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should lead on to the theme of the next paragraph. The paragraphs have different functions, but all *develop* an idea – that is, they add information, explanation, examples and illustrations to the central theme or idea until the theme is fully developed.

### Topic sentences

You should generally express the main theme of each paragraph by one sentence (the main or topic sentence). This sentence is best placed at the beginning of the paragraph as it will inform the reader of your point early on in the paragraph. The rest of the paragraph should then expand the theme contained in the main sentence, and each idea around the main theme should be supported by further information, evidence and argument. In Chapter 5 you will have seen how you can make use of these topic sentences when reading.

In Extract B of Activity 6.10 you saw the following sentence:

The consequences of not moderating the intake of fast food are rather alarming.

This first sentence of the paragraph acts as the topic sentence. It expresses the theme that there are disturbing consequences if we eat too much fast food.

### Activity 6.12 Dividing a text into paragraphs

Divide the following text into three paragraphs by adding ‘//’ where you think one paragraph ends and the other begins. Remember that each paragraph should begin with a topic sentence. The idea introduced in that topic sentence is then developed.

Respiration is the act of breathing. External respiration refers to the interchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide between the alveoli of the lungs and the pulmonary blood. Internal respiration, by contrast, takes place throughout the body; it is the interchange of these same gases between the circulating blood and the cells of the body tissues. Inhalation or inspiration refers to the intake of air into the lungs. Exhalation or expiration refers to breathing out or the movement of gases from the lungs to the atmosphere. Ventilation is also used to refer to the movement of air in and out of the lungs. There are basically two types of breathing: costal (thoracic) breathing and diaphragmatic (abdominal) breathing. Costal breathing involves the external intercostal muscles and other accessory muscles, such as the sternocleidomastoid muscles. It can be observed by the movement of the chest upward and outward. By contrast, diaphragmatic breathing involves the contraction and relaxation of the diaphragm, and it is observed by the movement of the abdomen, which occurs as a result of the diaphragm’s contraction and downward movement.

(Kozier *et al.*, 2008: 356)

### Supporting sentences

The aim of the supporting sentences (note that there needs to be more than one) is to develop the topic of your paragraph.

If you read the earlier topic sentence by itself:

the consequences of not moderating the intake of fast food are rather alarming hopefully, your immediate reaction would be, ‘What are these consequences?’ You would expect the writer now to provide you with answers to:

- 1 What are these consequences?
- 2 What makes them alarming?

You would also expect the writer to provide this information with evidence from the sources they have read (with references).

### Activity 6.13 Evaluating supporting sentences

Look back at Extract B of Activity 6.10 and using the two questions above, evaluate to what extent these questions have been answered.

### Creating topic sentences

When writing your topic sentence you need to know what the main theme of your paragraph is. It is important to strike the right balance. You should not write too general a sentence. You should try to focus your idea whilst at the same time you should not give too much detail.

### Activity 6.14 Identifying suitable topic sentences

- 1 Consider the following examples. In your opinion, and bearing in mind the above criteria, which of the three sentences is the most suitable topic sentence? Why?
  - (a) Growing vegetables in your back garden is fun.
  - (b) Growing vegetables in your back garden requires time and patience.
  - (c) Growing vegetables in your back garden can be very rewarding because you can watch the vegetables grow and then you can pick them and use them in your cooking.

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

- 2 Now do the same with the following sentences:
  - (a) There are three areas to consider when marketing a new product.
  - (b) Marketing a new product is difficult.



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- (c) When marketing a new product you need to analyse the market by identifying your target audience and looking at your competitors.

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

### 3 And again with these:

- (a) There seems to be a mismatch between teachers' and students' expectations.  
(b) There seems to be a mismatch between the way teachers and students view academic writing.  
(c) Students seem to rate writing skills relatively low on their learning priority scale as they do not realise the importance of writing in their academic life.

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

## Activity 6.15 Matching topic sentences to supporting sentences

Each of the following sentences provides supporting information. Choose a suitable topic sentence from the list below to introduce each of these sentences. The sentences are not dependent on each other and are therefore not intended to be read in a linear way.

- 1 Firstly, if an island is created by the loss of a land bridge to the mainland, following a sea-level rise, the new 'continental' island might initially be species-rich. (p. 255).
- 2 Land reclamation suggests that the land can be used again whereas land restoration is about returning the site to its former state. (p. 261).
- 3 Many regions of the world have experienced major climatic change to which plants and animals have been forced to adjust in order to survive. (p. 250).
- 4 Islands often provide as near a situation to a scientific laboratory that the biogeographer is likely to encounter. (p. 254).
- 5 This may be in order to increase the efficiency of its production or to control the spread of pest species. (p. 257).

Choose from the following topic sentences. You will *not* need one of the topic sentences provided:

- (a) The study of isolated areas such as islands has provided knowledge and understanding of huge importance.
- (b) Many aspects of biogeography have great relevance and impact today.
- (c) Several important extensions of land biogeography theory are used in biogeography and elsewhere to explain patterns of distribution.
- (d) There is often an economic as well as scientific reason for learning about the preferred 'geography' of a species.
- (e) Biogeographical management may involve land restoration or land reclamation.

## Developing paragraphs

- (f) Over a lesser but still extended period of time, climatic fluctuations over the past 2 million years have been important determinants of biogeographical change.

Answers: 1 \_\_\_\_, 2 \_\_\_\_, 3 \_\_\_\_, 4 \_\_\_\_, 5 \_\_\_\_

(Holden, J. (ed.) 2008)

## Activity 6.16 Writing topic sentences

Read the following paragraphs and create a suitable topic sentence for each one.

### 1 (On people's views of nature)

..... Some feel ruled by it, others feel in harmony with it and still others seek to master it. A long-term trend has been people's growing mastery over nature through technology and the belief that nature is bountiful. More recently, however, people have recognised that nature is finite and fragile – that it can be destroyed or spoiled by human activities. (Kotler *et al.*, 2008: 221)

### 2 (On media planners choosing among media types)

..... They want to choose media that will effectively and efficiently present the advertising message to target customers. Thus, they must consider each medium's impact, message effectiveness and cost. The media habits of target consumers will affect media choice and so will the nature of the product. (Kotler *et al.*, 2008: 748)

### 3 (On social interactions)

..... Because of hereditary differences, one child may be more sociable; this child will be the recipient of more interaction. Another child may be abrasive and disagreeable; this child will be treated more coldly. In the case of identical twins, who have no hereditary differences, the amount of interaction with each twin is likely to be similar. (Martin *et al.*, 2008: 657)

## Developing supporting sentences

To help you develop relevant supporting sentences, it may help if you ask questions of your topic sentence. You could then answer those questions by doing the following:

- Provide an explanation/reasons for the idea in the topic sentence. Why is it so?
- Provide evidence to support the topic sentence.
- Provide examples where appropriate to expand on your claim in the topic sentence.

**Activity 6.17 Developing supporting sentences**

Look at the following topic sentences and ask questions of them:

- Partial dictation may be considered as an alternative.
- Plug gages are one of the most common types of fixed gages.
- The intensity of the north-south exchange is shown in many, often unexpected, ways.

**Activity 6.18 Writing supporting sentences**

Now try to answer the questions you formed in Activity 6.17, thus in fact writing supporting sentences. You may of course choose to create your own topic sentences for this activity.

**Concluding sentences**

We suggested that you begin each paragraph with a topic sentence to help guide your reader. To assist your reader further, you may also choose to add concluding sentences at the end of the paragraphs. This is particularly useful if your paragraph is long and you have included a number of examples and supporting evidence. It is possible that by the end of the paragraph your reader may have lost the main point you are trying to make. By adding a concluding sentence, you are reiterating your point before moving onto the next paragraph.

Concluding sentences are relatively easy to write. Look at Table 6.1 (signalling words), choose one word or phrase from the 'summary/conclusion' row and rephrase your topic sentence so you are not exactly repeating it. Alternatively you can summarise your paragraph or link with the point in the next paragraph.

**Activity 6.19 Writing concluding sentences**

Turn the topic sentences you have devised in Activity 6.16 into concluding sentences.

**Connecting ideas within sentences and sentences within paragraphs (signalling)**

So far you have practised how to start, develop and end a paragraph. You also need to make clear to the reader how the various parts of your paragraph are connected. The information in the paragraph must flow easily from one sentence to the next. To

do this, it is important to structure your information clearly and signal exactly what you want to say by the use of signalling words. Notice that signalling words do not always start a sentence. They may also be found within a sentence as in 'many people attended because of the successful promotion'. Table 6.1 is intended as a guide to which signalling words should be used in which context.

**Table 6.1 Signalling words**

<b>Addition</b>	apart from this, as well as, besides, furthermore, in addition, moreover, nor, not only ... but also, too, what is more
<b>Cause and effect</b>	accordingly, as a consequence, as a result, because (of this), consequently, for this reason, hence, in order to, owing to this, so, so that, therefore, this leads to, thus
<b>Comparison/ similar ideas</b>	in comparison, in the same way, likewise, similarly
<b>Condition</b>	if, in that case, provided that, unless
<b>Contradiction</b>	actually, as a matter of fact, in fact
<b>Contrast/ opposite ideas</b>	although, but, despite, in spite of, even so, however, in contrast, in spite of this, nevertheless, on the contrary, on the other hand, whereas, yet
<b>Emphasis</b>	chiefly, especially, importantly, indeed, in detail, in particular, mainly, notably, particularly
<b>Examples</b>	for example, for instance, such as, thus, as follows
<b>Explanation/ equivalence</b>	in other words, namely, or rather, this means, to be more precise
<b>Generalisation</b>	as a rule, for the most part, generally, in general, normally, on the whole, in most cases, usually
<b>Stating the obvious</b>	clearly, naturally, obviously, surely
<b>Summary/ conclusion</b>	finally, in brief, in conclusion, in short, in summary, overall, to conclude
<b>Support</b>	actually, as a matter of fact, in fact, indeed
<b>Time/order</b>	at first, eventually, finally, first(ly), in the first/second place, initially, lastly, later, next, prior to, second(ly)

Another useful way to show the connection between the ideas in a paragraph is to start the second or subsequent sentence with a phrase such as 'this problem' or 'this situation'. These phrases help provide a connection by summarising the previous sentence.

Students often struggle to provide adequate links between sentences. This problem can be overcome easily.

The use of 'this problem' clearly relates to 'struggling to provide adequate links between sentences', which has been replaced by this linking phrase. Using 'this' or 'these' with one such noun is useful in showing the connection between sentences.

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Other nouns typically used in this way are shown in Table 6.2.

**Table 6.2** Examples of nouns used as linking devices with 'this' or 'these'

account	advice	answer	argument	area	assertion	assumption	claim
comment	conclusion	criticism	description	difficulty	discussion	distinction	emphasis
estimate	example	explanation	finding	idea	improvement	increase	observation
proof	proposal	reference	rejection	report	rise	situation	suggestion
view	warning						

### Activity 6.20 Identifying signalling expressions

Read the following text and circle all the examples of signalling words and phrases you can find. (There are at least 10 in total.)

Darwin's *The origin of species* published in 1859 was hugely influential in the field of science and in society in general. Indeed it has often been referred to as the 'book that shook the world'. The book outlined how there could be a relatively gradual change in the characteristics of successive generations of a species and that higher plants and animals evolved slowly over time from lower beings. This process occurred as a result of competition within local interacting communities. Darwin's book helped throw the idea that there was a complete difference between humans and the animal world into turmoil as he reinforced the suggestion that humans evolved from lower beings. Prior to this it was believed in the western world, based on biblical works, that humans were created superior to other beings. With the idea that humans could have evolved from lower beings came the undermining of traditional religious opinions. However, although some religious leaders did embrace Darwinism at the time, the theories were very different from those that had come before. These ideas radically shook a society, where, because of the increasing availability of printed books and papers, intellectual knowledge was being transferred in greater quantity than ever before. Darwin's idea therefore influenced most areas of science at the time. (Holden, 2008: 6)

### Activity 6.21 Using suitable signalling expressions

In the following text on understanding a textbook, at least 10 inappropriate signalling words and phrases have been included. Identify them and either remove them or replace them with a suitable word or phrase using Table 6.1 above to help you.

Research (Slotte and Lonka 1999) on student note-taking methods usually suggests that there are specific ways of reading a textbook which can maximise learning. As a matter of fact, half of the research sample were asked to review their notes during note-taking; the other half were not given any explicit instructions. Besides, analysis of the quality and

quantity of notes similarly indicated that reviewing notes during essay writing was associated with good performance on questions that required comprehension of the text and deep, and what is more, detailed knowledge. Moreover, reviewing these notes did not naturally help with drawing original conclusions about the text. In comparison, it was noted that students summarising the text in their own words, apart from this, with their own sub-headings and structure, performed better than those students who took verbatim notes or, in short, took notes in the exact order in which the material appeared in the text. Actually, this finding suggests that deeper understanding (and better performance) comes from having read and understood material in a text and finally expressing it in your own words.

(Martin et al., 2008: 295)

## Connecting paragraphs

As writing an academic text consists of more than one paragraph, you will need to link each paragraph in some way. Table 6.1 on signalling words may also be of use to you when connecting paragraphs together. You will find nevertheless that you often need a longer sentence to help create a link from paragraph to paragraph. The topic sentence can either form part of your linking sentence or it will follow it. Imagine you are outlining the positive and negative issues of a given topic. You may begin one of your 'positive' paragraphs with one of the following:

One of the main advantages of X is ...

One of the positive effects of X is ...

You may then choose to start the next paragraph with one of these phrases:

A further advantage (of X) is ...

X is a further advantage (worth considering)

Another advantage (of X) is ...

X is another advantage ...

When you are ready to change your discussion to the negative issues, you may write one of the following:

Having considered the positive effects of X, negative issues need to be taken into account.

Despite the positive effects outlined above, there are also negative issues to be considered.

The important point here is that paragraphs should not be standing in isolation. Do not expect your reader to make the connection in your ideas, but make those connections explicit. This way, the reader will be led in a logical order through your argument and will be reminded of your current theme or angle.



**Activity 6.22 Evaluating the importance of links between paragraphs**

Compare the following two extracts on the positive and negative issues associated with fast food taken from student work. Which extract signals to the reader what information to expect in each paragraph? Why is this a useful writing tool?

**Extract 1**

Fast food is also known as convenient food. This is highly processed food that is available on demand. Fast food is important because it has become a significant part of every society today.

Fast food industries improve the society by providing jobs for the unemployed. When new restaurants and fast food outlets are established in an area, new staff, mainly from the locality, is employed. This helps reduce the area's unemployment level.

Many economies have been influenced by fast food companies especially in the agricultural sector of the economy. Most fast food industries do not have their own large farm land to grow the crops needed for production; they depend on both local and international farmers. An increase in the demand for agricultural produce also encourages farmers to expand and grow crops on a larger scale either for exportation or for consumption within their own country.

McDonald's and many other world recognised fast food companies are known for their contribution to society. They award scholarships, sponsor the purchase of new medical facilities and help build health centres. The community programmes organised by these fast food companies include environmental sanitation where items used for production are reduce, reused or recycled to decrease the amount of annual waste produced.

Within the last ten years, there has been an awareness of the dangers of eating fast food. Fatty food is unhealthy. It contains a high amount of unsaturated fat which implies high energy content. This can lead to obesity which can in turn lead to health problems like heart disease, diabetes, and different forms of cancer.

Despite all efforts to keep the environment clean and tidy, it is almost impossible to keep litter off the streets. Take-away packs and unwanted souvenirs from fast food restaurants can often be found littering the streets.

Advertisements are not bad but when children are the target of unhealthy food adverts, then they are bad. Children between the ages of 2-8 are targeted because they can become loyal to the brand ...

**Extract 2**

Fast food is also known as convenient food. This is highly processed food that is available on demand. Fast food is important because it has become a significant part of every society today.

There are many advantages associated with fast food. Firstly, fast food industries improve the society by providing jobs for the unemployed. When new restaurants and fast food outlets are established in an area, new staff, mainly from the locality, is employed. This helps reduce the area's unemployment level.

A greater advantage and impact of the fast food industry on the world today is that many economies have been influenced by fast food companies especially in the agricultural

sector of the economy. Most fast food industries do not have their own large farm land to grow the crops needed for production; they depend on both local and international farmers. An increase in the demand for agricultural produce also encourages farmers to expand and grow crops on a larger scale either for exportation or for consumption within their own country.

The efforts of fast food industries in their contribution to society cannot be overemphasised. They contribute by awarding scholarships, sponsoring the purchase of new medical facilities and helping build health centres. The community programmes organised by these fast food companies include environmental sanitation where items used for production are reduce, reused or recycled to decrease the amount of annual waste produced.

Having considered the advantages of fast food in the world today, some important setbacks will be discussed. Within the last ten years, there has been an awareness of the dangers of eating fast food. Fatty food is unhealthy. It contains a high amount of unsaturated fat which implies high energy content. This can lead to obesity which can in turn lead to health problems like heart disease, diabetes, and different forms of cancer.

A further drawback is that despite all efforts to keep the environment clean and tidy, it is almost impossible to keep litter off the streets. Take-away packs and unwanted souvenirs from fast food restaurants can often be found littering the streets.

The final disadvantage worth considering is advertisements. Advertisements are not bad but when children are the target of unhealthy food adverts, then they are bad. Children between the ages of 2-8 are targeted because they can become loyal to the brand ...

**Activity 6.23 Identifying links**

Look at Extract 2 in Activity 6.22 and find all the examples used to link paragraphs together.

**Activity 6.24 Adding links between paragraphs**

Read the following paragraphs which form part of a text on support staff in classrooms. Add suitable links at the beginning of each paragraph.

Many primary and secondary teachers will find that they have with them a support teacher (ST) or a teaching assistant in the classroom. An ST is a member of staff who may be employed by the local education authority to support the learning of children with specific needs. One common use of a ST is to support children who have English as an additional language. These teachers have got specific expertise and will work on a one-to-one basis or with a group of children to improve their language skills and allow them to engage fully with the school curriculum.

..... is to help pupils who have specific educational needs like dyslexia. These teachers usually come from a special needs background and will come

into mainstream classrooms to support average ability or able pupils who have been identified as having specific learning difficulties.

....., STs may also be members of staff who have spare contact time and this needs to be used effectively to support those pupils who are identified as needing extra help. (Davies, 2007: 104)

### Activity 6.25 Checking for paragraph links in your own work

When you next write an assignment ask the following questions as you read through your work:

- Does the start of my paragraph show my reader what it will be about?
- Does my paragraph add to or elaborate on a point made previously and, if so, have I explicitly shown this with an appropriate linking phrase?
- Does my paragraph introduce a completely new point or a different viewpoint to before and if so, have I explicitly shown this with an appropriate linking phrase?
- Have I repeatedly used similar linking phrases? (If yes, try to vary them.)

To sum up, in order to write well-organised, logical, cohesive text, you should:

- identify the area you will concentrate on in each paragraph
- write a topic sentence which will introduce your point
- form a question from your topic sentence which you will then answer by writing supporting sentences
- link the sentences within your paragraph with appropriate signalling language like 'furthermore' or 'in fact'
- write a concluding sentence to remind the reader of your main point (particularly useful in long paragraphs)
- start the next paragraph with an appropriate linking sentence, which may include the topic sentence for that paragraph
- continue in the same way.

## WRITING PLANS

Chapter 2 looked at writing skeletal plans. To reiterate, in order for you to use the above checklist successfully and write well-organised texts, you need to plan your thoughts in advance. It is surprising how many students read a question, particularly in an examination, and immediately begin writing without any thought or planning. Even if you feel extremely confident in your ability to answer the question fully, you should take time to write a plan. Remember the plan is usually only for your

own use; you can therefore write it in whatever note form you like. The following guidelines are intended for all assignment writing, including examinations:

- Use the advice on deconstructing the title and overcoming the blank page in Chapter 2 and adapt it to suit you.
- Look at the ideas which you have generated and decide how to group them together in a meaningful and logical way.
- Keep in mind that each idea you have will be expressed in at least one paragraph.
- List your ideas on paper leaving big blanks between each idea on the page (the topic sentence).
- Fill the blanks with examples and points which develop your topic sentence (the supporting sentences).
- Now you have all the points written down, you can begin with your introduction having a clear idea of how your text will develop.

If you have never written plans before, you may like to try these guidelines over the next few assignments. If you have written plans before, you may like to consider whether these hints have provided you with any ideas you have not tried before and you may now like to try.

## WRITING DRAFTS

Writing drafts is a feature of academic writing so unless you are in an examination room where time is limited, try to allow yourself sufficient time to write drafts. Academic writing is a process that takes time and involves a number of additions, revisions and general editing before the final product is ready. If you manage to view academic writing as a way of constructing and developing a product you should feel less fear and anxiety when approaching a given assignment. Just as plans are intended for your personal use, drafts are meant to help you too.

Knowing that you have the flexibility to go back to a text you have written, reread it, rewrite parts of it and move it around before any reader has the chance to look at it should feel quite liberating. So next time you spend ages thinking of a better phrase to express something, write it in a different colour so you can find it easily later and move on. Leave yourself notes on the text in a different font or colour or highlight them and look at them after you have had a break, or indeed on a different day. Start with the conclusion first if you feel you know what you will say! You can always return to it later and adjust it or transform it completely. The point is, it does not really matter if your work does not feel perfect to you yet; it is only a draft.

### Writing drafts for lecturers

Many university lecturers give students the option to hand in drafts. If your course provides you with this opportunity, make sure you use it. The feedback you will receive will help you see whether you are on the right lines or whether there is

See  
Chapter 2

See  
Chapter 14

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a crucial point you have omitted to make. Using this opportunity could mean the difference between a pass and a fail, or a pass and an A grade. If the draft is assessed, make sure you find out what the exact requirements are: Does your lecturer want continuous prose, including an introduction and conclusion, or are bullet points acceptable with the expectation that they will be turned into continuous prose for the final submission? As with any piece of assessed work, make sure you work to the set requirements. Assessment criteria are usually provided with the coursework or in the course handbook.

## SUMMARY

In order for you to thrive in your new academic community, you need to write planned, well-organised, cohesive text in an appropriate style taking care to be objective and cautious with your expressed opinions. You should always endeavour to write critically, analysing and evaluating the ideas you find in sources and ensuring that you reference those sources appropriately. Make sure that you read widely so that you, in turn, produce appropriate academic texts for your academic community.

## References

Details of highlighted references can be found in the Introduction on page xxii.