

Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra
Faculty of Letters and Languages
Department of Foreign Languages
English Division

Level : 1st year LMD

Lecturer : Mrs. Bencharef. S

Module : Written Expression

Lesson : Characteristics of a good paragraph

1. Unity :

Unity in a paragraph means that the entire paragraph should focus on **one single idea** mentioned in the topic sentence. The supporting details should explain the main idea. The concluding sentence should end the paragraph with the same idea. If your paragraph contains a sentence or some sentences that are NOT related to the main topic, then we say that the paragraph "lacks unity." the sentence which is off-topic is called an **irrelevant sentence**.

***Let's Practise:* Identify the irrelevant sentence in each of the following paragraphs :**

The capital city of a country is usually a very important city. The government offices are located in the capital city and political leaders usually live there nearby. There are many different types of governments in the world. The capital may also be the centre of culture. There are often museums, libraries, and universities in the capital. Finally, the capital city can serve as a centre of trade, industry and commerce, so it is often the financial centre of a country. As a consequence, the capital city is usually the most crowded and developed city in a country.

The Smithsonian Institute, located in Washington, D.C., was established in 1846 for two reasons. The first was to do fundamental research and then publish the findings of this research. This research is used by historians and scientists all over the world. The second reason was to preserve the history and culture of the United States. The Smithsonian Institute established a museum to do this. The original building still stands today and is called the Smithsonian Museum. Since that first museum, many more have been built to house artifacts from various areas of U.S. society and history. The president of the United States also lives in Washington, D.C. These two functions of the Smithsonian Institute continue to be very important to the American people.

There are many examples to show that failure in school does not always predict failure in life. Albert Einstein, one of the world's geniuses, failed his university entrance examinations on his first attempt. Sir Winston Churchill, who is considered one of the masters of the English language, had to have special tutoring in English during elementary school. Dorothy Parker, who is a remarkable poet, used her famous sense of

humor to write some very good short stories and poems when she was a student. William Faulkner, one of America's noted writers, never finished college because he could not pass his English courses.

2. **Coherence** Cohere (verb): "stick together"

Coherence means that all the ideas in a paragraph flow naturally from one to another. They are arranged in a clear and logical way so that the reader can easily understand the main points. Sentences are connected logically together thanks to **cohesive devices** (**transitions, pronouns, synonyms, the definite article, repetition of key words, and parallel structure**).

Coherence has to do with organizing and ordering the ideas. There are three ways to think about organizing details in a paragraph :

- **Logical Order**: one idea leads logically to the next. For example, least important to most important, general to specific, familiar to new or unknown. For instance, if you are writing a paragraph to persuade your audience, you may want to provide your examples in order of importance. The weaker example appears first and your strongest example appears last.

This type is used for expository/argumentative paragraphs. Here coherence is based on logic or reason.

- **Space/spatial Order**: puts the details in an order relating to the physical world ; for example, left to right, top to bottom, head to foot, front to back, or close to far away. If you needed to provide directions on how to get somewhere, you would begin at the starting point and provide the directions a person might need to reach the destination. If you miss a step in the directions, your audience will be lost!

This type is used or descriptive paragraphs

- **Time/chronological Order** : puts the details in an order relating to time (hours, days, months,); for example, past to present, present to future, first to last. This type is used in narrative paragraphs. The supporting sentences must tell the events of a story in the order they happened

Cohesive Devices

They are words or phrases that connect sentences and paragraphs together, creating a smooth flow of ideas. They include :

1. **Transitions/transitional signals** : They are common type of **linking words**. They connect sentences together or relate ideas to one another. Here are some common transitions that are used with expository paragraphs, in particular.

- **Comparison :** *likewise- compared to - as....as - in the same way- once more- similarly- similar to-*
- **Contrast :** *however- on the one hand.....on the other hand- in spite of- in contrast- although- instead- nevertheless- on the contrary-*
- **Beginning of arguments:** *first...second....third / firstly...secondly.....thirdly....finally.*
In the first place- From a start- first of all- to start with
One reason is thatanother reason is that.....the last reason is that / the most important reason is
- **Additional information/ideas:** *and- also- besides- in addition- in fact- furthermore- moreover- another....- equally important.*
- **Examples :** *for example- for instance- in general- generally- specifically- in particular- indeed-in fact- the following example- to illustrate- as an illustration- in other words.*
- **Cause and effect :** ** therefore- so- thus- as a result- consequently- for this reason- hence- (result)*
** since- because- as- due to- (reason)*
- **Emphasizing:** *certainly, indeed, in fact, of course, naturally, of course, it is true*
- **Concluding ideas:** **finally (we use it in the last supporting sentence to indicate the last argument)*
** in conclusion- in summary- to sum up- therefore- to conclude- to summarize- in brief- in short- all in all.*

Practice 1 :

There are many reasons why I don't smoke. _____, smoking is unhealthy. It can cause lung cancer, and it can lead to an early death. _____, smoking is expensive. A pack of cigarettes costs five dollars. If I bought one pack of cigarettes every day, I would spend over \$1500 each year. _____, cigarettes smell bad. When people smoke, you can smell the cigarettes on their clothes all day. _____, the other night, I went to a restaurant that allowed smoking. After I left, all of my clothes smelled terrible, as did my hair. I don't like drinking alcohol as well. If I were a smoker, I would smell that way all the time. _____, I don't smoke because it is unhealthy, expensive, and unattractive.

Decide which transitions to use from the following list: *second, also, furthermore, another reason is that, for example, moreover, however, to sum up, first, one reason is that.*

Note: Transitions are part of “**linking words**”. Linking words include coordinating conjunctions, subordinating conjunctions, prepositions, and **transitions**.

Practice 2: Circle the correct linking word (transition).

In recent years, Internet has become a great part of our lives. More and more people have access to it and have discovered many benefits from using it. **To begin with/ moreover**, internet offers us unlimited information

and knowledge on just about every topic, and access to the Net is easy and fast. **In spite of this / Therefore**, school children regularly use the web to research school projects or to browse just for fun. **What is more / For this reason**, people can communicate with people all over the world with systems like e-mail or facebook. **For example/ Finally**, they can view products from different countries and use their credit card to do their shopping from the comfort of your own home. **As a consequence/ as a conclusion**, internet has certainly made life easier and, if used properly, it may make our lives better, too.

2. **Pronoun reference:** Two sentences can be connected by the use of a pronoun. Pronouns quite naturally connect ideas because pronouns almost always refer the reader to something earlier in the text.

Example :

American Sign Language developed from a mixture of signs used by deaf Americans and French sign Language. Today, **it** is used by more than 500,000 deaf people in the United States and Canada.

→ The pronoun *it* refers back to the subject, *American Sign Language*, and connects the two sentences together.

Activity: Correct the pronouns in the following paragraph:

Olympic athletes must be strong both physically and mentally. First of all, if you hope to compete in an Olympic Sport, you must be physically strong. Furthermore, aspiring Olympians must train rigorously for many years. For the most demanding sports, they train several hours a day, five or six days a week, for ten or more years. In addition to being physically strong, athletes must also be mentally tough. This means that you have to be totally dedicated to your sport, often giving up normal school, family and social life. Being mentally strong also means that he or she must be able to withstand the intense pressure of international competition with the accompanying media coverage.

3. **Repetition of key words or ideas:** Another way to connect ideas is by repeating important words or phrases. This will help the reader remember the main ideas in the text. However, careless or excessive repetition is boring.

Example :

Modern **medicine** focuses on illness. If a patient with a cough visits a modern doctor, then the doctor will give the patient a medicine to stop the cough. If the patient also has a fever, the doctor may give a different **medicine** to stop the fever. For every person with a cough, the doctor will probably recommend the same cough medicine. The philosophy of modern **medicine** is to stop problems like coughing and fever as quickly as possible.

4. Using synonyms

Example:

Myths narrate sacred histories and explain sacred origins. These **traditional narratives** are, in short, a set of beliefs that are a very real force in the lives of the people who tell them.

5. Parallel form

Parallelism is a sort of repetition, only here it is not names or nouns that are repeated, but grammatical structures. Parallelism makes a text easier to read, and by making sentences similar in structure it helps to emphasize connections in content.

Example:

Usually, the children spend the summer weekends **playing** ball in park, **swimming** in the neighbour’s pool, **eating** ice cream under the tree, or **camping** in the backyard.

Global Revision

Below is a good coherent paragraph . *Italics* indicates pronouns and repeated/restated key words, **bold** indicates transitional tag-words, and underlining indicates parallel structures.

The ancient Egyptians were masters of preserving dead people's bodies by *making mummies* of them. In short, *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. Indeed, *mummies* several thousand years old have been discovered nearly intact. *Their* skin, hair, teeth, fingernails 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.

Global practice

Read carefully the following paragraph then answer the questions below.

..... One reason is that homework gives students additional practice of skills covered in class. Classes are too short to teach a new concept and practice it sufficiently for students to master. Students need both guided practice in class and independent practice at home.is that it provides time to complete longer assignments....., reports and special projects often require research that cannot always be done at school., since all students do not work at the same speed, giving students time at home to finish work keeps them from falling behind., the most important reason for homework is that it ensures review. New material and old material are practiced in daily assignments. Students who do their homework daily are prepared for tests and make better grades., students, do your daily homework, make better grades, and learn more!

1. Provide the paragraph with an appropriate topic sentence.
2. Fill in the blanks with appropriate transitions form the list: *second, also, another reason is that, in short, finally, for example, however, to sum up, In fact, as a result, indeed, to conclude, in addition.*
3. Pick out the second supporting sentence of the paragraph.

4. Is this paragraph unified? Justify your answer.

5. How did the writer conclude his paragraph? _____

6. Name 3 different cohesive devices, then give an example from the text for each.
