence strategies.

Winterowd, W. Ross. "The Grammar of Coherence." *College English* 31 (1971): 828–35. This article describes the kinds of relations that link sentence to sentence and paragraph to paragraph.

#### HE'S ON SECOND

To illustrate the importance of clear pronoun reference in paragraphs, try to locate a recording or transcript of the famous Abbott and Costello skit, "Who's on First." While humorous, this skit demonstrates the frustration a reader can feel when encountering a series of pronouns with unclear antecedents. Keep in mind that students' use of unclear pronoun antecedents may signal a larger difficulty in defining or expanding on their subject matter.

within a sentence or among sentences. (See Chapter 25 for a detailed discussion of parallelism.) Parallel structures help tie together the last three sentences in the paragraph on mummies (p. 79). In the following paragraph, underlining highlights the parallel structures linking sentences. Aphra Behn (lived 1640–89) was the first Englishwoman to write professionally.

In addition to her busy career as a writer, Aphra Behn also found time to briefly marry and spend a little while in debtor's prison. She found time to take up a career as a spy for the English in their war against the Dutch. She made the long and difficult voyage to Suriname [in South America] and became involved in a slave rebellion there. She plunged into political debate at Will's Coffee House and defended her position from the stage of the Drury Lane Theater. She actively argued for women's rights to be educated and to marry whom they pleased, or not at all. She defied the seventeenth-century dictum that ladies must be "modest" and wrote freely about sex.

—Angeline Goreau, "Aphra Behn"

**Note** Though planned repetition can be effective, careless or excessive repetition weakens prose (see pp. 532–33).

#### 4 Using pronouns

Pronouns such as *she*, *he*, *it*, *they*, and *who* refer to and function as nouns (see p. 237). Thus pronouns naturally help relate sentences to one another. In the following paragraph the pronouns and the nouns they refer to are circled:

After dark, on the warrenlike streets of Brooklyn where I live, I often see women who fear the worst from me. They seem to have set their faces on neutral, and with their purse straps strung across their chests bandolier-style, they forge ahead as though bracing themselves against being tackled. I understand, of course, that the danger they perceive is not a hallucination. Women are particularly vulnerable to street violence, and young black males are drastically overrepresented among the perpetrators of that violence. Yet these truths are no solace against the kind of alienation that comes of being ever the suspect, a fearsome entity with whom pedestrians avoid making eye contact.

—Brent Staples, "Black Men and Public Space"

#### 5 Being consistent

Being consistent is the most subtle way to achieve paragraph coherence because readers are aware of consistency only when it is absent. Consistency (or the lack of it) occurs primarily in the tense of verbs and in the number and person of nouns and pronouns (see

Chapter 20). Although some shifts will be necessary to reflect your meaning, inappropriate shifts, as in the following passages, will interfere with a reader's ability to follow the development of ideas:

#### Shifts in tense

In the Hopi religion, water is the driving force. Since the Hopi lived in the Arizona desert, they needed water urgently for drinking, cooking, and irrigating crops. Their complex beliefs are focused in part on gaining the assistance of supernatural forces in obtaining water. Many of the Hopi kachinas, or spirit essences, were directly concerned with clouds, rain, and snow.

#### Shifts in number

Kachinas represent the things and events of the real world, such as clouds, mischief, cornmeal, and even death. A kachina is not worshiped as a god but regarded as an interested friend. They visit the Hopi from December through July in the form of men who dress in kachina costumes and perform dances and other rituals.

#### Shifts in person

Unlike the man, the Hopi woman does not keep contact with kachinas through costumes and dancing. Instead, one receives a small likeness of a kachina, called a *tihu*, from the man impersonating the kachina. You are more likely to receive a tihu as a girl approaching marriage, though a child or older woman sometimes receives one, too.

**Note** The grammar checker on a word processor cannot help you locate shifts in tense, number, or person among sentences. Shifts are sometimes necessary (as when tenses change to reflect actual differences in time). Furthermore, a passage with needless shifts may still consist of sentences that are grammatically correct, as all the sentences are in the preceding examples. The only way to achieve consistency in your writing is to review it yourself.

## 6 Using transitional expressions

Specific words and word groups, called **transitional expressions**, can connect sentences whose relationships may not be instantly clear to readers. Notice the difference in the following two versions of the same paragraph:

Medical science has succeeded in identifying the hundreds of viruses that can cause the common cold. It has discovered the most effective means of prevention. One person transmits the cold viruses to another most often by hand. An infected person covers his mouth to cough. He picks up the telephone. His daughter picks up the telephone. She rubs her eyes. She has a

Paragraph is choppy and hard to follow

## READING ALOUD

Often students can spot a lack of transitions in their own writing if they read their papers aloud. If you ask students to read one another's papers aloud, the student writers will often be able to recognize missing or unclear transitions at those points where the readers stumble over a passage or have to stop to puzzle out the meaning.



**COLLABORATIVE LEARNING**

Ask students to work in groups to analyze what happens when they substitute another transition from the same group into one of the sentences from Kathleen LaFrank's paragraph. How can a transitional word affect the meaning of that sentence and of the relationships between sentences?

**HIGHLIGHTING TRANSITIONS**

Encourage students to use highlighting pens or the Highlighting feature on a word processor to mark where transitional expressions appear in their texts; if they think too few "highlights" show up, students can add more.

cold. It spreads. To avoid colds, people should wash their hands often and keep their hands away from their faces.

Medical science has **thus** succeeded in identifying the hundreds of viruses that can cause the common cold. It has **also** discovered the most effective means of prevention. One person transmits the cold viruses to another most often by hand. **For instance**, an infected person covers his mouth to cough. **Then** he picks up the telephone. **Half an hour later**, his daughter picks up the **same** telephone. **Immediately afterward**, she rubs her eyes. **Within a few days**, she, **too**, has a cold. **And thus** it spreads. To avoid colds, **therefore**, people should wash their hands often and keep their hands away from their faces.

Transitional expressions (boxed) remove choppi-ness and spell out relationships

—Kathleen LaFrank (student),  
"Colds: Myth and Science"

There are scores of transitional expressions on which to draw. The box below shows many common ones, arranged according to the relationships they convey.

**Transitional expressions****To add or show sequence**

again, also, and, and then, besides, equally important, finally, first, further, furthermore, in addition, in the first place, last, moreover, next, second, still, too

**To compare**

also, in the same way, likewise, similarly

**To contrast**

although, and yet, but, but at the same time, despite, even so, even though, for all that, however, in contrast, in spite of, nevertheless, notwithstanding, on the contrary, on the other hand, regardless, still, though, yet

**To give examples or intensify**

after all, an illustration of, even, for example, for instance, indeed, in fact, it is true, of course, specifically, that is, to illustrate, truly

**To indicate place**

above, adjacent to, below, elsewhere, farther on, here, near, nearby, on the other side, opposite to, there, to the east, to the left

**To indicate time**

after a while, afterward, as long as, as soon as, at last, at length, at that time, before, earlier, formerly, immediately, in the meantime, in the past, lately, later, meanwhile, now, presently, shortly, simultaneously, since, so far, soon, subsequently, then, thereafter, until, when

**To repeat, summarize, or conclude**


all in all, altogether, as has been said, in brief, in conclusion, in other words, in particular, in short, in simpler terms, in summary, on the whole, that is, therefore, to put it differently, to summarize

**To show cause or effect**

accordingly, as a result, because, consequently, for this purpose, hence, otherwise, since, then, therefore, thereupon, thus, to this end, with this object

**Note** Draw carefully on the preceding list of transitional expressions because the ones in each group are not interchangeable. For instance, *besides*, *finally*, and *second* may all be used to add information, but each has its own distinct meaning.

To see where transitional expressions might be needed in your paragraphs, examine the movement from each sentence to the next. (On a computer or on paper, you can highlight the transitional expressions already present and then review the sentences that lack them.) Abrupt changes are most likely to need a transition: a shift from cause to effect, a contradiction, a contrast. You can smooth and clarify transitions *between* paragraphs, too. See pages 108 and 109–10.

 If transitional expressions are not common in your native language, you may be tempted to compensate when writing in English by adding them to the beginnings of most sentences. But such explicit transitions aren't needed everywhere, and in fact too many can be intrusive and awkward. When inserting transitional expressions, consider the reader's need for a signal: often the connection from sentence to sentence is already clear from the context, or it can be made clear by relating the content of sentences more closely (see pp. 83–84). When you do need transitional expressions, try varying their positions in your sentences, as shown in the sample paragraph on the facing page.

**Punctuating transitional expressions**

A transitional expression is usually set off by a comma or commas from the rest of the sentence:

**CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION**

Pan-cultural examples lend themselves to collaborative discussion; students might collect and discuss examples of mistranslations from other languages to English or from English to other languages. For instance, the Chevy Nova was a failure when it was introduced in Puerto Rico because *No va* means “It doesn't run” in Spanish. Students for whom English is a second language can contribute many examples of idioms that give them trouble.

**COMPUTER ACTIVITY****SCRAMBLING SENTENCES**

The computer makes scrambling exercises particularly viable. Ask each student to scramble the sentence order deliberately in one of their own paragraphs and then present that exercise in “unscrambling” to their group. It can be very useful for each writer to hear their own coherence “clues” being analyzed and debated.

## ANALYZING FOR COHERENCE

Exercise 4.6 works well as a group exercise because students have more opportunity to debate and explore options. Have each group report back to the class on the different methods each writer uses to achieve coherence.

## ANSWERS: EXERCISE 4.6

1. Lieber paragraph (p. 76): Organization: general to specific. Parallelism after first sentence: *They have measured . . . recorded and studied . . . learned*. Repetition: *whale, sings, song*. Pronoun: *they*. Transitional expression: *And*.
2. Begas paragraph (p. 91): Organization: chronological. Parallelism: *They persuaded . . . they deprived; Jill became . . . she dropped out*. Repetition: *lonely, college/school*. Pronouns: *Jill/she; men and women/they*. Transitional expressions: *Between . . . , increasingly, Before long, too*.
3. Dyson paragraph (p. 93): Organization: climactic. Parallelism and repetition: *reason is the need . . . reason is the need . . . reason is our spiritual need*. Further repetition: *space, earth/this planet*. Pronouns: *we, our, us*. Transitional expressions: *first, second, third*.

## ANSWERS: EXERCISE 4.7

## Possible answer

The coherent order would be 1, 2, 5, 3, 6, 4.

## ANSWERS: EXERCISE 4.8

The Hopi *tihu*, or kachina likeness, is often called a “doll,” but its owner, usually a girl or woman, does not regard it as a plaything. Instead, she treats it as a valued possession and hangs it out of the way on a wall. For its owner the *tihu* represents a connection with the kachina’s spirit. It is considered part of the kachina, carrying a portion of the kachina’s power.

Immediately afterward, she rubs her eyes. Within a few days, she, too, has a cold.

See page 438 for more on this convention and its exceptions.

## 7 Combining devices to achieve coherence

The devices for achieving coherence rarely appear in isolation in effective paragraphs. As any example in this chapter shows, writers usually combine sensible organization, parallelism, repetition, pronouns, consistency, and transitional expressions to help readers follow the development of ideas.

## EXERCISE 4.6 Analyzing paragraphs for coherence

Study the paragraphs by Janet Lieber (p. 79), Hillary Begas (p. 91), and Freeman Dyson (p. 93) for the authors’ use of various devices to achieve coherence. Look especially for organization, parallel structures and ideas, repetition and restatement, pronouns, and transitional expressions.

## EXERCISE 4.7 Arranging sentences coherently

After the topic sentence (sentence 1), the sentences in the student paragraph below have been deliberately scrambled to make the paragraph incoherent. Using the topic sentence and other clues as guides, rearrange the sentences in the paragraph to form a well-organized, coherent unit. (You can do this exercise online at [ablongman.com/littlebrown](http://ablongman.com/littlebrown).)

We hear complaints about the Postal Service all the time, but we 1  
should not forget what it does *right*. The total volume of mail del- 2  
ivered by the Postal Service each year makes up almost half 3  
the total delivered in all the world. Its 70,000 employees handle 4  
140,000,000,000 pieces of mail each year. And when was the last 5  
time they failed to deliver yours? In fact, on any given day the Postal 6  
Service delivers almost as much mail as the rest of the world com-  
bined. That huge number means over 2,000,000 pieces per employee  
and over 560 pieces per man, woman, and child in the country.

## EXERCISE 4.8 Eliminating inconsistencies

The following paragraph is incoherent because of inconsistencies in person, number, or tense. Identify the inconsistencies and revise the paragraph to give it coherence. (You can do this exercise online at [ablongman.com/littlebrown](http://ablongman.com/littlebrown).) For further exercises in eliminating inconsistencies, see pages 359, 360–61, and 363.

The Hopi *tihu*, or kachina likeness, is often called a “doll,” but its owner, usually a girl or woman, does not regard them as a plaything. Instead, you treated them as a valued possession and hung them out of the way on a wall. For its owner the *tihu* represents a connection

with the kachina's spirit. They are considered part of the kachina, carrying a portion of the kachina's power.

#### EXERCISE 4.9 Using transitional expressions

Transitional expressions have been removed from the following paragraph at the numbered blanks. Fill in each blank with an appropriate transitional expression (1) to contrast, (2) to intensify, and (3) to show effect. Consult the list on pages 86–87 if necessary. (You can do this exercise online at [ablongman.com/littlebrown](http://ablongman.com/littlebrown).)

All over the country, people are swimming, jogging, weightlifting, dancing, walking, playing tennis—doing anything to keep fit. (1) this school has consistently refused to construct and equip a fitness center. The school has (2) refused to open existing athletic facilities to all students, not just those playing organized sports. (3) students have no place to exercise except in their rooms and on dangerous public roads.

#### EXERCISE 4.10 Considering your past work: Paragraph coherence

Continuing from Exercise 4.3 (p. 76), examine the body paragraphs of your essay to see how coherent they are and how their coherence could be improved. Do the paragraphs have a clear organization? Do you use repetition and restatement, parallelism, pronouns, and transitional expressions to signal relationships? Are the paragraphs consistent in person, number, and tense? Revise two or three paragraphs in ways you think will improve their coherence.

#### EXERCISE 4.11 Writing a coherent paragraph

Write a coherent paragraph from the following information, combining and rewriting sentences as necessary. First, begin the paragraph with the topic sentence given and arrange the supporting sentences in a climactic order. Then combine and rewrite the supporting sentences, helping the reader see connections by introducing repetition and restatement, parallelism, pronouns, consistency, and transitional expressions. (You can do this exercise online at [ablongman.com/littlebrown](http://ablongman.com/littlebrown).)

##### Topic sentence

Hypnosis is far superior to drugs for relieving tension.

##### Supporting information

Hypnosis has none of the dangerous side effects of the drugs that relieve tension.

Tension-relieving drugs can cause weight loss or gain, illness, or even death.

Hypnosis is nonaddicting.

Most of the drugs that relieve tension do foster addiction.

Tension-relieving drugs are expensive.

Hypnosis is inexpensive even for people who have not mastered self-hypnosis.

#### ANSWERS: EXERCISE 4.9

##### Possible answers

1. *Yet, However, Even so, or Nevertheless*
2. *even, also, or further*
3. *As a result, Consequently, or Therefore*

#### TRANSITIONAL EXPRESSIONS

Ask students to compare answers to Exercise 4.9 and discuss the effects of each student's choices on the meaning of the sentences and of the paragraph.

#### ANSWERS: EXERCISE 4.10

Individual response.

#### ANSWERS: EXERCISE 4.11

##### Possible paragraph

Hypnosis is far superior to drugs for relieving tension. It is inexpensive even for people who have not mastered self-hypnosis, whereas drugs are expensive. It is nonaddictive, whereas drugs foster addiction. And most important, hypnosis has none of the dangerous side effects of drugs, such as weight loss or gain, illness, and even death.

#### COMPUTER ACTIVITY

##### REARRANGING SENTENCES

Exercise 4.11 is particularly feasible on the computer since students can rearrange the information in multiple ways without retyping.

##### COHERENT PARAGRAPHS

The kind of coherence achieved in Exercises 4.11 and 4.12 will depend a great deal on each individual's choice of connective strategies. When students compare their responses to Exercises 4.11 and 4.12 in groups, it is beneficial for them to note the results of other writers' differing choices.

## ANSWERS: EXERCISE 4.12

Individual response.

## EXERCISE 4.12 Turning topic sentences into coherent paragraphs

Develop three of the following topic sentences into coherent paragraphs. Organize your information by space, by time, or for emphasis, as seems most appropriate. Use repetition and restatement, parallelism, pronouns, consistency, and transitional expressions to link sentences. (You can do this exercise online at [ablongman.com/littlebrown](http://ablongman.com/littlebrown).)

1. The most interesting character in the book [or movie] was \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Of all my courses, \_\_\_\_\_ is the one that I think will serve me best throughout life.
3. Although we in the United States face many problems, the one we should concentrate on solving first is \_\_\_\_\_.
4. The most dramatic building in town is the \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Children should not have to worry about the future.

## HIGHLIGHTS

Section 4c looks at ways to convey the central idea of a paragraph fully and convincingly to the reader. Developing paragraphs and essays fully is often difficult for students. One of the important differences between casual conversation and formal writing is the degree to which ideas must be concretely developed in writing. Because students are more experienced in conversation than in writing, they find generalizations much easier to come by than the details, examples, and reasons to support them.

All of us must grapple with the student essay or single paragraph that is largely a succession of generalizations without support or explanation. Part of the solution to such problem paragraphs is to make students aware of readers as a special kind of audience for ideas. Another part is to make them aware of different strategies for developing paragraphs or essays.

The ways to develop ideas are infinite, but this section focuses on a limited number. The initial emphasis falls on the use of details, examples, and reasons, which are essential to any more specific method of development. Students are encouraged to follow the standard methods or patterns of development by posing questions about an idea, event, or object in order to uncover concrete information about it.

You may wish to ask students to spend time in class or in groups working with sample topics to discover how the methods of development can be used to probe a topic and how the questions reveal different aspects of a topic. This discus-

## 4c Developing the paragraph

In an essay that's understandable and interesting to readers, you will provide plenty of solid information to support your *general* statements. You work that information into the essay through the paragraph, as you build up each point relating to the thesis.

A paragraph may be unified and coherent but still be inadequate if you skimp on details. Take this example:

Untruths can serve as a kind of social oil when they smooth connections between people. In preventing confrontation and injured feelings, they allow everyone to go on as before.

General statements needing examples to be clear and convincing

This paragraph lacks **development**, completeness. It does not provide enough information for us to evaluate or even care about the writer's assertions.

## 1 Using specific information

If they are sound, the general statements you make in any writing will be based on what you have experienced, observed, read, and thought. Readers will assume as much and will expect you to provide the evidence for your statements—sensory details, facts, statistics, examples, quotations, reasons. Whatever helps you form your views you need, in turn, to share with readers.

Here is the actual version of the preceding sample paragraph. With examples, the paragraph is more interesting and convincing.

Untruths can serve as a kind of social oil when they smooth connections between people. Assuring a worried friend that his haircut is ]

flattering, claiming an appointment to avoid an aunt's dinner invitation, pretending interest in an acquaintance's children—these lies may protect the liar, but they also protect the person lied to. In preventing confrontation and injured feelings, the lies allow everyone to go on as before.

—Joan Lar (student), "The Truth of Lies"

Examples specifying kinds of lies and consequences

If your readers often comment that your writing needs more specifics, you should focus on that improvement in your revisions. Try listing the general statements of each paragraph on lines by themselves with space underneath. Then use one of the discovery techniques discussed on pages 16–26 (freewriting, brainstorming, and so on) to find the details to support each sentence. Write these into your draft. If you write on a computer, you can do this revision directly on your draft. First create a duplicate of your draft, and then, working on the copy, separate the sentences and explore their support. Rewrite the supporting details into sentences, reassemble the paragraph, and edit it for coherence.

## 2 Using a pattern of development

If you have difficulty developing an idea or shaping your information, then try asking yourself questions derived from the patterns of development. (The same patterns can help with essay development, too. See pp. 24–25.)

You can download the following questions from [ablongman.com/littlebrown](http://ablongman.com/littlebrown). When you're having difficulty with a paragraph, you can duplicate the list and explore answers. You may be able to import what you write directly into your draft.

### ■ How did it happen? (Narration)

**Narration** retells a significant sequence of events, usually in the order of their occurrence (that is, chronologically):

Jill's story is typical for "recruits" to religious cults. She was very lonely in college and appreciated the attention of the nice young men and women who lived in a house near campus. They persuaded her to share their meals and then to move in with them. Between intense bombardments of "love," they deprived her of sleep and sometimes threatened to throw her out. Jill became increasingly confused and dependent, losing touch with any reality besides the one in the group. She dropped out of school and refused to see or communicate with her family. Before long she, too, was preying on lonely college students.

—Hillary Begas (student),  
"The Love Bombers"

Important events in chronological order

sion may help students see how the process of development can be an act of discovery. You will probably want to stress, however, that the methods of development covered in the handbook are not the only ones writers can use and that most paragraphs use more than a single method.

The exercises for this section range from analyzing paragraphs to producing them, and whether used in groups or by students working individually, they encourage students to treat the patterns of development as different ways of viewing a topic.

## WHAT AND WHY

Students from non-Western cultures may be unaccustomed to analysis that involves critical thinking. They may know how to describe an item or text by listing component parts, for instance, but they may not be accustomed to including discussion of why the thing or text is important. A quick way to help these students learn to distinguish between "what" a thing is and "why" it is important is to ask them the following series of questions about a flag:

What is the object attached to the tall pole in the quad? (Describe its appearance, give its name, discuss the component colors and shapes.)

How does the object work? (How is it attached? How is it raised and lowered? When is it raised and lowered?)

Why does it get flown? (This question will lead students into a discussion of the symbolism and meaning of the flag and of its being flown on campus.)

### THE SUBJECT-OBJECT BOUNDARY

Students may find that the subjective-objective boundary is sometimes fuzzy. Even the objective paragraph has judgmental language like “piercing” in it. Perhaps a way of solving this dilemma is to say that in *subjective* description, the writer’s intention is to interpret experience for readers, while in *objective* description, the writer’s intention is to allow the audience to interpret the reported experiences themselves.

As this paragraph illustrates, a narrator is concerned not just with the sequence of events but also with their consequence, their importance to the whole. Thus a narrative rarely corresponds to real time; instead, it collapses transitional or background events and focuses on events of particular interest. In addition, writers sometimes rearrange events, as when they simulate the workings of memory by flashing back to an earlier time.

#### ■ How does it look, sound, feel, smell, taste? (Description)

Description details the sensory qualities of a person, place, thing, or feeling. You use concrete and specific words to convey a dominant mood, to illustrate an idea, or to achieve some other purpose. Some description is **subjective**: the writer filters the subject through his or her biases and emotions. In the subjective description by Virginia Woolf on page 80, the *glare* of the walls, the *impenetrable darkness*, the *bulge of a great bowl*, and the *formidable corners and lines* all indicate the author’s feelings about what she describes.

In contrast to subjective description, journalists and scientists often favor description that is **objective**, conveying the subject without bias or emotion:

The two toddlers, both boys, sat together for half an hour in a ten-foot-square room with yellow walls (one with a two-way mirror for observation) and a brown carpet. The room was unfurnished except for two small chairs and about two dozen toys. The boys’ interaction was generally tense. They often struggled physically and verbally over several toys, especially a large red beach ball and a small wooden fire engine. The larger of the two boys often pushed the smaller away or pried his hands from the desired object. This larger boy never spoke, but he did make grunting sounds when he was engaging the other. In turn, the smaller boy twice uttered piercing screams of “No!” and once shouted “Stop that!” When he was left alone, he hummed and muttered to himself.

—Ray Mattison (student),  
“Case Study: Play Patterns of Toddlers”

Objective description:  
specific record of  
sensory data without  
interpretation

#### ■ What are examples of it or reasons for it? (Illustration or support)

Some ideas can be developed simply by **illustration or support**—supplying detailed examples or reasons. The writer of the paragraph on lying (pp. 90–91) developed her idea with several specific examples of her general statements. You can also supply a single extended example:

The language problem that I was attacking loomed larger and larger as I began to learn more. When I would describe in English certain concepts and objects enmeshed in Korean emotion and imagination, I became slowly aware of nuances, of differences between two languages even in simple expression. The remark "Kim entered the house" seems to be simple enough, yet, unless a reader has a clear visual image of a Korean house, his understanding of the sentence is not complete. When a Korean says he is "in the house," he may be in his courtyard, or on his porch, or in his small room! If I wanted to give a specific picture of entering the house in the Western sense, I had to say "room" instead of house—sometimes. I say "sometimes" because many Koreans entertain their guests on their porches and still are considered to be hospitable, and in the Korean sense, going into the "room" may be a more intimate act than it would be in the English sense. Such problems!  
—Kim Yong Ik, "A Book-Writing Venture"

Topic sentence  
(assertion to be  
illustrated)

Single detailed example

Sometimes you can develop a paragraph by providing your reasons for stating a general idea:

There are three reasons, quite apart from scientific considerations, that mankind needs to travel in space. The first reason is the need for garbage disposal: we need to transfer industrial processes into space, so that the earth may remain a green and pleasant place for our grandchildren to live in. The second reason is the need to escape material impoverishment: the resources of this planet are finite, and we shall not forgo forever the abundant solar energy and minerals and living space that are spread out all around us. The third reason is our spiritual need for an open frontier: the ultimate purpose of space travel is to bring to humanity not only scientific discoveries and an occasional spectacular show on television but a real expansion of our spirit.  
—Freeman Dyson, "Disturbing the Universe"

Topic sentence

Three reasons arranged  
in order of increasing  
drama and importance

■ **What is it? What does it encompass, and what does it exclude? (Definition)**

A definition says what something is and is not, specifying the characteristics that distinguish the subject from the other members of its class. You can easily define concrete, noncontroversial terms

**PARAGRAPH COHERENCE**

Students sometimes have the idea that "next to" means "connected to" as far as coherence goes; this is emphatically not the case. Take a paragraph like this one and have students mark the coherence devices used; or sabotage a paragraph by removing or disguising the coherence devices, and ask students to put them back in.



## COMPUTER ACTIVITY

Students might complete the draft of their paragraphs and e-mail them to a revision partner for comments and suggestions before reworking them. It is important for students to recognize that a well-developed paragraph generally emerges from successive drafts. You can dramatize this process by posting student paragraphs at various stages of revision on the class network and holding discussions about strategies for developing each example further.

in a single sentence: *A knife is a cutting instrument (its class) with a sharp blade set in a handle* (the characteristics that set it off from, say, scissors or a razor blade). But defining a complicated or controversial topic often requires extended explanation, and you may need to devote a whole paragraph or even an essay to it. Such a definition may provide examples to identify the subject's characteristics. It may also involve other methods of development discussed here, such as classification or comparison and contrast.

The following definition of the word *quality* comes from an essay asserting that "quality in product and effort has become a vanishing element of current civilization":

In the hope of possibly reducing the hail of censure which is certain to greet this essay (I am thinking of going to Alaska or possibly Patagonia in the week it is published), let me say that quality, as I understand it, means investment of the best skill and effort possible to produce the finest and most admirable result possible. Its presence or absence in some degree characterizes every man-made object, service, skilled or unskilled labor—laying bricks, painting a picture, ironing shirts, practicing medicine, shoemaking, scholarship, writing a book. You do it well or you do it half-well. Materials are sound and durable or they are sleazy; method is painstaking or whatever is easiest. Quality is achieving or reaching for the highest standard as against being satisfied with the sloppy or fraudulent. It is honesty of purpose as against catering to cheap or sensational sentiment. It does not allow compromise with the second-rate.

—Barbara Tuchman,  
"The Decline of Quality"

General definition

Activities in which quality may figure

Contrast between quality and nonquality

## EXTRA EXAMPLE

Division: Face

Eyes	Nose	Mouth
Pupil	Nostrils	Lips
Iris	Bridge	Tongue
Cornea		Teeth
		Teeth
		Molars
		Incisors
		Bicuspids

■ What are its parts or characteristics? (Division or analysis)

**Division** and **analysis** both involve separating something into its elements, the better to understand it. Here is a simple example:

A typical daily newspaper compresses considerable information into the top of the first page, above the headlines. The most prominent feature of this space, the newspaper's name, is called the *logo* or *nameplate*. Under the logo and set off by rules is a line of small type called the *folio line*, which contains the date of the issue, the volume and issue numbers, copyright information, and the price. To the right of the logo is a block of small type called a *weather ear*, a summary of the day's forecast. And above

The subject being divided

Elements of the subject, arranged spatially

Instructor's Annotated Edition

the logo is a *skyline*, a kind of advertisement in which the paper's editors highlight a special feature of the issue.

—Kansha Stone (student),  
"Anatomy of a Paper"

Generally, analysis goes beyond simply identifying elements. Often used as a synonym for *critical thinking*, analysis also involves interpreting the elements' meaning, significance, and relationships. You identify and interpret elements according to your particular interest in the subject. (See pp. 157–63 for more on critical thinking and analysis.)

The following paragraph comes from an essay about soap operas. The analytical focus of the whole essay is the way soap operas provide viewers with a sense of community missing from their own lives. The paragraph itself has a narrower focus related to the broader one.

The surface realism of the soap opera conjures up an illusion of "liveness." The domestic settings and easygoing rhythms encourage the viewer to believe that the drama, however ridiculous, is simply an extension of daily life. The conversation is so slow that some have called it "radio with pictures." (Advertisers have always assumed that busy housewives would listen, rather than watch.) Conversation is casual and colloquial, as though one were eavesdropping on neighbors. There is plenty of time to "read" the character's face; close-ups establish intimacy. The sets are comfortably familiar: well-lit interiors of living rooms, restaurants, offices, and hospitals. Daytime soaps have little of the glamour of their prime-time relations. The viewer easily imagines that the conversation is taking place in real time.

—Ruth Rosen,  
"Search for Yesterday"

Topic and focus: how "liveness" seems an extension of daily life

Elements:

Slow conversation

Casual conversation

Intimate close-ups  
Familiar sets

Absence of glamour  
Appearance of real time

■ What groups or categories can it be sorted into? (Classification)

Classification involves sorting many things into groups based on their similarities. Using the pattern, we scan a large group composed of many members that share at least one characteristic—office workers, say—and we assign the members to smaller groups on the basis of some principle—salary, perhaps, or dependence on computers. Here is an example:

In my experience, the parents who hire daytime sitters for their school-age children tend to fall into one of three groups. The first group

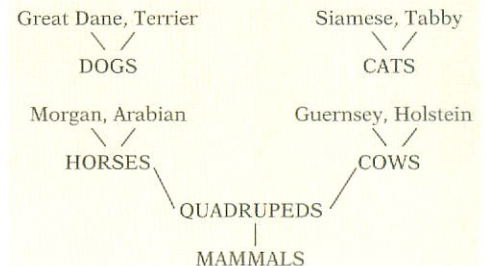
Topic sentence

CLASSIFICATION PRACTICE

Other topics to be classified might include car models, job categories, types of music, and local restaurants. (You might want to bring in the Yellow Pages for the last topic.)

EXTRA EXAMPLE

Classification:



## COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

## TEAM CLASSIFICATION

Ask teams of students to compile the group of sentences or facts from an area they know well (for instance, sports, business, entertainment, social groups, or activities). Have the groups exchange sets of sentences and then attempt to assemble them into paragraphs. When the paragraphs are written, the “expert” collectors should critique the perspective each offers.

includes parents who work and want someone to be at home when the children return from school. These parents are looking for an extension of themselves, someone who *will* give the care they would give if they were at home. The second group includes parents who may be home all day themselves but are too disorganized or too frazzled by their children’s demands to handle child care alone. They are looking for an organizer and helpmate. The third and final group includes parents who do not want to be bothered by their children, whether they are home all day or not. Unlike the parents in the first two groups, who care for their children whenever and however they can, these parents are looking for a permanent substitute for themselves.

—Nancy Whittle (student),  
 “Modern Parenting”

Three groups:

Alike in one way  
 (all hire sitters)

No overlap in groups  
 (each has a different  
 attitude)

Classes arranged in  
 order of increasing dra-  
 ma

■ **How is it like, or different from, other things?**  
 (Comparison and contrast)

Asking about similarities and differences leads to **comparison and contrast**: comparison focuses on similarities, whereas contrast focuses on differences. The two may be used separately or together to develop an idea or to relate two or more things. Commonly, comparisons are organized in one of two ways. In the first, **subject by subject**, the two subjects are discussed separately, one at a time:

Consider the differences also in the behavior of rock and classical music audiences. At a rock concert, the audience members yell, whistle, sing along, and stamp their feet. They may even stand during the entire performance. The better the music, the more active they’ll be. At a classical concert, in contrast, the better the performance, the more *still* the audience is. Members of the classical audience are so highly disciplined that they refrain from even clearing their throats or coughing. No matter what effect the powerful music has on their intellects and feelings, they sit on their hands.

—Tony Nahm (student),  
 “Rock and Roll Is Here to Stay”

Subjects: rock and  
 classical audiences

Rock audience

Classical audience

In the second comparative organization, **point by point**, the two subjects are discussed side by side and matched feature for feature:

The first electronic computer, ENIAC, went into operation just over fifty years ago, yet the differences between it and today’s personal computer are enormous. ENIAC was enormous

Subjects: ENIAC and  
 personal computer

itself, consisting of forty panels, each two feet wide and four feet deep. Today's notebook PC or Macintosh, by contrast, can fit easily on one's lap. ENIAC had to be configured by hand, with its programmers taking up to two days to reset switches and cables. Today, the average user can change programs in an instant. And for all its size and inconvenience, ENIAC was also slow. In its time, its operating speed of 100,000 pulses per second seemed amazingly fast. However, today's notebook can operate at more than 1 billion pulses per second.

Size: ENIAC, personal computer

Ease of programming: ENIAC, personal computer

Speed: ENIAC, personal computer

—Shirley Kajiwara (student),  
"The Computers We Deserve"

The following examples show the two organizing schemes in outline form. The one on the left corresponds to the point-by-point paragraph about computers. The one on the right uses the same information but reorganizes it to cover the two subjects separately: first one, then the other.

#### Point by point

- I. Size
  - A. ENIAC
  - B. Personal computer
- II. Ease of programming
  - A. ENIAC
  - B. Personal computer
- III. Speed
  - A. ENIAC
  - B. Personal computer

#### Subject by subject

- I. ENIAC
  - A. Size
  - B. Ease of programming
  - C. Speed
- II. Personal computer
  - A. Size
  - B. Ease of programming
  - C. Speed

### ■ Is it comparable to something that is in a different class but more familiar to readers? (Analogy)

Whereas we draw comparisons and contrasts between elements in the same general class (audiences, computers), we link elements in different classes with a special kind of comparison called **analogy**. Most often in analogy we illuminate or explain an unfamiliar, abstract class of things with a familiar and concrete class of things:

We might eventually obtain some sort of bedrock understanding of cosmic structure, but we will never understand the universe in detail; it is just too big and varied for that. If we possessed an atlas of our galaxy that devoted but a single page to each star system in the Milky Way (so that the sun and all its planets were crammed on one page), that atlas would run to more than ten million volumes of ten thousand pages each. It would take a library the size of

Abstract subject: the universe, specifically the Milky Way

Concrete subject: an atlas

## COMBINING FOR EMPHASIS

Put together a group of sentences or bits of information about a topic, perhaps drawing the material from an essay in a reader or a magazine article. Ask students, working individually or in groups, to combine the material into a paragraph that has a distinct point of view. You might, for example, provide information about a recent controversial incident and ask for a paragraph emphasizing one perspective toward the incident or one perspective on its causes and effects.

Harvard's to house the atlas, and merely to flip through it, at the rate of a page per second, would require over ten thousand years.

—Timothy Ferris,  
*Coming of Age in the Milky Way*

■ **Why did it happen, or what results did it have?**  
(Cause-and-effect analysis)

When you use analysis to explain why something happened or what is likely to happen, then you are determining causes and effects. **Cause-and-effect analysis** is especially useful in writing about social, economic, or political events or problems. In the next paragraph the author looks at the causes of Japanese collectivism, which he elsewhere contrasts with American individualism:

The *shinkansen* or "bullet train" speeds across the rural areas of Japan giving a quick view of cluster after cluster of farmhouses surrounded by rice paddies. This particular pattern did not develop purely by chance, but as a consequence of the technology peculiar to the growing of rice, the staple of the Japanese diet. The growing of rice requires the construction and maintenance of an irrigation system, something that takes many hands to build. More importantly, the planting and the harvesting of rice can only be done efficiently with the cooperation of twenty or more people. The "bottom line" is that a single family working alone cannot produce enough rice to survive, but a dozen families working together can produce a surplus. Thus the Japanese have had to develop the capacity to work together in harmony, no matter what the forces of disagreement or social disintegration, in order to survive.

—William Ouchi, *Theory Z*

Effect: pattern of  
Japanese farming

Causes: Japanese  
dependence on rice,  
which requires  
collective effort

Effect: working in  
harmony

Cause-and-effect paragraphs tend to focus either on causes, as Ouchi's does, or on effects, as this paragraph does:

At each step, with every graduation from one level of education to the next, the refrain from bystanders was strangely the same: "Your parents must be so proud of you." I suppose that my parents were proud, although I suspect, too, that they felt more than pride alone as they watched me advance through my education. They seemed to know that my education was separating us from one another, making it difficult to resume familiar intimacies. Mixed with the instincts of parental pride, a certain hurt

Cause: education

Effects:  
Pride

Separation  
Loss of intimacies  
Hurt

also communicated itself—too private ever to be adequately expressed in words, but real nonetheless.

—Richard Rodriguez, "Going Home Again"

■ **How does one do it, or how does it work?**  
(Process analysis)

When you analyze how to do something or how something works, you explain the steps in a **process**. Paragraphs developed by process analysis are usually organized chronologically, as the steps in the process occur. Some process analyses tell the reader how to do a task:

As a car owner, you waste money when you pay a mechanic to change the engine oil. The job is not difficult, even if you know little about cars. All you need is a wrench to remove the drain plug, a large, flat pan to collect the draining oil, plastic bottles to dispose of the used oil, and fresh oil. First, warm up the car's engine so that the oil will flow more easily. When the engine is warm, shut it off and remove its oil-filler cap (the owner's manual shows where this cap is). Then locate the drain plug under the engine (again consulting the owner's manual for its location) and place the flat pan under the plug. Remove the plug with the wrench, letting the oil flow into the pan. When the oil stops flowing, replace the plug and, at the engine's filler hole, add the amount and kind of fresh oil specified by the owner's manual. Pour the used oil into the plastic bottles and take it to a waste-oil collector, which any garage mechanic can recommend.

—Anthony Andreas (student),  
"Do-It-Yourself Car Care"

Process: changing oil

Equipment needed

Steps in process

Other process analyses explain how processes are done or how they work in nature. Annie Dillard's paragraph on mangrove islands (p. 80) is one example. Here is another:

What used to be called "laying on of hands" is now practiced seriously by nurses and doctors. Studies have shown that therapeutic touch, as it is now known, can aid relaxation and ease pain, two effects that may in turn cause healing. A "healer" must first concentrate on helping the patient. Then, hands held a few inches from the patient's body, the healer moves from head to foot. Healers claim that they can detect energy disturbances in the patient that indicate tension, pain, or sickness. With further hand movements, the healer tries to redirect the

Process: therapeutic touch

Benefits

Steps in process

## COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

### PRACTICAL INSTRUCTIONS

The most hilarious process exercise is one of the oldest: bring the ingredients for peanut butter and jelly sandwiches to class. Have each group write instructions for making a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Then have the groups exchange instructions and make the sandwich exactly according to instructions they receive. (Typically, students' instructions will omit using a knife to spread the fillings, or putting together the sides with fillings.) The results are usually hilarious—and messy—but prove the point that process paragraphs must be complete to be effective.

### IMITATING PARAGRAPHS

Choose a successful paragraph (student or professional) with a clear pattern, and discuss it in class. Then ask students to write paragraphs imitating the pattern but not the content of the model paragraph.

### DEVELOPING PARAGRAPHS

Take underdeveloped paragraphs on subjects likely to be familiar to students and ask them to develop the paragraphs fully by drawing on their own knowledge. Student paragraphs often provide good material for this exercise. Students can work collaboratively in groups of two or three to develop each person's paragraph. Alternatively, groups can supply a list of questions for each paragraph based on the questions provided in this chapter. Then each student can brainstorm responses to the questions and use that material to revise his or her own paragraph.

## COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

### ANALYZING PARAGRAPHS

When students work together to analyze the paragraphs in Exercise 4.13 they benefit by discovering a broader range of interpretive responses. Those discoveries can be put to work in revising the underdeveloped paragraphs in Exercise 4.14 either individually or in groups.

### ANSWERS: EXERCISE 4.13

1. Gates paragraph (p. 76): Patterns of development: cause-and-effect analysis and illustration. Supporting information: mainly the example in sentences 4–8.
2. Wax paragraph (p. 81): Pattern of development: cause-and-effect analysis. Supporting information: first three sentences.

energy. Patients report feeling heat from the healer's hands, perhaps indicating an energy transfer between healer and patient.

How process works

—Lisa Kuklinski (student),  
"Old Ways to Noninvasive Medicine"

Diagrams, photographs, and other figures can do much to clarify process analyses. See pages 120–25 for guidelines on creating and clearly labeling figures.

### ■ Combining patterns of development

Whatever pattern you choose as the basis for developing a paragraph, other patterns may also prove helpful. Combined patterns have appeared often in this section: Dyson analyzes causes and effects in presenting reasons (p. 93); Tuchman uses contrast to define *quality* (p. 94); Nahm uses description to compare (p. 96); Ouchi uses process analysis to explain causes (p. 98).

### 3 Checking length

The average paragraph contains between 100 and 150 words, or between four and eight sentences. The actual length of a paragraph depends on the complexity of its topic, the role it plays in developing the thesis of the essay, and its position in the essay. Nevertheless, very short paragraphs are often inadequately developed; they may leave readers with a sense of incompleteness. And very long paragraphs often contain irrelevant details or develop two or more topics; readers may have difficulty following, sorting out, or remembering ideas.

When you are revising your essay, reread the paragraphs that seem very long or very short, checking them especially for unity and adequate development. If the paragraph wanders, cut everything from it that does not support your main idea (such as sentences that you might begin with *By the way*). If it is underdeveloped, supply the specific details, examples, or reasons needed, or try one of the methods of development we have discussed here.

### EXERCISE 4.13 Analyzing paragraph development

Examine the paragraphs by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (p. 76), and Judith Wax (p. 81) to discover how the authors achieve paragraph development. What pattern or patterns of development does each author use? Where does each author support general statements with specific evidence?

### EXERCISE 4.14 Analyzing and revising skimpy paragraphs

The following paragraphs are not well developed. Analyze them, looking especially for general statements that lack support or leave ques-

tions in your mind. Then rewrite one into a well-developed paragraph, supplying your own concrete details or examples. (You can do this exercise online at [ablongman.com/littlebrown](http://ablongman.com/littlebrown).)

1. One big difference between successful and unsuccessful teachers is the quality of communication. A successful teacher is sensitive to students' needs and excited by the course subject. In contrast, an unsuccessful teacher seems uninterested in students and bored by the subject.
2. Gestures are one of our most important means of communication. We use them instead of speech. We use them to supplement the words we speak. And we use them to communicate some feelings or meanings that words cannot adequately express.
3. I've discovered that a word processor can do much—but not everything—to help me improve my writing. I can easily make changes and try out different versions of a paper. But I still must do the hard work of revising.

#### EXERCISE 4.15 Considering your past work: Paragraph development

Continuing from Exercises 4.3 (p. 76) and 4.10 (p. 89), examine the development of the body paragraphs in your writing. Where does specific information seem adequate to support your general statements? Where does support seem skimpy? Revise the paragraphs as necessary to make your ideas clearer and more interesting. It may help you to pose the questions on pages 91–99.

#### EXERCISE 4.16 Writing with the patterns of development

Write at least three unified, coherent, and well-developed paragraphs, each one developed with a different pattern. Draw on the topics provided here, or choose your own topics.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. <b>Narration</b><br>An experience of public speaking<br>A disappointment<br>Leaving home<br>Waking up                        | Usefulness or uselessness of a self-help book   |
| 2. <b>Description (objective or subjective)</b><br>Your room<br>A crowded or deserted place<br>A food<br>An intimidating person | 4. <b>Definition</b><br>Humor<br>An adult<br>Fear<br>Authority  |
| 3. <b>Illustration or support</b><br>Why study<br>Having a headache<br>The best sports event                                    | 5. <b>Division or analysis</b><br>A television news show<br>A barn<br>A Web site<br>A piece of music                    |
|   | 6. <b>Classification</b><br>Factions in a dispute<br>Styles of playing poker<br>Types of Web sites<br>Kinds of teachers |

#### ANSWERS: EXERCISE 4.14

##### Possible answers

1. Sentence 1 requires some expansion to explain *quality of communication*. Each of the next two sentences needs to be supported with specific examples of the two qualities named.
2. Sentences 2, 3, and 4 should each be followed by at least two specific examples of gestures to make the writer's meaning concrete.
3. Sentences 2 and especially 3 require specific support: examples of easy changes, advantages of trying out different versions, and clarification of *the hard work of revising*. What does it involve? Why is it *hard*? Why is it different from what a word processor can do?

#### ANSWERS: EXERCISE 4.15

Individual response.

#### ANSWERS: EXERCISE 4.16

Individual response.

### COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

#### DEVELOPING PARAGRAPHS

In exercises like 4.15 and 4.16, where students may find it difficult to develop their own paragraphs, they can work initially with their revision groups to pinpoint unsupported statements, highlight unclear claims, and create a list of specific questions to aid each writer in a further revision.



## RESOURCES AND IDEAS

Cohan, Carol. "Writing Effective Paragraphs." *College Composition and Communication* 27 (1976): 363–65. Cohan suggests encouraging paragraph development by treating topic sentences as questions to be answered by the paragraph that follows.

Eden, Rick, and Ruth Mitchell. "Paragraphing for the Reader." *College Composition and Communication* 37 (1986): 416–30. The authors suggest that judgments about length and paragraph decisions should be made with the readers in mind.

Lanham, Richard. *Analyzing Prose*. New York: Scribner, 1983. Lanham offers extensive advice on revising paragraphs for stylistic effect.

Witte, Stephen, and Lester Faigley. "Coherence, Cohesion, and Writing Quality." *College Composition and Communication* 32 (1981): 189–204. Students need to learn the features of coherence that extend across sentence boundaries; the article stresses ways to make them aware of coherence strategies.

## HIGHLIGHTS

This section addresses introductory and concluding paragraphs, the occasionally useful transitional and short emphatic paragraphs, and the conventions of paragraphing in dialogue. The emphasis you give to introductory and concluding paragraphs may vary with the experience of your students. For some, writing a straightforward introductory paragraph that simply sets the stage for the essay and presents a thesis statement will be an accomplishment. Others will benefit from experimenting with some of the variations illustrated. Most, however, will appreciate the list of don'ts for introductory paragraphs.

Because concluding paragraphs often present a special problem, you may wish to highlight the common inept endings that trap students and then suggest satisfactory alternatives.

## USING JOURNALS

Encourage students to collect a repertoire of introduction strategies in their journals. They can draw these strategies from class readings, other courses, and their outside reading. They might also make a log of the ways television news or tabloid shows introduce various subjects, and add them to this repertoire. This strategy can also be applied to conclusions.

## 7. Comparison and contrast

Surfing the Web and watching TV  
AM and FM radio DJs  
High school and college football  
Movies on TV and in a theater

## 8. Analogy

Paying taxes and giving blood  
The US Constitution and a building's foundation  
Graduating from high school and being released from prison

## 9. Cause-and-effect analysis

Connection between tension and anger  
Causes of failing or acing a course  
Connection between credit cards and debt  
Causes of a serious accident

## 10. Process analysis

Preparing for a job interview  
Setting up a Web log  
Protecting your home from burglars  
Making a jump shot

## 4d Writing special kinds of paragraphs

Several kinds of paragraphs do not always follow the guidelines for unity, coherence, development, and length because they serve special functions. These are the essay introduction, the essay conclusion, the transitional or emphatic paragraph, and the paragraph of spoken dialog.

## 1 Opening an essay

Most of your essays will open with a paragraph that draws readers from their world into your world. A good opening paragraph usually satisfies several requirements:

- It focuses readers' attention on your subject and arouses their curiosity about what you have to say.
- It specifies what your topic is and implies your attitude.
- Often it provides your thesis statement.
- It is concise and sincere.

The box on the facing page provides a range of options for achieving these goals.

**Note** If you are composing on the World Wide Web, you'll want to consider the expectations of Web readers. Your opening page may take the place of a conventional introduction, providing concise text indicating your site's subject and purpose, a menu of its contents, and links to other pages. (See pp. 832–38 for more on composing for the Web.)



The requirements and options for essay introductions may not be what you are used to if your native language is not English. In other cultures, readers may seek familiarity or reassur-

### Some strategies for opening paragraphs

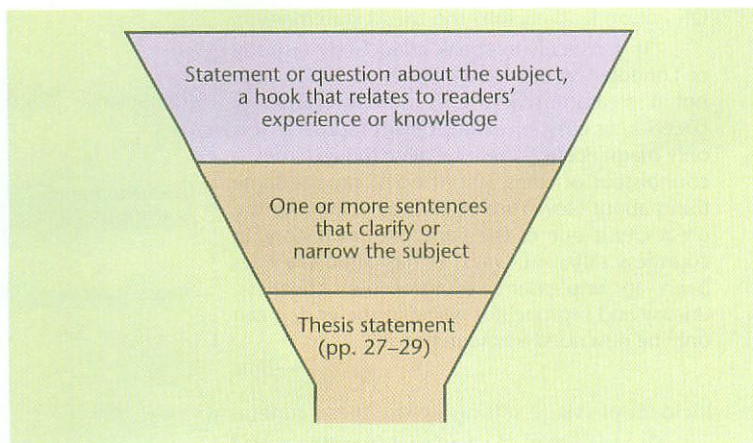
- Ask a question.
- Relate an incident.
- Use a vivid quotation.
- Offer a surprising statistic or other fact.
- State an opinion related to your thesis.
- Outline the argument your thesis refutes.
- Provide background.
- Create a visual image that represents your subject.
- Make a historical comparison or contrast.
- Outline a problem or dilemma.
- Define a word central to your subject.
- In some business or technical writing, summarize your paper.

ance from an author's introduction, or they may prefer an indirect approach to the subject. In academic and business English, however, writers and readers prefer concise, direct expression.

#### ■ The funnel introduction

One reliably effective introduction forms a kind of funnel:

Funnel introduction



Here are two examples of the funnel introduction:

Can your home or office computer make you sterile? Can it strike you blind or dumb? The answer is: probably not. Nevertheless, reports of side effects relating to computer use should be examined, especially in the area of birth defects, eye complaints, and postural difficulties.

Questions about subject

Clarification of subject: bridge to thesis statement

### TRANSPARENCY MASTER 4.3

#### MAGAZINE MODELS

Magazines like *Time*, *Glamour*, *Outdoor Life*, *Ebony*, and *Self* contain a variety of informative articles. The authors of these articles and students writing expository essays face a similar problem—how to get readers interested enough to keep reading. Have students collect effective openings and bring them to class for discussion. Students can also comb editorials and magazine articles for openings of argumentative essays.

#### LEARNING STRATEGIES

To help students learn effective strategies for writing opening paragraphs, give the class outlines of well-known essays and ask students to construct opening paragraphs based on the information provided. Compare students' opening paragraphs with those of the essays. This exercise will expose students to the numerous possibilities for creating good opening paragraphs and will promote discussion of the relative merits of different techniques for a specific subject, essay, or audience.

#### IMITATING OPENINGS AND CLOSINGS

When experienced writers have trouble beginning or ending essays, they usually turn to strategies that have been successful on other occasions. To help student writers develop similar resources, distribute opening and closing paragraphs that demonstrate particularly effective strategies and ask students to write their own paragraphs using the same strategies but containing different content.

Although little conclusive evidence exists to establish a causal link between computer use and problems of this sort, the circumstantial evidence can be disturbing.

—Thomas Hartmann, "How Dangerous Is Your Computer?"

Thesis statement

The Declaration of Independence is so widely regarded as a statement of American ideals that its origins in practical politics tend to be forgotten. Thomas Jefferson's draft was intensely debated and then revised in the Continental Congress. Jefferson was disappointed with the result. However, a close reading of both the historical context and the revisions themselves indicates that the Congress improved the document for its intended purpose.

—Ann Weiss (student), "The Editing of the Declaration of Independence"

Statement about subject

Clarification of subject: bridge to thesis statement

Thesis statement

#### ■ Other effective introductions

Several other types of introduction can be equally effective, though they are sometimes harder to invent and control.

##### Quotation leading into the thesis statement

"It is difficult to speak adequately or justly of London," wrote Henry James in 1881. "It is not a pleasant place; it is not agreeable, or cheerful, or easy, or exempt from reproach. It is only magnificent." Were he alive today, James, a connoisseur of cities, might easily say the same thing about New York or Paris or Tokyo, for the great city is one of the paradoxes of history. In countless different ways, it has almost always been an unpleasant, disagreeable, cheerless, uneasy and reproachful place; in the end, it can only be described as magnificent.

—*Time*

Quotation

Bridge to thesis statement

Thesis statement

##### Incident or image setting up the thesis statement

Canada is pink. I knew that from the map I owned when I was six. On it, New York was green and brown, which was true as far as I could see, so there was no reason to distrust the map maker's portrayal of Canada. When my parents took me across the border and we entered the immigration booth, I looked excitedly for the pink earth. Slowly it dawned on me: this foreign, "different" place was not so different.

Incident from writer's experience

I discovered that the world in my head and the world at my feet were not the same.

—Robert Ornstein, *Human Nature*

Thesis statement

**Startling opinion or question**

Caesar was right. Thin people need watching. I've been watching them for most of my adult life, and I don't like what I see. When these narrow fellows spring at me, I quiver to my toes. Thin people come in all personalities, most of them menacing. You've got your "together" thin person, your mechanical thin person, your condescending thin person, your tsk-tsk thin person. All of them are dangerous.

—Suzanne Britt, "That Lean and Hungry Look"

Opinion

Thesis statement

**Background, such as a historical comparison**

Throughout the first half of this century, the American Medical Association, the largest and most powerful medical organization in the world, battled relentlessly to rid the country of quack potions and cure-alls; and it is the AMA that is generally credited with being the single most powerful force behind the enactment of the early pure food and drug laws. Today, however, medicine's guardian seems to have done a complete about-face and become one of the pharmaceutical industry's staunchest allies—often at the public's peril and expense.

—Mac Jeffery, "Does Rx Spell Rip-off?"

Historical background

Thesis statement

An effective introductory paragraph need not be long, as the following opener shows:

I've often wondered what goes into a hot dog. Now I know and I wish I didn't.

—William Zinsser, *The Lunacy Boom*

**■ Ineffective introductions**

When writing and revising an introductory paragraph, avoid the following approaches that are likely to bore readers or make them question your sincerity or control:

**Openings to avoid**

- **A vague generality or truth.** Don't extend your reach too wide with a line such as *Throughout human history . . .* or *In today's world. . .* Readers can do without the warm-up.

(continued)

**RESOURCES AND IDEAS**

Fulkerson, Richard. "Composition at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century." *College Composition and Communication* 56 (June 2005): 654–687. Fulkerson provides an excellent introduction to current key issues in composition theory and pedagogy, including the influence on curriculum of critical/cultural studies and genre analysis and the continuing popularity of expressive approaches to teaching writing.

McClish, Glen. "Of Attention-Getting Openers and Contracts: A Reassessment of an Introductory Dilemma." *Journal of Teaching Writing* 13: 1 (1996): 197–207. McClish discusses the metaphor of the "contract" as a way to teach students about the rhetorical impact of introductions without prompting clichés.

Platz, Judith. "Revision and Process: 'Round Robin' Group Writing." *Teaching English in the Two Year College* 22 (March 2000): 342. Platz shows how a collaborative writing activity can improve the structure and content of student writing.

## COMPARING CLOSINGS

Using the same essays gathered for the preceding activity, ask students to read all but the conclusions. Then have them underline the thesis statement and the main ideas of each paragraph. Finally, have students write their own conclusions. This exercise will help students to recognize the structure, effectiveness, and importance of concluding paragraphs and will provide diverse examples of how key information may be arranged for variety and emphasis.

## Openings to avoid

(continued)

- **A flat announcement.** Don't start with *The purpose of this essay is . . .*, *In this essay I will . . .*, or any similar presentation of your intention or topic.
- **A reference to the essay's title.** Don't refer to the title of the essay in the first sentence—for example, *This is a big problem* or *This book is about the history of the guitar*.
- **According to Webster.** . . . Don't start by citing a dictionary definition. A definition can be an effective springboard to an essay, but this kind of lead-in has become dull with overuse.
- **An apology.** Don't fault your opinion or your knowledge with *I'm not sure if I'm right, but . . .*; *I don't know much about this, but . . .*; or a similar line.

## 2 Closing an essay

Most of your compositions will end with a closing statement or conclusion, a signal to readers that you have not simply stopped writing but have actually finished. The conclusion completes an essay, bringing it to a climax while assuring readers that they have understood your intention.

**Note** Compositions for the Web usually do not provide the kind of closure featured in essays. In fact, you'll need to ensure that your Web pages don't dead-end, leaving the reader stranded without options for moving backward or forward through your material. (For more on Web composition, see pp. 832–38.)

### ■ Effective conclusions

An essay conclusion may consist of a single sentence or a group of sentences, usually set off in a separate paragraph. The conclusion may take one or more of the following approaches:

## Some strategies for closing paragraphs

- Recommend a course of action.
- Summarize the paper.
- Echo the approach of the introduction.
- Restate your thesis and reflect on its implications.
- Strike a note of hope or despair.
- Give a symbolic or powerful fact or other detail.
- Give an especially compelling example.
- Create an image that represents your subject.
- Use a quotation.

The following paragraph concludes the essay on the Declaration of Independence (the introduction appears on p. 104):

The Declaration of Independence has come to be a statement of this nation's political philosophy, but that was not its purpose in 1776. Jefferson's passionate expression had to bow to the goals of the Congress as a whole to forge unity among the colonies and to win the support of foreign nations.

—Ann Weiss (student), "The Editing of the Declaration of Independence"

Echo of introduction: contrast between past and present

Restatement and elaboration of thesis

Maxine Hong Kingston uses a different technique—a vivid image—to conclude an essay about an aunt who committed suicide by drowning:

My aunt haunts me—her ghost drawn to me because now, after fifty years of neglect, I alone devote pages of paper to her, though not origami into houses and clothes. I do not think she always means me well. I am telling on her, and she was a spite suicide, drowning herself in the drinking water. The Chinese are always very frightened of the drowned one, whose weeping ghost, wet hair hanging and skin bloated, waits silently by the water to pull down a substitute.

—Maxine Hong Kingston, "No Name Woman"

Summary

Image

In the next paragraph the author concludes an essay on environmental protection with a call for action:

Until we get the answers, I think we had better keep on building power plants and growing food with the help of fertilizers and such insect-controlling chemicals as we now have. The risks are well known, thanks to the environmentalists. If they had not created a widespread public awareness of the ecological crisis, we wouldn't stand a chance. But such awareness by itself is not enough. Flaming manifestos and prophecies of doom are no longer much help, and a search for scapegoats can only make matters worse. The time for sensations and manifestos is about over. Now we need rigorous analysis, united effort and very hard work.

—Peter F. Drucker, "How Best to Protect the Environment"

Summary and opinion

Call for action

■ Ineffective conclusions

The preceding examples illustrate ways of avoiding several pitfalls of conclusions:

## TRANSPARENCY MASTER 4.6

## COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

## OPENING AND CLOSINGS

Students can work together effectively to analyze the introductory and concluding paragraphs of the student essay in Chapter 3, the openings and closings of published essays, and the opening and closing paragraphs from their own papers. Ask each group of students to create their own list of effective opening and concluding strategies accompanied by quoted examples from these various readings.

## PAIRS OF IDEAS

Students may hone their skills with transitional paragraphs by being given pairs of seemingly unrelated ideas and being asked to link them. For example, using the topic of global sweatshop labor, have students create a transitional paragraph linking the discussion of legal implications to the discussion of moral implications.

## ONE-SENTENCE PARAGRAPHS

Students may be confused about the use of one-sentence paragraphs. Take time to discuss publicly the uses of such paragraphs and to make them aware of any taboos or restrictions you place on such paragraphs; this will save you and your students time and grief later.

## COMPUTER ACTIVITY

## NAVIGATION MARKERS

Ask students to locate sample Web pages and bring them to class. Together, the class can evaluate the effectiveness of the navigational markers in the text of each Web page and discuss how to use paragraphing to optimize the reader's ease of navigation.

## Closings to avoid

- **A repeat of the introduction.** Don't simply replay your introduction. The conclusion should capture what the paragraphs of the body have added to the introduction.
- **A new direction.** Don't introduce a subject different from the one your essay has been about. If you arrive at a new idea, this may be a signal to start fresh with that idea as your thesis.
- **A sweeping generalization.** Don't conclude more than you reasonably can from the evidence you have presented. If your essay is about your frustrating experience trying to clear a parking ticket, you cannot reasonably conclude that *all* local police forces are tied up in red tape.
- **An apology.** Don't cast doubt on your essay. Don't say, *Even though I'm no expert* or *This may not be convincing, but I believe it's true* or anything similar. Rather, to win your readers' confidence, display confidence.

## 3 Using short emphatic or transitional paragraphs

A short emphatic paragraph can give unusual stress to an important idea, in effect asking the reader to pause and consider before moving on.

In short, all those who might have taken responsibility ducked it, and catastrophe was inevitable.

A transitional paragraph, because it is longer than a word or phrase and is set off by itself, moves a discussion from one point to another more slowly or more completely than does a single transitional expression or even a transitional sentence attached to a larger paragraph.

These, then, are the causes of the current contraction in hospital facilities. But how does this contraction affect the medical costs of the government, private insurers, and individuals?

So the debates were noisy and emotion-packed. But what did they accomplish? Historians have identified at least three direct results.

Use transitional paragraphs only to shift readers' attention when your essay makes a significant turn. A paragraph like the following one betrays a writer who is stalling:

Now that we have examined these facts, we can look at some others that are equally central to an examination of this important issue.

## 4 Writing dialog

When recording a conversation between two or more people, start a new paragraph for each person's speech. The paragraphing

establishes for the reader the point at which one speaker stops talking and another begins.

The dark shape was indistinguishable. But once I'd flooded him with light, there he stood, blinking.

"Well," he said eventually, "you're a sight for sore eyes. Should I stand here or are you going to let me in?"

"Come in," I said. And in he came.

—Louise Erdrich, *The Beet Queen*

Though dialog appears most often in fictional writing (the source of the preceding example), it may occasionally freshen or enliven narrative or expository essays. (For guidance in using quotation marks and other punctuation in passages of dialog, see pp. 444–46 and 471–72.)

#### EXERCISE 4.17 Analyzing an introduction and conclusion

Analyze the introductory and concluding paragraphs in the first and final drafts of the student essay in Chapter 3, pages 47–48 and 63–65. What is wrong with the first-draft paragraphs? Why are the final-draft paragraphs better? Could they be improved still further?

#### EXERCISE 4.18 Considering your past work: Introductions and conclusions

Examine the opening and closing paragraphs of the essay you've been analyzing in Exercises 4.3, 4.10, and 4.15. Do the paragraphs fulfill the requirements and avoid the pitfalls outlined on pages 102–08? Revise them as needed for clarity, conciseness, focus, and interest.

## 4e Linking paragraphs in the essay

Your paragraphs do not stand alone: each one is a key unit of a larger piece of writing. Though you may draft paragraphs or groups of paragraphs almost as mini-essays, you will eventually need to stitch them together into a unified, coherent, well-developed whole. The techniques parallel those for linking sentences in paragraphs:

- **Make sure each paragraph contributes to your thesis.**
- **Arrange the paragraphs in a clear, logical order.** See pages 32–43 for advice on essay organization.
- **Create links between paragraphs.** Use repetition and restatement to stress and connect key terms, and use transitional expressions and transitional sentences to indicate sequence, direction, contrast, and other relationships.

#### ANSWERS: EXERCISE 4.17

##### Possible answers

The introduction in the first draft rushes to Kadi's essay without first securing the reader's interest, and it summarizes and dismisses Kadi's point too tersely. In contrast, the final introduction approaches readers with a statement and question of general interest, more fully explains Kadi's point, and grants it some value.

The conclusion in the first draft is abrupt, does not pick up both of the essay's main points (becoming more tolerated as well as more tolerant), and does not clearly link tolerance to community. The final conclusion solves these problems (especially with the addition of common ground) and finishes strongly.

#### ANSWERS: EXERCISE 4.18

Individual response.

#### COMPUTER ACTIVITY

Ask your students to visit each other's Web sites (for those who already have them) and give feedback on the smoothness of the page-to-page transitions.



The essay “A Picture of Hyperactivity” on pages 42–43 illustrates the first two of these techniques. The following passages from the essay illustrate the third technique, with circled repetitions and restatements, boxed transitional expressions, and transitional sentences noted in annotations.

Introduction establishing subject and stating thesis

A hyperactive committee member can contribute to efficiency. A hyperactive salesperson can contribute to profits. When children are hyperactive, though, people—even parents—may wish they had never been born. A collage of those who must cope with hyperactivity in children is a picture of frustration, anger, and loss.

Thesis statement

The first part of the collage is the doctors. In their terminology, the word hyperactivity has been replaced by ADHD, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder. They apply the term to children who are abnormally or excessively busy. . . .

Transitional topic sentence relating to thesis statement

As the mother of an ADHD child, I can say what the disorder means to the parents who form the second part of the collage. . . .

Transitional topic sentence relating to thesis statement

The weight of ADHD, however, does not rest on the doctors and parents. The darkest part of the collage belongs to the children. . . .

Transitional sentence

The collage is complete, and it is dark and somber. ADHD, as applied to children, is a term with uncertain, unattractive, and bitter associations. The picture does have one bright spot, however, for inside every ADHD child is a lovely, trusting, calm person waiting to be recognized.

Topic sentence relating to thesis statement

Transitional sentence into conclusion, restating thesis statement

#### ANSWERS: EXERCISE 4.19

##### Possible answer

Throughout the essay the author repeats or restates her key terms: *communication/interaction, community, anonymous/anonymity, physical barriers/physical appearance/the way they look/physical bias, prejudged/prejudge, tolerance/tolerated/tolerant*, and so on. For each main point, the opening sentence specifically connects to the thesis statement. The pronouns *we, us,* and *our* appear consistently. Transitional expressions (*Instead, Because of . . . , For example, Granted, However,* and many others) explicitly link sentences and paragraphs. And parallelism links sentences in the second, third, and fifth paragraphs (for instance, *The people we communicate with do not know and readers don't even know* in the second paragraph). (Further analysis of this essay appears in Chapter 3 of the handbook and in the answers to Exercise 4.17 on page 109.)

#### ANSWERS: EXERCISE 4.20

Individual response.

#### EXERCISE 4.19 Analyzing paragraphs in an essay

Analyze the ways in which paragraphs combine in the student essay in Chapter 3, pages 63–65. What techniques does the writer use to link paragraphs to the thesis statement and to each other? Where, if at all, does the writer seem to stray from the thesis or fail to show how paragraphs relate to it? How would you revise the essay to solve any problems it exhibits?

#### EXERCISE 4.20 Considering your past work: Paragraphs in the essay

Examine the overall effect of the essay you've been analyzing in Exercises 4.3, 4.10, 4.15, and 4.18. Do all the paragraphs relate to your

thesis? Are they arranged clearly and logically? How do repetition and restatement, transitional expressions, or transitional sentences connect the paragraphs? Can you see ways to improve the essay's unity, coherence, and development?

## CHAPTER 5

# Designing Documents

Imagine how hard it would be to read and write if text looked like this. To make reading and writing easier, we place a space between words. This convention and many others—such as page margins, page numbers, and paragraph breaks—have evolved over time to help writers communicate clearly with readers.

### 5a Designing academic papers and other documents

The design guidelines offered in this chapter apply to all types of documents, including academic papers, Web sites, business reports, flyers, and newsletters. Each type has specific requirements as well, covered elsewhere in this book.

#### 1 Designing academic papers

Many academic disciplines prefer specific formats for students' papers. This book details four such formats:

- **MLA**, used in English, foreign languages, and some other humanities (pp. 687–89).
- **Chicago**, used in history, art history, religion, and some other humanities (pp. 775–77).

<http://www.ablongman.com/littlebrown> ▶

Visit the companion Web site for more help with document design.

mycomplab<sup>2.0</sup>

Please visit MyCompLab at [www.mycomplab.com](http://www.mycomplab.com) for more on the writing process.

#### HIGHLIGHTS

Document design is increasingly important to the creation of written documents, as technology gives the individual computer user access to increasingly powerful design tools. If the courses you teach include diverse forms of writing, or if you teach journalism, technical writing, or business writing, you may wish to ask your students to put together a smart-looking newsletter, report, or brochure, and they will need to know how to design their projects. Even if you are teaching a course strictly focused on argument and academic prose, your students can benefit from understanding how to design their documents.

The chapter begins by referencing various academic formatting styles that will probably be useful to your student. Section 5b explains the principles of good document design: creating flow, using good spacing techniques, grouping related elements, emphasizing important elements, and standardizing the appearance of elements. Section 5c covers application of design principles using specific tools and features, including print quality, margins, text, lists, headings, tables, figures, images, and color. Section 5d has an expanded treatment of using illustrations, with examples of tables, figures, and photographic or other images. A new section (5e) on considering readers who have vision disabilities ends the chapter.

#### COMPANION WEB SITE

See page IAE-52 for companion Web site content description.