Writing Paragraphs

Coherent Paragraphs
- Write paragraphs that are easy to follow and understand.
- Make sure each paragraph has a clear topic sentence and supporting sentences.
- Each paragraph should have a logical flow.

Paragraph Length
- Make paragraphs between 3-4 sentences long.
- Avoid long or short paragraphs.

Organization
- Organize paragraphs in a logical order.
- Use topic sentences to introduce each paragraph.

Supporting Sentences
- Include supportive sentences that develop the topic sentence.
- Use examples, facts, or details to illustrate points.

Develop Main Point
- Use a main point to guide the paragraph.
- Make sure the main point is clear and relevant.

Coherence
- Ensure paragraphs are connected and flow smoothly.
- Use transition words to link sentences.

Example
- Provide an example to illustrate the main point.
- Use specific details to make the example clear.

Reference
- Cite sources to support your points.
- Use a variety of sources to provide a comprehensive view.

Music
- Use music to set the tone and mood.
- Music can enhance the reading experience.
Focus on a Main Point

• A paragraph must be unified around one main point or idea.

• Every sentence should relate to that point/idea.

• Start with a **topic sentence** - a one sentence summary that tells the reader what to expect as he or she reads on.

• Topic sentences are **essential for business writing** because readers scan for information and summary statements.

As a result of the tax cut, Lincoln High School's educational facilities have reached an all-time low.
Sticking to the Point

• Sentences that do not support the topic sentence destroy unity.

• If a paragraph is not focused, delete irrelevant information.

• Writers sometimes stray from a topic because they cannot think of enough evidence to support a topic sentence.

Two choices:
  • find more evidence
  • adjust topic sentence to reflect evidence provided

Activity: Identify focused paragraphs
1) The issue of leadership and management is both similar to and different from non-human, animal, and human biology. To be effective, a manager should be a good leader. Good leaders know how to manage people differently.

2) Critics should offer courses to help students with the mechanics of temperament. Such a course might begin with a discussion of how to build temperament, and then continue with writing and citizenship. Right and Letter 1 offer students' real-world advice. They are required classes for students who want to move on, and help students with their interpersonal skills. However, some people feel the courses are not well prepared for the difficult task of building a successful career.

3) Employees at the American Electric Company should be imperialism. The problem is not that they are working much instead of individuals. People feel they are not part of a team, they would not consider the task, or different duties are for each of them. Management's attitude.

4) You can not really work with principles, but it is important to know how useful what is not. They choose an easy path, perfectly at night and during the day. The next day, people argue and save energy and time. Problem solving is finding on the right time to do it. Several transactions per ingredients. Other work is activity to the maximum of principles. Some, deadly and steadily. Finally, some know the same; we are pressed in any time. Problems are large and varied when they are considered. The presence of foods is the same. They may enrich the jobs in society. If you have these single principles, you must change them.
Develop the Main Point

- A series of brief paragraphs suggests inadequate information.
- How much evidence is enough to develop the point varies?
- Hamburger analogy

| Topic Sentence | Examples/Evidence | Main Points | Closing/Transition |
Organization

- Choose a method of development (patterns).

Examples & Illustrations

Narration

Description

Process
Organization

Compare & Contrast

Analogy

Cause & Effect

Classification & Division

Definition

Activity: Paragraph development

Narration:
One North Carolina man lived quite a successful year while fishing in the Catawba River. A prairie, Jerry McAdoo, in Carolina, raised in a riverfront, fished as far as 100 miles from the mouth of the river. McAdoo caught several large fish, including a nearly 10-foot-long salmon.
**Narration:**

One North Carolina man found quite a surprise last year while fishing in the Catawba River: a piranha. Jerry Melton, of Gastonia, reeled in a one pound, four ounce fish with an unusual bite. Melton could not identify it, but a nearby fisherman did. Melton at first could not believe he had caught a piranha. He said, “That ain’t no piranha. They ain’t got piranha around here.” Melton was right: the fish is native to South America, and North Carolina prohibits owning the fish as a pet or introducing the species to local waterways. The sharp-toothed, carnivorous fish likely found itself in the Catawba River when its illegal owner released the fish after growing tired of it. Wildlife officials hope that the piranha was the only of its kind in the river, but locals are thinking twice before they wade in the water.

**Description:**

Piranha are omnivorous, freshwater fish, which are mostly known for their single row of sharp, triangular teeth in both jaws. Piranhas’ teeth come together in a scissor-like bite and are used for puncture and tearing. Baby piranha are small, about the size of a thumbnail, but full-grown piranha grow up to about 6-10 inches, and some individual fish up to 2 feet long have been found. The many species of piranha vary in color, though most are either silvery with an orange underbelly and throat or almost entirely black.

**Process:**

You can safely swim with piranhas, but it’s important to know how and when to do it. First, choose an appropriate time, preferably at night and during the rainy season. Avoid piranha-infested waters during the dry season, when food supplies are low and piranhas are more desperate. Piranhas feed during the day, so night-time swimming is much safer. Second, streamline your movement. Wild or erratic activity attracts the attention of piranhas. Swim slowly and smoothly. Finally, never enter the water with an open wound or raw meat. Piranhas attack larger animals only when they are wounded. The presence of blood in the water may tempt the fish to attack. If you follow these simple precautions, you will have little to fear.
Paragraph Length

Most of the time, paragraphs should be between 100 and 200 words.

Shorter paragraphs start and stop too much.

Longer paragraphs strain reader's attention span.

Exceptions:

- scholarly writing about complex ideas contain long paragraphs.
- business writing can contain short paragraphs because readers skim for main ideas.

When should I begin a new paragraph?
When should I combine paragraphs?
When should I separate paragraphs?
Coherent Paragraphs

• When paragraphs move from one to another without any gaps, they are **coherent**.

• Coherence is improved by strengthening the relationship between the old paragraph and the new.

• Also called **transitioning** from old information to new information.
Coherent Paragraphs: Transitions

Link ideas clearly: directly or indirectly support topic sentence with every paragraph sentence

Repeat key words: use variations of key word to avoid repetition

Use parallel structures: bind a series of sentences expressing similar information

Maintain consistency: do not change point of view or verb tense suddenly

Provide transitions: identify relationship between one paragraph and the next. (sentence-level, paragraph-level)
Example

Consider aseptic packaging, the synthetic packaging for juice boxes and drinks that many children bring to school. One criticism of aseptic packaging is that it is nearly impossible to recycle, yet on almost every other count, aseptic packaging is environmentally preferable to packaging alternatives. Not only do aseptic containers not require refrigeration to keep their contents from spoiling, but their manufacture requires less than one-tenth the energy of making glass bottles.

What is true for juice boxes is also true for other forms of synthetic packaging. The use of polystyrene, which is commonly (and mistakenly) referred to as "Styrofoam," can reduce food waste dramatically due to its insulating properties. Due to these properties, Styrofoam cups are preferred over paper cups for coffee in most places. Polystyrene also requires significantly fewer resources to produce than its paper counterparts.
References

Alan Hancock College Writing Center. (n.d.). *Transitional Words*.

ASC. (2013). *Organizational Patterns*.


Odegaard Writing & Research Center. (n.d.). *Using Transitions Effectively*.