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## Target: 1<sup>st</sup> year Licence

## Subject: Written Comprehension and Expression

# Handout

By

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# Introduction

Writing is fundamental in education as most teaching/learning resources are in the written mode. Indeed, teachers and students alike are required to have grips of the pillars of writing, for they need to have access to readings and to write as well.

Particularly, students need to be accustomed with the basics of writing that ready them to write larger compositions. They need to master the specificities of writing to deliver their aptitudes in the most accurate, adequate and effective way possible. Indeed, doing so reflects their ability and skills to write, and would allow teachers, evaluators and examiners to gauge students' written performances.

The first year at the university is critical, for it is the underpinning of subsequent levels. Thus, as far as the writing skill is concerned, the syllabus of Written Comprehension and Expression covers the basics of writing through which students are familiarised with what constitutes language (words), and are trained to put those words together into larger constructions (phrases, clauses, sentences, and paragraphs) that are governed by rules.

This handout is, therefore, a theoretical account of the lessons of first year 'Written Comprehension and Expression.' It covers the syllabus suggested in the 'Offre de Formation 2015-2016'. Besides, the handout provides practice for students to have hands-on command of the different writing aspects.

This handout aims at developing students' mastery of the basics and constituents of writing at the end of the first semester. Particularly, the first part grapples to achieve the following objectives:

Students will be familiarised with constituents of the language.

Students will be able to identify/produce different types of sentences.

Students will be able to appropriately use writing mechanics.

Students will be able to detect/avoid sentence problems.

At the end of the second semester, this handout aims at developing students' mastery of paragraph structure and of the different types of paragraphs, by being able to write a well-thought-out written composition. Particularly, the handout grapples to achieve the following objectives:

Students will be introduced to paragraph format.

Students will be explicitly exposed to how writing proceeds.

Students will be familiarised with different types of paragraph writing.

# Semester I

# Basics of Writing

# Basics of Writing

## By

## Dr. Manel MIZAB

Writing is one of the four language skills (along with reading, listening and speaking). It is considered the most difficult skill to learn, even for natives, for it is multifaceted and it requires mastery of language rules, vocabulary, and regulations of writing. Indeed, writing is a fundamental skill that is necessary throughout students' university career, for almost any assignment and test is pursued in the written mode. Paragraphs, essays, research projects, articles, and emails are essential and indispensable manuscripts that reflect students' writing skills and potential.

Therefore, developing such skills occupies the lion's share, for they highly depend on knowing the basics of writing, from words to larger written constructions.

## I. Parts of Speech (brief introduction)

Look at the following paragraph and how words underlined, circled or squared constitute the language of the paragraph.

It was a dark, gray day but even the darkest of days can turn sunny. Depressed by the weather, John put on his warmest coat. He could not find his gloves so he shoved his cold hands deep into the pockets of his coat. "Hey!" he said and so loud his mother could hear him. "Hey what?" she called out to him from the kitchen. "I found my missing locker key! he said. He happily put the key into his backpack and was smiling as he walked out the door. The day was still dark and gray but his mood was now an even sunny one. (www.quora.com)

Noun     Article     Verb     Adverb     Pronoun     Adjective

Interjection     Conjunction     Preposition

Parts of speech, also called word classes, are the constituents of the language. There are two main categories: form class (or open class) that consists of content words, including nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs; and structure class (or closed class) that encompasses all words making sentences grammatically correct, including articles, pronouns, conjunctions, prepositions, and interjections.

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**Drill 1: Classify the following words into open class and closed class**

You, class, or, since, articulate, far, intelligent, badly, clearer, well, Oh,

| Open Class | Closed Class |
|---|---|
|  |  |

---

## 1. Nouns

Nouns are words used to name persons, animals, things, and places, or ideas. They can be classified into different categories (Table 1), but the latter can overlap; e.g., a countable noun can be a common noun at the same time.

Table 1

*Some categorisations of nouns*

|  | Categories | Definition | Examples |
|---|---|---|---|
| Common Vs. Proper nouns | Common nouns | Words used to name persons, things, or places in general. | Girl Animal City |
| | Proper nouns | Words used to name specific persons, things, or places. | Malek Rex Algiers |
| Concrete Vs. Abstract nouns | Concrete nouns | Words referring to people or things that exist physically, and can be detected by one of the five senses. | Cat Tree |
| | Abstract nouns | Words having no physical existence referring to ideas, emotions, and concepts that can't be detected by senses. | Love Freedom |
| Countable Vs. Non-countable nouns | Countable nouns | Words which can be counted, and eventually they have singular and plural forms. | Table ↓ |

| | | | Table**s** |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Non-countable nouns | Words which cannot be counted. They includes words referring to liquids, substances, and abstract ideas. | Water Coal Happiness |
| Compound nouns | | Combination of words. They can be separate, attached, hyphenated. | Sunrise Post office Ice-cream |
| Collective nouns | | Words referring to a set or a group of people, animals, or things. | Team Flock |

## 2. Determiners

Determiners, or noun signals, are words that precede nouns, and that indicate that the coming word is a noun. They are structure words classified into articles, demonstratives, and quantifiers.

### 2.1. Articles

Articles in English are three: "The" (definite article) and "a" and "an" (indefinite articles).

### 2.2. Demonstratives

Demonstratives are used to point at a person, an object, a place, or an animal. They are "this", "that", "these", and "those".

### 2.3. Quantifiers

Quantifiers are words that indicate the quantity of a noun, such as most, all, few, little, many, much …etc.

## 3. Adjectives

Adjectives are words that identify and add more information to the noun or noun phrase being described. There two type: descriptive and limiting.

### 3.1. Descriptive Adjectives

Describing adjectives are adjectives that determine a quality, a characteristic, a trait, a feature, or a tribute of a person, an animal, a place, a thing, a concept …etc.

#### 3.1.1. Regular (attributive)

Regular or attributive adjectives are adjacent to what they describe.  In other words, attributive adjectives are not separable by a linking verb; e.g., The flowers have a nice smell.

<div align="right">Adj.    N.</div>

### 3.1.2.  Predicate

As the name implies, predicate adjectives come after a linking verb to act as a complement of the subject; e.g., The Pickles are salty.

<div align="center">N.          Adj.</div>

### 3.2.Limiting Adjectives

Unlike descriptive adjectives that describe, limiting adjectives limit and restrict nouns or noun phrases.  They are article, possessive, demonstrative, cardinal, ordinal, indefinite, interrogative, relative, proper, and noun (Table 2).

Table 2

*Types of limiting adjectives*

| Type | Example |
|---|---|
| Articles | The cat ate the mouse.<br><br>I saw a lion at the zoo.<br><br>She ate an apple. |
| Possessive adjectives | I forgot my keys0 |
| Demonstrative adjectives | That dog is so adorable. |
| Cardinal adjectives | There are 18 tables. |
| Ordinal adjectives | The seventh month of the year is July. |
| Indefinite adjectives | No person helped Djamel when he was tortured and killed. |
| Interrogative adjectives | Which teaching method is likely to produce the best results? |
| Relative adjectives | I couldn't guess which team was gonna win. |
| Proper adjectives | I love Italien food. |
| Noun used as adjective | I attended a book exhibition. |

## 4. Pronouns

Pronouns are words that replace nouns or noun phrases. They have different functions summarised in Table 3.

Table 3

*Types of pronouns*

| Type | Example |
|---|---|
| Personal | I walked to the university.<br><br>My cousin sent me a letter. |
| Possessive | Is this book yours? |
| Demonstrative | This is the dress I'm wearing tonight. |
| Interrogative | What did you tell him? |
| Relative | I couldn't understand what the message meant. |
| Indefinite | Everybody was absent. |
| Reciprocal | We've been waiting for each other for 9 years. |
| Intensive | I myself find pronouns fascinating. |
| Reflexive | She baked a cake for herself. |

**Note**

**Some words can be both adjectives and pronouns. Thus, to make distinction between them, you need to pay attention to what follows them. If these words are followed by nouns or noun phrases, they are adjectives. If they are not followed by nouns or noun phrases and they can stand alone, they are pronouns. Look at Sentences (1) and (2):**

**(1) This dress is beautiful.   --→ This + Noun --→ 'This' is a demonstrative adjective.**

**(2) This is the dress I love.   --→ This + Ø--→ 'This' is a demonstrative pronoun.**

Table 4 summarises the pronouns

Table 4

*List of pronouns*

| Personal Pronoun Subject | Personal Pronoun Object | Possessive pronouns | Reflexive / Intensive pronouns |
|---|---|---|---|
| I | Me | Mine | Myself |
| You | You | Yours | Yourself |
| He | Him | His | Himself |
| She | Her | Hers | Herself |
| It | It | Its | Itself |
| We | Us | Ours | Ourselves |
| They | Them | Theirs | Themselves |
| You | You | Yours | yourselves |

## 5. Verbs

Verbs are the core of predicates in clauses and sentences. They are words used to describe an action or a state; e.g.,

(1) I prepare the lessons.

(2) She seems happy.

The verb in Sentence (1) is an **action verb**; it describes a performance. However, the verb in Sentence (2) describes the state, so it is called a **state verb** or a **linking verb**.

Other types of verbs include helping verbs, which are also called auxiliary; e.g., I was watching TV. Modals are should, would, will, could, can, must, and ought to; they are used with stems to express a particular function. Finally, phrasal verbs is another type of verbs; they consist of a verb+a preposition and/or an adverb.

**Drill 2. Classify the verbs on the list according to the table**

was, can, turn, put on, could, find, shoved, said, hear, called out, found, put, smiling, walked out

| Action | Linking | Helping | Modals | Phrasal Verb |
|--------|---------|---------|--------|--------------|
|        |         |         |        |              |

## 6. Adverbs

Adverbs are words that show the manner.  Look at Sentences (1), (2) and (3).

(1) He <u>drives</u> <u>fast</u> / He <u>drives</u> <u>crazily.</u>
   V.      Adv.          V.       Adv.

(2) He <u>drives</u> <u>very fast.</u>
   V.       Adv. Adv.

(3) He bought a <u>very fast</u> car.
          Adv.  Adj.

In Sentence (1), 'fast' and 'crazily' show how fast he drives.  In sentence (2), 'very' demonstrates how fast he drives.  In Sentence (3), 'very' indicates how fast the car he bought is.  Therefore, adverbs can modify verbs (Sentence 1), another adverb (Sentence 2), or an adjective (Sentence 3).

In Sentence (1), there are two types of adverbs.  First, 'crazily' is a regular adverb because it is derived from the adjective 'crazy' by adding –ly.  Second, fast is an irregular adverb because it does not comply with the –ly rule.

**Note**

**Some words can be both adjectives and adverbs. To distinguish between them, you need to pay attention to what the word identifies. Consider the sentences above, 'fast' in Sentence (1) shows the manner of driving (action), but 'fast' in Sentence (3) describes the car (noun).**

There are other types of adverbs. Consider Sentences (4) and (5):

(4) Even the darkest of days can turn sunny.

(5) It's raining. Therefore, you should take your umbrella!

In Sentence (4), 'even' is an adverb used to establish comparison. In Sentence (5), 'therefore' is a conjunctive adverb that coordinates two independent clauses.

## 7. Prepositions

Prepositions are function words used mainly before nouns and noun phrases to indicate their relation to other parts of the sentence. There are two types of prepositions (Table 5).

Table 5

*Types of prepositions*

| Type | Examples |
|------|----------|
| Simple Prepositions | along, among, at, before, behind, below, during, from, in, for, on, out, over, since, through, to, upon, until, under, within, without, with |
| Compound Prepositions | according to, as well as, in addition to, out of, with regard to, instead of, in front of |

## 8. Conjunctions

Conjunctions are words used to join two clauses. Depending on the relationship between the two sentences, coordination, subordination, or correlation is established.

### 8.1. Coordinating Conjunctions

There are seven (7) coordinating conjunctions gathered in the word FANBOYS:

F A N B O Y S

For And Nor But Or Yet So
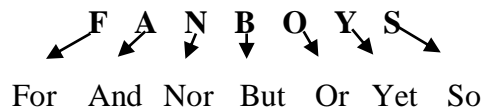
These coordinating conjunctions are not part of the sentences they relate, and they are always preceded by a comma; e.g., I drink soda, but my sister does not.

### 8.2. Subordinating Conjunctions

Subordinating conjunctions are introduced into a sentence to subordinate it and to make it dependent upon another; e.g., 'Although he is rich, he is not happy.'

Subordinating conjunction have different meanings; they are summarisesd in Table 6.

Table 6

*Common subordinating conjunctions*

| Subordinating Conjunctions | |
| --- | --- |
| Time | After, before, once, since,  till, until, when,  while, |
| Concession | Although, though, |
| Condition | Unless, if |
| Cause | As, because, since |
| Contrast | While |

### 8.3. Correlative Conjunctions

Correlative conjunctions are pairs of words that correlate two elements (words or phrases) of equal nature.  Consider Sentences (1), (2) and (3).

(1) Neither my sister nor my brother is a teacher.

(2) Either my sister or my brother is employed.

(3) I love both my sister and my brother

## 9. Interjections

The term interjection goes back to Latin, meaning "something thrown in between" (Nordquist, 2019). They are words used to express emotions and reactions (Table 7).

Table 7

*Interjections*

| Interjection | Meaning | Example |
|---|---|---|
| **Ah** | expressing pleasure | Ah, that feels good. |
| **Alas** | expressing grief or pity | Alas, she's dead now. |
| **Eh** | expressing enquiry | What do you think of that, eh? |
| **Hello, Hullo** | expressing greeting | Hello John. How are you today? |
| **Hey** | calling attention | Hey, look at that! |
| **Hi** | expressing greeting | Hi! What's new? |
| **Hmm** | expressing hesitation, doubt or disagreement | Hmm. I'm not so sure. |
| **Oh** | expressing surprise | Oh! You're here! |
| | expressing pain | Oh! I've got a toothache. |
| **Ouch** | expressing pain | Ouch! That hurts! |
| **Well** | expressing surprise | Well I never! |
| | introducing a remark | Well, what did he say? |
| **Wow** | expressing amazement | Wow! What a cool car you've got! |

**Drill 3: Identify the parts of speech**

Great! Meera and her friend are merrily

………………………………………………………………………………………

enjoying their first holidays in London

**……………………………………………………………………………………..**

**Drill 4: Use words from each category to form a sentence**

| | |
|---|---|
| Nouns | cat, work, university, sport, book |
| Verbs | like, eat, play, go, come, get, practice, read |
| Adverbs | really, silently, quickly, steadily |
| Adjectives | good, big, far, excellent, interesting |
| Pronouns | I, you, hers, them, myself |
| Prepositions | in, on, at, for, from, to, under |
| Conjunctions | but, and, while, so, for, as, since |
| Interjections | Oh!, hi!, ouch!, wow ! |
| Articles | the, a, an |

**II. From Word to Sentence**

Words can be combined together to form larger syntactic constructions, including phrases, clauses, and sentences.

o **A phrase** is a group of words without a conjugated verb; e.g., 'The beautiful girl,' 'To prepare pasta'

o **A clause** is a group of words with a conjugated verb. There are two types of clauses:

• If the clause is meaningful, it is an independent / a main clause, so it can stand alone; e.g., 'I succeeded,' 'Stop'

• If the meaning is not complete, the clause is called a dependent a / a subordinate clause, so it needs an independent clause to be complete; e.g., 'If you revise well,' 'Though he was rich'

o **A sentence** is an independent clause, but it can be a combination of independent and /or dependent clauses.

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**Drill 5: Combine these words (independent, she, faces, is, woman, although, my, an, mother, difficulties) to construct…**

A phrase……………………………………………………..

A dependent clause……………………………………………………………

An independent clause …………………………………………………………..

A sentence……………………………………………………………………………………

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**1. Types of Sentences**

Clauses can be combined in different ways to result into four (4) types of sentences. They are: simple, compound, complex, and compound complex.

**1.1. Simple Sentence**

Simple sentences consist of ONE independent clause (subject and predicate expressing a complete thought). In brief, a simple sentence is: **Ind. Cl.**

Eg., The Sun rises in the east

I love purple

My family went on holiday

### 1.2. Compound Sentence

A compound sentence is a combination of two or more independent clauses, which are simple sentences, coordinated in three different ways:

- They can be joined by a semi-colon; e.g., 'My father went to the market; my mother stayed home.'

- They can be linked by a coordinating conjunction (preceded by comma); e.g., 'I drink whatever I want, but my sister is not allowed to because of her kidneys.'

- Another way of forming compound sentences is the use of conjunctive adverbs; e.g., 'The contest ended two days ago; however, the results are not announced.'

Conjunctive adverbs are flexible within the sentence; their position can be initial (sentences 1 and 2), middle (sentence 3), or final (sentence 4) vis-à-vis the idea they express; and punctuation differs according to the placement of the conjunctive adverb:

(1) The contest ended two days ago; however, the results are not announced.

(2) The contest ended two days ago. However, the results are not announced.

(3) The contest ended two days ago; the results, however, are not announced.

(4) The contest ended two days ago; the results are not announced, however.

There are a lot of conjunctive adverbs (Table 8)

Table 8

*Examples of conjunctive adverbs*

| Meaning | Conjunctive Adverb |
|---------|--------------------|
| Contrast | However, nonetheless, nevertheless... |
| Addition | Besides, moreover, furthermore, in addition… |
| Consequence | Therefore, thus, hence… |
| Time, sequence | Then, after that, afterward, first… |
| Condition | Otherwise… |

In brief, a compound sentence is:

**Ind. Cl. + ; + Ind. Cl**

Or

**Ind. Cl. + , + Coord. Conj. + Ind. Cl.**

Or

**Ind. Cl. + conj. Adv + Ind. Cl.**

**1.3.Complex Sentence**

A complex sentence consists of an independent clause and at least one dependent clause.  They are joined by a GLUE, which introduces a dependent clause, and thus, takes part of it.  It can be a subordinating conjunction (sentences 1 and 2) or a relative pronoun (sentences 3 and 4).

(1)Parallel lines do not meet until they are bent.

(2)Although the sun is a star, it changes back to the sun at daytime.

(3)The man who is there is my soul mate

Defining relative clause

(4)The Head of the Department, who is new, enforced new regulations.

Non- defining relative clause

In brief, a complex sentence is:

**Ind. Cl. + Sub. Conj. Dep. Cl**

Or

**Ind. Cl. + Rel. Pro. Dep. Cl**

In complex sentences, the clauses can be reversed. Consider the changes in

capitalisation and punctuation

e.g., Even though I had studied hard, I didn't succeed.

I didn't succeed even though I had studied hard

NOTE: Not all clauses in complex sentences can be reversed.

e.g., You recognise the girl who is over there!

### 1.4.Compound-complex Sentence

Compound complex sentences consist of at least two independent clauses and one or

more dependent clauses (1).

(1) Harry didn't sit for the exams because he broke his arm, so he needed to make them up.

In brief, a complex sentence is:

**Ind. Cl. + Sub. Conj. Dep. Cl + Coord. Conj + Ind. Cl.**

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**Drill 6: Identify the type of each sentence**

- When we visited London, we went to Big Ben, but we found it under reconstruction.

- My scores are very good, but they are not sufficient to enroll in PhD.

- My mother prepared a cake for my birthday.

- Although he is rich, he is not happy.

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## 2. Mechanics of Writing

**Drill 7: What is wrong with this passage?**

my name is marion field I'm a freelance writer and I write articles for various magazines I live near several motorways so I can easily drive around the country to do my research he airport is also near me I love travelling and I've visited many different parts of the world his gives me the opportunity to write travel articles I enjoy taking photographs

You probably have noticed that reading this passage is breathless, for there are no stops or pauses throughout. Writing any composition should flow smoothly in logic, relevance, and most importantly in meaning. Reading this passage is difficult, and it does not allow readers to adequately make sense and relate to the content because they would rather be occupied figuring out when to finish. Therefore, mechanics of writing are a crucial component in determining the overall structure of the passage, and in keeping it consistent and readable. Writing mechanics include capitalisation and punctuation.

### 2.1. Capitalisation

Capitalisation stands for writing a letter in uppercase. It is applicable to the cases summarised in Table 9.

Table 9

*Cases of capitalisation*

| Case | Example |
|---|---|
| **First Word of a Sentence** | • **T**he cat is sleeping. • **W**here did I put that book? • **H**ey! It's great to see you! How have you been? |
| **Names and Other Proper** | • My favorite author is **J**ane **A**usten. |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Nouns** | • **M**ark and **A**nn met at **C**arlos's house.<br><br>• Have you met my dog, **J**ack? |
| **First Word of a Quote** | • Jane asked, "**W**hat is everyone doing this weekend?"<br><br>• Mark answered, "**M**y sister and I are going to the water park."<br><br>Exception: DO NOT CAPITALISE WHEN THE QUOTE IS PART OF THE TEXT; e.g.,<br><br>• My friend said she was "way too busy" to join the gym. |
| **Days, Months, and Holidays** | • I hate **M**ondays!<br><br>• Tom's birthday is in **J**une.<br><br>• Oh no! I forgot about **V**alentine's **D**ay!<br><br>Exception: DO NOT CAPITALISE SEASONS; e.g.,<br><br>• I hate winter!<br><br>• Having a summer birthday is the best |
| **Most Words (content words) in Titles** | • *Sense and Sensibility* is better than *Pride and Prejudice*.<br><br>• The first movie of the series is *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. |
| **Cities, Countries, Nationalities, and Languages** | • English is made up of many languages, including **L**atin, **G**erman, and **F**rench.<br><br>• My mother is **B**ritish, and my father is **D**utch.<br><br>• The capital of **B**otswana is **G**aborone. |
| **Time Periods and Events** | • Most of the **W**orld **W**ar I veterans are now deceased.<br><br>• In the **M**iddle **A**ges, poor hygiene was partly responsible for the spreading of bubonic plague.<br><br>• Exception: DO NOT CAPITALISE CENTURIES AND |

| | THE NUMBERS BEFORE; e.g., <br><br> • In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, England blossomed into an empire. |
|---|---|
| **Capitalise After a Colon** | • Followed by a proper noun; e.g., There is only one place I want to visit: **N**ew York City <br><br> • Followed by a complete sentences; e.g., Maggie wears a brimmed cap at all times for these two reasons: **S**trong light often gives her a headache. She also likes the way it looks. <br><br> • Exception: DO NOT CAPITALISE AFTER A COLON WHEN FOLLOWED BY A WORD OR A PHRASE; e.g., <br><br> • I have one true passion: wombat racing. |

## 2.2. Punctuation

Punctuation is important in writing as it breaks down long passages into sentences of complete thought. Punctuation identifies the meaning that the writer would like to deliver. Using the same punctuation mark in different places of the same sentence denotes different meanings and structures. The major punctuation marks are summarised in Table 10.

Table 10

*Punctuation marks*

| Comma | **,** | Colon | **:** | Question mark | **?** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Semi-colon | **;** | Dash | **–** | Exclamation mark | **!** |

### 2.2.1. Comma

There are certain rules to follow when using commas.

**Rule 1: The Sentence Core Rules:** Do not separate a subject and a verb with a comma

E.g. Asma, worked on the research proposal and sent it to my email (wrong)

**Rule 2: Conjunction:** Put a comma before a coordinating conjunction when connecting two independent clauses (1)

(1) Mark Mallory is the new district manager, and he starts on Monday.

However, no comma is needed joining two phrases (2) or two actions performed by the same subject (3)

(2) Mark will be an inspiration to our staff and an excellent spokesperson for our product.

(3) Mail your information now and expect a reply within the next week.

**Rule 3: Series:** In a series of three or more items, separate them by commas.

E.g. The estate was left to Robert, Rose, Charles, and Sophie.

However, do not put comma between a two-item series ; e.g.,

The assistant provided a series of examples, and a good recap of the meeting. (wrong)

Tip : The last item in a series may not be preceded by comma, for the meaning is different.

Consider the difference between these examples :

(1) The estate was left to Robert, Rose, Charles, and Sophie.

(2) The estate was left to Robert, Rose, Charles and Sophie.

In (1), the estate was divided into four parts for each person (one for Robert, one for Rose, one for Charles, and one for Sophie), but in (2), the estate was divided into three (one for Robert, one for Rose, and one for Charles and Sophie together)

**Rule 4: Introductory:** Put a comma when an independent clause is introduced. It can be after

(1) A *word*; e.g., However, I was not able to attend the conference.

*(2) A phrase*; e.g., To arrive earlier, Michael rearranged his entire schedule.

*(3) A dependent clause*; e.g., Although my calendar is full, we can meet this Friday morning.

**Rule 5: Non-restrictive:** Use commas to enclose non-restrictive/nonessential words and phrases; e.g., Alice Walker, who is a prestigious author, will be the keynote speaker.

**Rule 6: Parenthetical:** Use commas to enclose a word or expression that interrupts the flow of a sentence; e.g., The project, in my opinion, needs improvement.

Tip: In terms of punctuation, parenthetical are not like conjunctive adverbs, which are preceded by a semi-colon and followed by a comma. E.g.

Ms. Philippe; in fact, approved the request last week (wrong)

**Rule 7: Direct Address:** Use commas to set off the name or title of a person addressed directly at the beginning (1), in the middle (2), or at the end (3) of a sentence; e.g.,

(1) Donald, you can arrange the meeting in Dallas or Fort Worth.

(2) I gave the invitation to everyone in the department, Marge.

(3) Thank you, Astrid, for speaking on my behalf.

**Rule 8: Appositive:** Use commas when restating a noun or pronoun; e.g.,

Emily, my co-worker from Carolina, requested the file.

Drill: What is the difference between the following sentences?

- Josef, my former boss gave me the information.
- Josef, my former boss, gave me the information.

**Rule 9: Addresses and Dates:** Use commas to set off the parts of addresses and dates; e.g.,

Boston, Massachusetts, is the best city to host the conference.

On Wednesday, August 15, my friends celebrated the Ferragosta.

**Rule 10: Word Omitted:** Use a comma to indicate a word is omitted when it affects the flow of the sentence. For example, instead of saying "The problem is that the current situation is quite grim," we can say "The problem is, the current situation is quite grim."

**Rule 11: Direct Quotation:** Use commas to set off direct quotations within a sentence; e.g., Gabrielle said, "I have a 9 o'clock appointment," and then left abruptly.

### 2.2.2. Semi-colon

• When there is no need for a full stop because the second idea is closely related to the first one, a semi-colon is used instead; e.g., "It was growing very dark; there was obviously a storm brewing."

• When there are statements that naturally follow each other, they are separated by a semi-colon; e.g., "The storm clouds gathered; the rain started to fall; the thunder rolled; the lightning flashed."

• When we want to emphasise a statement, but it is weakened due to the use of a conjunction, the latter is replaced by a semi-colon. Consider the difference between these sentences:

(1) The thieves had done a good job; every drawer and cupboard had been ransacked."

(2) The thieves had done a good job because every drawer and cupboard had been ransacked.

• When we want to emphasise a contrast between two statements, we use a semi-colon; e.g., Kate may go to the disco; you may not.

### 2.2.3. Colon

A colon is used either to introduce a list of statements (1) or to reinforce what has been said (2); e.g.,

(1) There are three good reasons why you got lost: you had no map, it was dark and you have no sense of direction.

(2) Your punctuation is weak: you must learn when to use full stops.

### 2.2.4. Dash

When a word or a group of words is set off by a dash, it is more stressed, and the reader would understand its importance.  Its placement can be in the middle (1) or at the end (2) of the sentences; e.g.,

(1) Janice, Elaine, Maureen, Elsie – in fact all the girls – can go on the trip to London.

(2) This is the second time you have not done your English homework – or any of your homework.

### 2.2.5. Question Mark

It is used at the end of a question; e.g., "When is your exam?"

### 2.2.6. Exclamation Mark

It is used in direct speech when exclaiming; e.g., "I don`t believe it!"

---

**Drill 8: Practice for the following comma rules: Conjunction (CONJ)**

**Instructions:** Place commas where needed in the following sentences. For each main clause, underline the subject once and the verb twice. Also, indicate the name of the comma rule for each comma that you use, for example:

**Incorrect:** You assisted me with the project and I appreciated it.

**Correct:** You assisted me with the project, and I appreciated it. (CONJ)

1. I completed my report and Alice sent it to Wanda.

2. Wanda received the report but she did not yet file it with the department.

3. Give Wanda the information today and you will save her some time.

4. The report often needs to be adjusted and Wanda kindly helps us with it.

5. You can ask for additional time but you may not receive it.

---

**Drill 9: Revise the mechanics of the following paragraph**

The sun shone down from a brilliant blue sky the slight breeze ruffled the long grass the scent of roses was all around and the birds were twittering happily in the trees Emma who had been feeling sad suddenly felt more cheerful the summer had come at last hadn't it while she wandered down the garden path she thought about the letter she'd received that morning

---

## 3. Sentence Problems

### 3.1. Unparalleled Structures

It is commonly agreed upon that writing sentences with a series or a pair should comply with the rules of parallelism. Indeed, a kind of balance is preferably maintained when the same grammatical form in two or more parts of a sentence is repeated.

One of the most well-known examples of parallelism is Neil Armstrong's saying when he first landed on the moon: "That's **one small step for man**, **one giant leap for mankind**." This expression has two noun phrases (underlined) with the same grammatical structure.

Importantly, parallelism is not the repetition of words or phrases. Repetition can be resorted to for rhetoric and aesthetic purposes in writing; such as "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness" (Charles Dickens, A Tale of Two Cities). However, parallelism is rather the juxtaposition of the same syntactic construction; e.g., I like **milk**, **chocolote**, and **vegetables**.

Parallelism reflects style by lining up all parts of a series or a pair. Consider sentences (1) and (2); they are both meaningfully correct, but Sentence (1) lacks harmony stylistically speaking:

(1) I like fishing, camping, and to climb mountains

(2) I like fishing, camping, and climbing mountains

---

**Drill 10: Spot the mistake and correct it**

I love music, watching movies, and going to the gym

………………………………………………………………….

---

### 3.2. Subject-verb Agreement

In a sentence, a verb (action) must agree with its subject (doer) in number and person. Number refers to singular and plural forms. Person stands for the speaker (first person), the person spoken to (second person), and what/who is spoken of (third person).

First person and second person do not challenge us because when conjugating a verb, it is easy to determine its form, being the stem.  However, the problem lies in third person that should be identified as singular or plural (Table 11).

Table 11

*Examples of third person (singular and plural)*

| **Singular** | **Plural** |
|---|---|
| Sits | Sit |
| Does / doesn't | Do / don't |
| Is sitting | Are sitting |
| Was sitting | Were sitting |
| Has sat | Have sat |

Subject-verb agreement depends on the nature of the subject.

### 3.2.1.Simple subject

If the subject is simple (one doer), ignore any other details that accompany it; e.g.,

The pink and red dresses in the store are on sale
      Subject

### 3.2.2.Compound subject

If the subject is compound; i.e., when more than one doer is included, the contribution of each performer determines the verb form.  Consider Sentences (1), (2) and (3), and how the underlined words shape the verb form:

(1) Alice and Ann are looking for the remote control

(2) Alice or Ann is looking for the remote control

(3) Neither Alice nor Ann is looking for the remote control

In Sentence (1), both Alice and Ann perform the action; however, in Sentences (2) and (3), the verb agrees with the nearest subject.

### 3.2.3.Indefinite pronoun subject

When indefinite pronouns play the role of the subject in a sentence, it can either denote singular subject or plural subject (Table 12).

Table 12

*Singular and plural indefinite pronouns*

| Singular indefinite pronouns | Example | Plural indefinite pronouns | Example |
|---|---|---|---|
| Nobody | Nobody knows her. | Several | Several work here. |
| Anyone | Has anyone asked? | Many | Many have done it. |
| Everyone | Everyone says no. | Few | Few believe it. |
| Each | Each gets a ticket. | Both | Both were yellow. |
| One | One uses a mobile. | | |
| Another | Another has arrived | | |

### 3.2.4.Relative clauses

In relative clauses, relative pronouns replace a noun or noun phrase, and thus, the verb agrees with the noun or noun phrase; e.g.,

Most instructors appreciate students who ask appropriate questions.

The student who asks appropriate questions is appreciated by most instructors.

### 3.2.5.Verb preceeding the subject

There are two cases in which the subject follows the verb, but the former still determines the form of the latter:

a) Questions; e.g., Why doesn't the soup have any noodles?

b) Sentences starting with 'there is/are' or 'here is/are'; e.g., Here is the famous singer; There are mice in the attic.

### 3.3. Dangling Modifiers

It is called modifier because it is a word or a phrase that modifies, describes, and adds information. It becomes dangling because the described (modified) word is not clearly stated within the sentence. Consider sentences (1) and (2)

(1) Having finished the assignment, Jack turned on the TV.

(2) Having finished the assignment, the TV was turned on.

In sentence (1), the doer of both actions (finishing the assignment and turning on the TV) is Jack, so there is no dangling modifier. However, in Sentence (2), the TV cannot be the subject of the first action (the TV does not finish the assignment), so the performer of the first action (in the modifier) is unknown. Thus, "having finished the assignment" is a dangling modifier.

Thus, to avoid dangling modifiers; i.e., to use modifiers correctly; the doer of the action in the modifier must be the same subject of the main clause that follows.

There are three mian techniques to revise dangling modifiers:

a) Name the doer of the action (in the modifier) as the subject of the main clause; e.g.,

- Having arrived late for practice, a written excuse was needed. (wrong)

→ Having arrived late for practice, he needed a written excuse. (correct)

b) Change the dangling modifier into an introductory clause, and name the doer of the action in that clause; e.g.,

- Without his name, it was difficult to introduce him. (wrong)

→ Since his name was unknown, it was difficult to introduce him. (correct)

c) Combine the modifier and the main clause; e.g.,

- To improve his results, the experiment was conducted again. (wrong)

→ He improved the results by conducting the experiment again. (correct)

**Drill 11: Rewrite the following sentences to avoid dangling modifiers**

- Having prepared dinner, the guests did not come.

………………………………………………………………………………………………..

- Being a doctor, the patients are treated professionally.

………………………………………………………………………………………………..

- Looking at her, she is amazing

………………………………………………………………………………………………..

## 3.4. Choppy Sentences

As the word choppy (from chop, meaning cut) implies, choppy sentences are two or more short and simple sentences in a row that lack proper connections to make reading it flow smoothly; e.g., (1) She took dance classes. She had no natural grace or sense of rhythm. She eventually gave up the idea of becoming a dancer.

To reiterate choppy sentences, we can correct them by using coordinating conjunctions, subordination, or appropriate transitions.

Sentence (1) can be corrected as follows:

• **Coordination:** She took dance classes, but she had no natural grace or sense of rhythm, so she eventually gave up the idea of becoming a dancer.

• **Subordination:** She took dance classes, but because she had no natural grace or sense of rhythm, she eventually gave up the idea of becoming a dancer.

Other strategies to correct choppy sentences are:

• **Appositives:**

Jesse Ventura has denied an interest in running for the senate. Ventura is the former governor of Minnesota. (Choppy sentence)

Jesse Ventura, the former governor of Minnesota, has denied an interest in running for the senate. (Correct)

- **Integration of minor details:**

The boy asked his father a question. The boy is five years old. The question was about death. (Choppy sentence)

The five-year-old boy asked his father a question about death. (Correct)

- **Modifying phrases:**

My aunt is very strict with my cousin. She expects her to study all the time. (Choppy sentence)

My aunt is very strict with my cousin, expecting her to study all the time. (Correct)

---

**Drill 12: Correct the following choppy sentence using modifying phrases.**

I was exhausted. I stared at the page. I was unable to comprehend a single word.

……………………………………………………………………………………………..

---

### 3.5. Stringy Sentences

Reading Sentence (1) is difficult to follow and to understand because it has three clauses (underlined) strung together using coordinating conjunctions (circled).

(1) I try to teach my friend things (and) he keeps forgetting (and) I feel bad. He's always helping me.

This sentence is called a stringy sentence. The latter refers to sentences consisting of many clauses combined together by coordinating or subordinating conjunctions.

One way to reiterate stringy sentences is by subordinating minor ideas to replace coordinating conjunctions, and by changing subordinating clauses into separate independent clauses; e.g., Sentence (1) is corrected as follows:

- **Break down clauses** by **subordinating minor ideas**

I try to teach my friend things, and he keeps forgetting. I feel bad because he's always helping me.

### 3.6. Faulty Coordination/Subordination

#### 3.6.1. Faulty coordination

Faulty coordination occurs when two independent clauses are coordinated even though they are not equal ideas. Doing so denotes that they are of equal emphasis, but in fact they are not; e.g., (1) The bus driver is a careless person, and he was pulled over by the police several times last week.

To reiterate faulty coordination, the less emphasised idea is subordinated. Sentence (1) is corrected as follows: The bus driver, who is a careless person, was pulled over by the police several times last week

#### 3.6.2. Faulty subordination

Sometimes, the expected relation between clauses is reversed or not appropriate (separate actions). In other words, the important clause is subordinated, and the less imporant is placed as the main. Such a problem is called faulty subordination; e.g., (1) I was sick because I didn't attend classes.

To reiterate faulty subordination, the position of the subordinate is changed. Sentence (1) is corrected as follows: I didn't attend classes because I was sick

### 3.7. Run-ons (Fused Sentences) and Comma Splices

Run-ons and comma splices concern sentence structure and punctuation when coordinating two indpendent clauses. When two independent clauses follow each other with neither punctuation nor coordination, the sentence is called a run-on sentence; e.g., (1) The flowers are beautiful they brighten the room. Besides, when two independent clauses are separated by only a comma, the problem is labelled a comma splice; e.g., (2) The flowers are beautiful, they brighten the room.

Nonetheless, it is commonly known that independent clauses are not joind like in Sentences (1) and (2). Thus, the correct version of this sentence is as follows:

The flowers are beautiful. They brighten the room

The flowers are beautiful; they brighten the room

The flowers are beautiful, and they brighten the room

The flowers are beautiful because they brighten the room

### 3.8.Sentence Fragments

Grammatically speaking, to call a group of words a sentence, it has to consists of a subject and a predicate and to be a complete thought; e.g., <u>Jay</u> <u>put the bowl</u> on the table.

                                                         S      Predicate

Thus, if one of these elements is missing, the sentence is meaningless and is called fragment; e.g.,

(1) Some food very hot (Missing verb)

(2) Takes a nap for 30 minutes everyday (Missing subject)

(3) After they had taken the test (dependent clause)

Sentences (1), (2) and (3) are corrected as follows

(1)* Some food is very hot

(2)* He Takes a nap for 30 minutes everyday

(3)* After they had taken the test, they went home

# Semester I

# Answers to

# Drills

# Answers to Drills

**Drill 1: Classify the following words into open class and closed class**

You, class, or, since, articulate, far, intelligent, badly, clearer, well, Oh,

| Open Class | Closed Class |
|---|---|
| class<br>articulate<br>far<br>intelligent<br>badly<br>clearer<br>well | You<br>or<br>since<br>Oh |

**Drill 2. Classify the verbs on the list according to the table**

was, can, turn, put on, could, find, shoved, said, hear, called out, found, put, smiling, walked out

| Action | Linking | Helping | Modals | Phrasal Verb |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| was<br>turn<br>put on<br>find<br>shoved<br>said<br>hear<br>called out<br>found<br>put<br>smiling<br>walked out | was | was | can<br>could | put on<br>called out<br>walked out |

**Drill 3: Identify the parts of speech**

| Word | Word Class |
|---|---|
| Great! | Interj. |
| Meera | Proper N. |
| and | Coor.Conj. |
| her | Poss. Adj. |

| | |
|---|---|
| friend | Common N. |
| are | Aux. V. |
| merrily | Adv. |
| enjoying | Action V. |
| their | Poss. Adj |
| first | Ordinal Adj. |
| holidays | N. |
| in | Prep. |
| London | Proper N. |

**Drill 4: Use words from each category to form a sentence**

| Nouns | cat, work, university, sport, book |
|---|---|
| Verbs | like, eat, play, go, come, get, practice, read |
| Adverbs | really, silently, quickly, steadily |
| Adjectives | good, big, far, excellent, interesting |
| Pronouns | I, you, hers, them, myself |
| Prepositions | in, on, at, for, from, to, under |
| Conjunctions | but, and, while, so, for, as, since |
| Interjections | Oh!, hi!, ouch!, wow ! |
| Articles | the, a, an |

**Oh! I really like going to the university and reading interesting books**

**Drill 5: Combine these words (independent, she, faces, is, woman, although, my, an, mother, difficulties) to construct…**

A phrase: **An independent woman**…………………………………………………………..

A dependent clause: **Although she is an independent woman** ……………………………

An independent clause: **She is an independent woman**……………………………..

A sentence: **Although my mother is an independent woman, she faces difficulties**. ….

**Drill 6: Identify the type of each sentence**

- When we visited London, we went to Big Ben, but we found it under reconstruction.

**(Compound-complex)**

- My scores are very good, but they are not sufficient to enroll in PhD. **(Compound)**

- My mother prepared a cake for my birthday. **(Simple)**

- Although he is rich, he is not happy. **(Complex)**

**Drill 7: What is wrong with this passage?**

**M**y name is **M**arion **F**ield**.** I'm a freelance writer**,** and I write articles for various magazines**.** I live near several motorways**,** so I can easily drive around the country to do my research**. T**he airport is also near me**;** I love travelling and I've visited many different parts of the world**. T**his gives me the opportunity to write travel articles**.** I enjoy taking photographs**.**

**Drill 8: Practice for the following comma rules: Conjunction (CONJ)**

**Instructions:** Place commas where needed in the following sentences. For each main clause, underline the subject once and the verb twice. Also, indicate the name of the comma rule for each comma that you use, for example:

1.I completed my report**,** and Alice sent it to Wanda.

2.Wanda received the report**,** but she did not yet file it with the department.

3.Give Wanda the information today**,** and you will save her some time.

4.The report often needs to be adjusted**,** and Wanda kindly helps us with it.

5.You can ask for additional time**,** but you may not receive it.

**Drill 9: Revise the mechanics of the following paragraph**

The sun shone down from a brilliant blue sky**;** the slight breeze ruffled the long grass the scent of roses was all around**;** and the birds were twittering happily in the trees**.** Emma**,** who had been feeling sad**,** suddenly felt more cheerful**. T**he summer had come at last**,** hadn't it**?** **W**hile she wandered down the garden path**,** she thought about the letter she'd received that morning**.**

**Drill 10: Spot the mistake and correct it**

I love <u style="color:red">music</u>, watching movies, and going to the gym

I love **<span style="color:green">listening to</span>** music**,** watching movies, and going to the gym ……………………………….

**Drill 11: Rewrite the following sentences to avoid dangling modifiers**

- Having prepared dinner, the guests did not come.

**When dinner was ready, the guests had not come yet**………………………………..

- Being a doctor, the patients are treated professionally.

**Being a doctor, John treats the patients professionally**………………………………..

- Looking at her, she is amazing

**Looking at her, I realised how amazing she is**………………………………..

**Drill 12: Correct the following choppy sentence using modifying phrases.**

I was exhausted. I stared at the page. I was unable to comprehend a single word.

I was exhausted**, for w**hen I stared at the page**,** I was unable to comprehend a single word.……………………………………………………………………………………………………… …..

# Semester II

# Writing

# Paragraphs

<div align="center">**Writing Paragraphs**

By

Dr. Manel MIZAB</div>

## II. From Sentence to Paragraph

A paragraph is a group of sentences that discuss one main idea. Indeed, all sentences constituting the paragraph have to be relevant to its central idea. For example, a paragraph that focuses on causes of pollution should not mention one of the consequences of pollution!

A paragraph is a structured composition that consists of three main parts: a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence.

### 1. Topic Sentence

The topic sentence of a paragraph signals what the paragraph is about; e.g., "Gold is prised for its beauty and usefulness" is a topic sentence indicating that the paragraph discusses how beautiful and useful gold is.

Accordingly, the topic sentence consists of two elements. Look at Sentence (1)

(1) <u>Gold</u> is prised for its <u>beauty and usefulness</u>
   Topic                    Controlling idea

The topic is the general idea of the paragraph that can be tackled differently according to the writer's interest. The writer of Sentence (1) would like to talk about the beauty and usefulness of gold, so this aspect is the controlling idea. In other words, the supporting sentences tackle the beauty and usefulness of gold, being the focus of this particular paragraph.

Look at Sentence (2):

(2) <u>Gold</u> is prised for <u>two main features</u>.
   Topic                    Controlling idea

Sentence (2) has the same topic as Sentence (1), but the controlling idea is different. The focus of this particular paragraph is about 'gold', but the writer can choose any two characteristics of gold to tackle in the supporting sentences.

P.S. The placement of the topic and controlling idea can be reversed; e.g.,

Beauty and usefulness are important features of gold.
   Controlling idea                                Topic

---

**Drill 13: Circle the topic and underline the controlling idea**

Being punctual, committed and perseverant are important characteristics of a good worker.

---

**2.Supporting Sentences**

Supporting sentences constitute the core of the paragraph; they are the part where writers develop the topic and controlling idea (topic sentence).  They take the form of explanations, elaborate details, illustrations, examples, real-life instances, statistics, experiences, …etc.  Supporting sentences should comply with the guidelines in the topic sentences, and should follow the same order in the controlling idea.

**3.Concluding Sentence**

The concluding sentence of a paragraph represents the end of the development and the paragraph.  The concluding sentence can be a summary of the main points tackled in the supporting sentences in different words.  It can also be a reformulation of the topic sentence in different words.  In some types of paragraphs, the concluding sentence is a lesson to learn, advice, or an opinion.

**III. The Writing Process**

Writing is a productive language skill in the written mode. It is considered the hardest skill to be acquired for both natives and non-natives since it is the last skill that children learn in institutions. Indeed, writing –academic writing in particular- is no easy task. It requires study, practice, and patience since it is a highly cognitive skill which undergoes several mental processes. Teaching the writing skill, and academic writing in particular, is very demanding as it requires teaching a set of sub-skills such as mechanics, linguistic competence, unity, coherence and cohesion, relevant messages, formal style and manner of expression, and so on. Therefore, writing is a process rather than an end-product, which makes it never complete as it regularly undergoes reviewing and revising.

The writing process consists of four main stages: (a) pre-writing, (b) planning, (c) writing, and (d) revising.

**1. Pre-writing**

Before writing, writers need first to get and to generate ideas that are relevant to the main topic of the assignment. Thus, they have to carefully choose a topic (narrowing down) to which they collect appropriate and relevant ideas (brainstorming) for thorough explanation.

**1.1. Narrowing Down a Topic**

When students are given written assignments to be submitted for any module, they can simply write about that topic specified by teachers. Therefore, students will not find difficulties looking for the focal point to be discussed in their written compositions.

However, students, and writers in general, may be given freedom to choose any topic of interest. In other words, they may choose a general subject which cannot be developed in a paragraph or an essay. Therefore, narrowing down a topic into a feasible focus is necessary before writing. One of the techniques used in narrowing down is the 'funnel.' In technical terms, a funnel is a device which is large at the top and narrow at the bottom. It is the same in

narrowing down a topic starting from the general subject to the specific idea, as the example indicates (Figure 1).
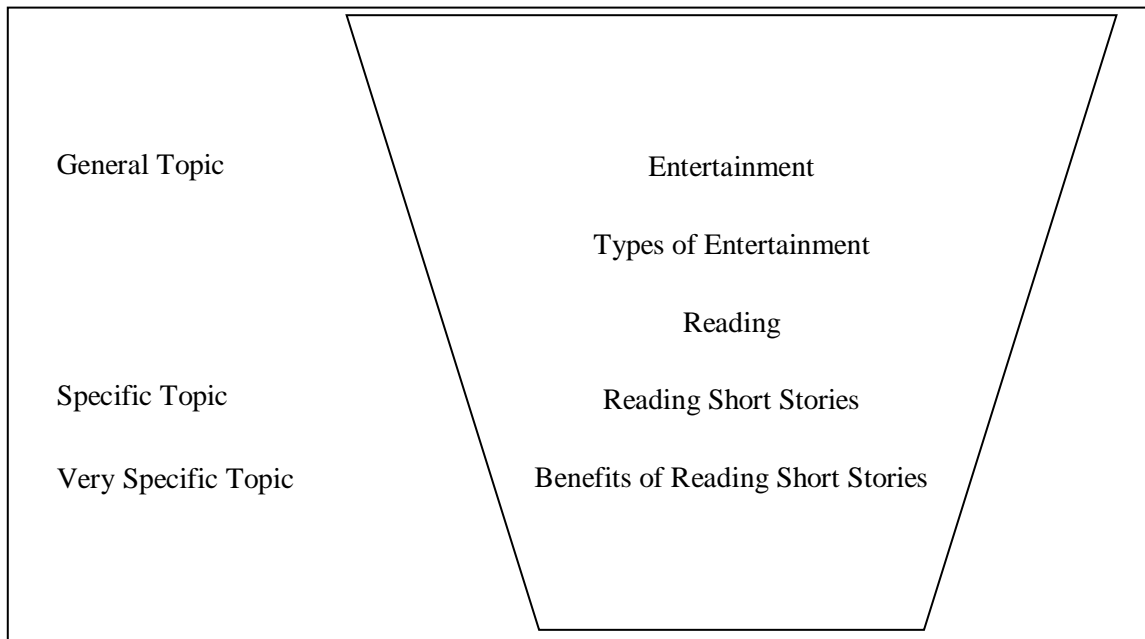
General Topic                        Entertainment

Types of Entertainment

Reading

Specific Topic                 Reading Short Stories

Very Specific Topic       Benefits of Reading Short Stories

*Figure 1*. Narrowing down a topic

As shown in Figure 1, if someone is interested in '*Entertainment*,' s/he cannot cover all its aspects in one paragraph or an essay. Thus, it is preferable to narrow it down into '*Types of Entertainment,*' if this is the writer's interest. Yet, it would be impossible to cover such a topic as it is manifold. It needs to be further narrowed down to tackle one type of '*Entertainment*' such as '*Reading*.' Nevertheless, writing about '*Reading*' is still too vague as it includes several genres, which necessitates choosing one genre to write about, such as '*Reading Short Stories*.' Finally, the writer can get an even narrower topic by discussing '*The Benefits of Reading Short Stories*' only. This technique allows writers to obtain a focus to be clearly developed.

**1.2. Brainstorming**

After getting a focal point to be developed, writers are in a phase where they need ideas related to their topic, which can be done through a process labeled '*Brainstorming*'. In this stage, writers generate as many ideas as possible; in other words, writers pen down

whatever comes to their minds within the scope of their topic. There are several techniques of brainstorming, among which we mention *'Listing,' 'clustering,'* and *'free-writing.'*

**1.2.1. Listing**. It is a brainstorming technique wherein writers write any idea related to their topic in the form of words, phrases, sentences, abbreviations, symbols, and so on. Doing so eases generating a huge list of ideas in a short period of time. Oshima and Hogue (2007) set forth the following procedure:

- Write down the general topic at the top of your paper

- Make a list of every idea that comes into your mind about that topic. Keep the ideas flowing. Try to stay on the general topic; however, if you write down information that is completely off the topic, don't worry about it because you can cross it out later.

- Use words, phrases, or sentences, and don't worry about spelling and grammar. (p. 4)

Figure 2 shows an outcome of this procedure.



**Culture Shock**

| | |
|---|---|
| communication problems | homeless people shocking sight ✓ |
| poor verbal skills | American students |
| children disrespectful | classroom environment |
| new language | unclear expressions |
| American family life | public transportation is not good |
| families seldom eat together | need a car |
| lack vocabulary | use first names with teachers |
| show affection in public | college professors wear jeans |
| Americans talk too fast | students ask questions |
| they are friendly | no formal dress code |
| people are always in a hurry | no one takes time to cook good meals |
| use slang and idioms | professor's role |
| families don't spend time together on weekends and holidays | children spend more time with friends than with parents |
| children are "kings" | use incomplete sentences |
| lack confidence | poor pronunciation |
| American food is unhealthy | Americans difficult to understand |
| everyone eats fast food | students can challenge professors |

*Figure 2*. The listing technique
*Source*. Oshima and Hogue (2007, p. 5)

After that, ideas that go together should be grouped under one sub-topic, and ideas which are irrelevant or duplicated should be crossed out. This permits to have LISTs of related ideas to be used in writing paragraphs (Figure 3).



*Figure 3*. Lists of related ideas
*Source*. Oshima and Hogue (2007, p. 5)

**1.2.2. Clustering**. It is a brainstorming technique. To cluster means to "come together in a small group or groups" (Oxford Dictionary). The essence of this technique is to have a mind map of the different aspects related to the topic of interest. Generally, ideas are generated in *'balloons'* as shown in Figure 4. The more ideas are generated for an aspect makes that particular aspect the focus of the paragraph.
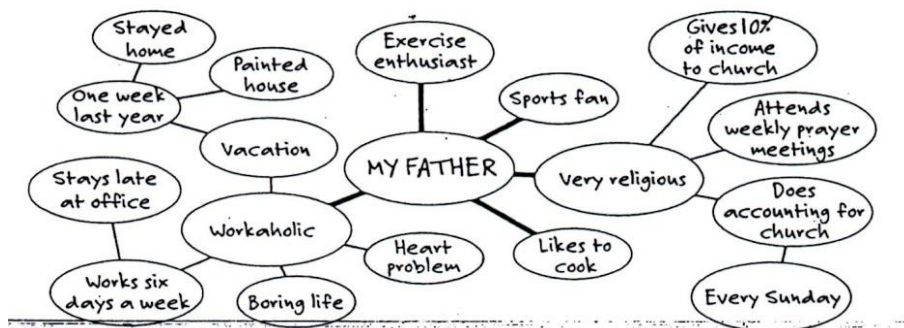


*Figure 4*. The clustering technique
*Source*. Oshima and Hogue (2007, p. 8)

**1.2.3. Free-writing**.  It is another technique of brainstorming through which writers free-write about a topic for the purpose of finding a focal point for their paragraphs.  Like *'Listing,'* free-writing aims at generating as many ideas as possible without paying great attention to spelling, grammar, relevance, and so on.  Thus, writers should keep ideas flowing until they run out of them.  Oshima and Hogue (2007) suggest the following procedure:

- Write the topic at the top of your paper

- Write as much as you can about the topic until you run out of ideas. Include such supporting items as facts, details, and examples that come into your mind about the subject.

- After you have run out of ideas, reread your paper and circle the main idea(s) that you would like to develop. (p. 6)

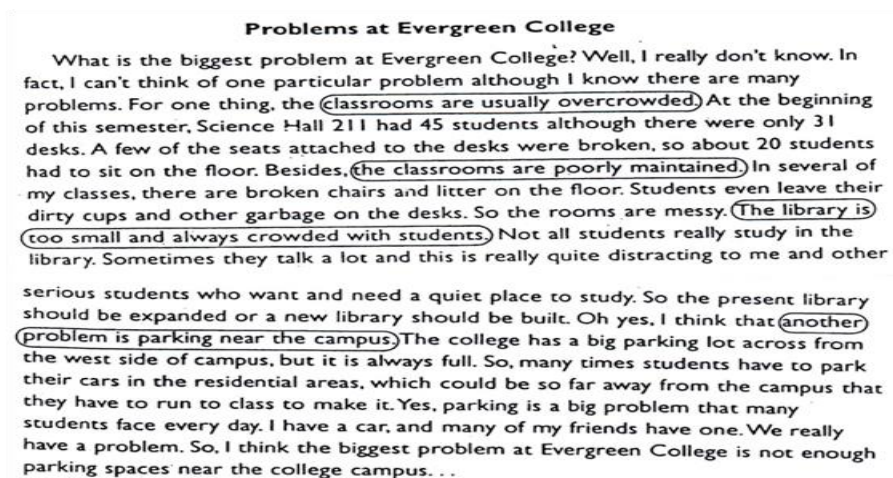Figure 5 is a student's attempt of free-writing.



*Figure 5*. The free-writing technique
*Source*. Oshima and Hogue (2007, p. 6)

## 2. Planning

Planning is the essence of life.  Undoubtedly, success is the outcome of organisation. Indeed, in order to generate a well-structured piece of writing, be it a paragraph or an essay, having a plan is advisable.  The planning stage is based on what writers brainstormed in the previous stage (pre-writing).  If writers have a list of related ideas, they need to sub-divide

that preliminary list into sub-lists that group related points and sub-points together. These latter should be organised in the same order of occurrence in the piece of writing as they constitute the introductory sentence, the supporting sentences and supporting details, and the concluding sentence. This is what we call a plan or a formal outline which stands as a guide throughout the stage of writing (Figure 6).

| Outline | Communication Problems |
|---|---|
| Topic Sentence | International students in the United States face communication problems with Americans. |
| Supporting point | **A.** International students have poor verbal skills. |
| Supporting detail | **1.** lack vocabulary |
| Supporting detail | **2.** have poor pronunciation |
| Supporting point | **B.** Americans are difficult to understand. |
| Supporting detail | **1.** use incomplete sentences |
| Supporting detail | **2.** use unclear expressions |
| Supporting detail | **3.** talk too fast |
| Supporting detail | **4.** use slang and idioms |

*Figure 6.* A sample outline
*Source.* Oshima and Hogue (2007, p. 10)

## 3. Writing

Having drawn an outline eases the next stage which is writing. It is evident that no piece of writing is complete as every draft undergoes several revisions and refinements. On the basis of one's plan, s/he starts writing the topic sentence that consists of the '*topic,*' which is the main subject of the paragraph, and the '*controlling idea*' which limits the focus of the paragraph into a specific area.

| Topic | Controlling idea |
|---|---|
| Pollution can be categorised into three main types |

It is clear from this topic sentence that the topic to be discussed is pollution. However, the writer is limited to discussing only three types of pollution.

After that, the writer follows his/her outline, and starts developing the topic in the form of supporting sentences by providing explanations, facts, examples and illustrations, percentages, quotes, and so on and so forth. Besides, if an idea sparks into the writer's mind

while s/he is writing, s/he needs to add it to the outline without hesitation especially if it is highly relevant to the topic.

Finally, the writer concludes his/her paragraph by either reformulating the topic sentence or summarising the main points of the paragraph as a reminder for readers. The concluding sentence is indicated by one of the end-of-paragraph signals that suit the conclusion (Table 13).

Table 13

*Some end-of-paragraph signals*

| Signals followed by a comma | | Signals not followed by a comma |
|---|---|---|
| Finally, | As a result, | We can see that………. |
| In conclusion, | Indeed, | It is clear that…………… |
| In summary, | In brief, | These examples show that…………………. |
| Therefore, | In short, | There can be no doubt that………………… |
| | | The evidence suggests that…………………. |

*Source.* Oshima and Hogue (2007, p. 26)

All in all, these are the three main structural parts of a paragraph that writers accomplish at the writing stage. Therefore, writers are encouraged not to pay so much attention to grammatical mistakes, punctuation, capitalisation, spelling, and sentence structures because they are going to be adjusted in the revising stage.

## 4. Revising drafts

When writers revise their first drafts, they tend to change what they have written in order to improve and/or correct it. Indeed, they may substitute, add, or omit ideas and organisational patterns for the sake of making their writings clearer, more effective, more expressive, and more informative. The first revision is concerned with content and organisation which require unity and coherence.

After having revised the first daft for content and organization, the second revision, or what is labeled '*Proofreading of the second draft,*' is concerned with aspects of grammar, vocabulary, mechanics, and paper format.  First, grammar encompasses sentence structures and varieties (simple sentence, compound sentence, complex sentence, complex-compound sentence, and different types of phrases).  Second, vocabulary includes lexis and word choice in relation to the topic, which indicates writers' vocabulary knowledge.  Third, mechanics involves spelling, capitalisation, and appropriate punctuation which help avoid comma supplies and run-ons.  Finally, paper format is built on title, indentation, margins, and handwriting.  Figure 7 is a sample paper format.
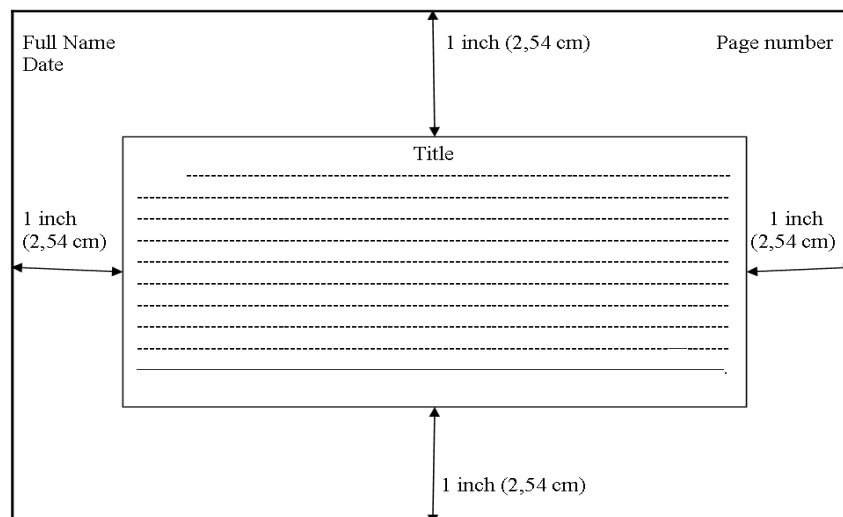


*Figure 7.* A sample paper format for submitting written assignments

## IV. Paragraph Types

Writing paragraphs does not depend on stringing sentences together to form a paragraph structure. Writing paragraphs relies on the audience addressed, whose interests can differ, and so do paragraph types. For example, readers interested in experiencing concrete settings throughout texts would rather read descriptive writings; readers looking for proponents and opponents of a particular subject would opt for argumentative compositions…etc.

The major types of paragraphs are: descriptive, narrative, comparison and contrast, cause and effect, definition, and opinion.

## 1. Descriptive Paragraph

Read this paragraph

*December Beach Days in Hawaii*

*A beach in Hawaii on a December day is like a day at a lake in mid-August. The beach smells fresh, almost like a new ocean breeze air freshener. The sand is hot and looks like gold blended in with little white specks; it sparkles like the water running off the swimmers back and feels like walking on coals from a burning grill. Not far from the shore, you can see the coral sitting still in the wild and shallow water. Turtles drift in to see all the people. The palm trees sway in the air from the forceful wind. In a distance, a house is beautifully placed right by the water, so it can look across the ocean each and every day. People are laughing and playing in the burning sand, and others are relaxing on the beach bronzing their skin while enjoying the bright rays of light coming from the sun. From a far distance the ocean is a deep navy blue; waves come in like a bulldozer from all the wind. At night everything is still. Waves are still coming in but not as hard, while the beach is cleared from all the people. All you can hear is the waves of the ocean and the light breeze coming from the giant palm trees. The beach is a spectacular place. Leaving it is excruciating and difficult to do. (Ashleigh Tranmer, 2005)*

Reading this paragraph makes its readers imagine what is being described; it allows them to visualise themselves in the setting being described, which they have never been to. Indeed, this paragraph is descriptive, for it provides a vibrant experience that readers are appealed to position themselves within.

Thus, descriptive paragraphs do not (only) inform the readers about personal thoughts, feelings, and experiences; but they rather display vivid descriptions of persons, things, animals, places, and events. Descriptive writing uses a language that appeals to the readers'

five senses: sight, smell, sound, taste, and touch. Descriptive paragraphs are characterised by the use of adjectives. Table 14 illustrates some common adjectives related to the five senses.

Table 14

*Sense-related adjectives*

| See | Hear | Smell | Taste | Feel |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Colours | Loud | Sweet | Delicious | Soft |
| Contrast (light or dark) | Grating | Delicious | Sour | Creamy |
| Depth(near or far) | Metallic | Disgusting | Sweet | Rubbery |
| Texture (rough or smooth) | Melodic | Appetizing | Savoury | Firm |
| Shape | Harmonious | Fresh | Salty | Cool / hot |
| Dimensons | | fruity | Spoiled | Porous / smooth |
| | | | Bitter | Sticky |
| | | | spicy | Dry : moist |

Consider the difference between Sentences (1) and (2):

(1) The tree was tall and green

(2) The soft and damp pink flowers of the dogwood tree smelled sweet in the cool spring air as the wind whistled through its yellow-green leaves

Both sentences talk about 'a tree'; however, the difference between them lies in the elaborate description in Sentence (2) that provides a better picture of a specific tree, other than any other tall and green tree. Therefore, this descriptive sentence does not only tell the reader about a tree, but it explains the importance of what is being described by giving details that help them picture it.

**Drill 14: Consider the differences between the sentences below:**

**Example 1**: Ever since grade school, I have always been nervous during tests.

**Example 2**: Staring blankly at my exam, I tapped my pencil rapidly on the side of my desk and desperately tried to focus. Mustering up some courage, I wrote an answer to the second question. Just as quickly, I erased the answer frantically, not wanting to leave a trace of it on the blank white paper. As the teacher announced that time was almost up, I remembered the taunt of my evil grade-school teacher: "You'll never pass this test. Just give up already." The memory of her words paralyzed my mind. Even more panic-stricken than before, I stared wildly at my blank test, trying to remember what the teacher had said in class last week or what I had read in the textbook.

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

## 1.1. Descriptive Paragraph Structure

Like any paragraph, a descriptive paragraph consists of a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence.

A descriptive paragraph starts with a familiar topic sentence that introduces the person, place, animal, or thing. This sentence also catches the readers' attention, and it sketches the object of description. The topic sentence in this type of paragraph should be clear and concise, focusing on one aspect of what is being described, to avoid stuffing it, which overwhelms the readers to decode several meanings.

The supporting sentences in a descriptive paragraph describe several aspects of the person, animal, thing, or place being described. For instance, if the item of description is a person, the first supporting idea can be about personal appearance, which would attract

readers' attention as it is the first aspect noticed in a person. You can accentuate the brightest part to touch readers' imagination and visualisation of the person by describing it in a way that makes readers feel as if they are seeing him/her. The second supporting idea can be about personality, by using descriptive language that sketches who the person being described really is.

The concluding sentence wraps up the most important parts of this person's appearance and personality. It should be presented in a way that leaves readers with a good impression.

## 2. Narrative Paragraph

Read the following paragraph

### Peddling On My Own

*Learning how to ride a bike for the first time was a nerve racking independent moment. I was about five years old when my sister informed me that I was too old to still be riding a bike with training wheels. That was the time I decided not to depend on them anymore. Even though I had some doubt, my sister and I went outside and started to take the little wheels off my bike. After my bike went through the transformation, I was now ready for the big moment. With butterflies in my stomach, I slowly got on the bike, and with my shaky hands, I gripped the handles tightly. Meanwhile my sister was holding on to me to help keep my balance. I was so afraid the she would let go, yet I was determined to ride this bike on my own. Next with a little push from her, I started to peddle. The faster my bike went the faster my heart raced. Finally I looked back nervously and noticed that my sister let go of my bike a long time ago. I was so excited that I accomplished freedom on my bike that I forgot to peddle. The next step I remember, I was lying on the ground, yet I did not care because of the adrenaline rush. I will never forget the exhilarating moment and growing up stage of riding a bike without training wheels. (Fallon Fauque, 2005)*

Narrative paragraphs not only tell stories; they also provide instances that trigger readers' attention and feelings of being involved in the story. Indeed, successful narration makes readers feel part of the story through visualisations of the story underlying the narrative language. Besides, narratives aim at teaching a lesson and at establishing a moral that readers learn from.

### 2.1. Components of Narration

For a paragraph to be considered narrative, it should comply with the standards of narration by including the main pillars, including the story, the plot, the setting, and the characters. First, the story refers to the overall narrative that writers would like to account for and share with their readers. It stands for the topic that frames the narrative process, such as a childhood memory. Second, the plot answers the question 'what'. It is the core of the story, for it represents the events constituting it, and that took place in the past. Third, the setting answers the questions 'when' and 'where' that gives context to the story. Finally, the characters answer the question 'who', referring to the personages acting roles in the story.

### 2.2. Narrative Paragraph Structure

Like any paragraph, a narrative paragraph consists of a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence.

The topic sentence shows readers that there is a story to be told from which a lesson is inferred. Next, the supporting sentences present the story in the chronological order of events as they occurred. At the end, the concluding sentence is a lesson or a moral.

Narratives are characterised by the use of past tenses and transitional expressions that indicate narration through time, such as after, finally, soon, as (soon as), later, then, before, meanwhile, upon, during, next, when, first, now, and while.

**3. Comparison/Contrast or Cause/effect**

The comparison/contrast organisation pattern deals with similarities and differences between two elements (persons, animals, places, objects), whereas the cause/effect organisation pattern tackles events and situations, how they came into existence (causes), and what is happening because of them (effects). In order to achieve well-organised comparison/contrast or cause/effect paragraphs, writers can clearly express the development of their ideas through two ways of organisation: (a) block by block or (b) point by point.

In the first organisation (block by block), writers group each part in a separate block. In other words, in case of comparison/contrast of two elements, with a focus on differences, features distinguishing the first item should occupy one block, while the differences of the second item should be in another block. In case of cause/effect of a particular phenomenon, writers can talk about the causes in one block and about their consequences in another block (Table 15).

Table 15

*The block by block organisation*

| Block by block organisation | |
|---|---|
| Comparison/contrast organisation pattern | Cause/effect organisation pattern |
| Topic sentence<br><br>Differences    First item <br>    Second item <br><br>Concluding sentence | Topic sentence<br><br>    Causes <br>    Effects <br><br>Concluding sentence |

In the second organisation (point by point), in case of comparison/contrast of two elements, with a focus on differences, writers discuss each difference (subtopic) in accordance with both items in one block. For instance, if a writer is contrasting the physical appearance of two persons, s/he should, first, identify the elements to be contrasted such as height, weight, eyes, and so on. Then, s/he discusses how different the persons are in each subtopic

in that order.  In case of cause/effect, writers should talk about the first cause and its effect together, and proceed similarly with subsequent causes and effects.  Table 16 illustrates this organisation pattern.

Table 16

*The point by point organisation*

| Point by point organisation | |
|---|---|
| Comparison/contrast organisation pattern | Cause/effect organisation pattern |
| Topic sentence<br>Difference 1 (Item 1 and Item 2)<br>Difference 2 (Item 1 and Item 2)<br>Difference 3 (Item 1 and Item 2)<br>Concluding sentence | Topic sentence<br>Cause 1 and Effect 1<br>Cause 2 and Effect 2<br>Cause 3 and Effect 3<br>Concluding sentence |

**Drill 15. Identify the type of each paragraph and its organisation pattern**

Paragraph 1: The Differences between Wallyball and Volleyball

Although the names of volleyball and wallyball are quite similar, there are many different qualities between them. The game of wallyball takes place in an enclosed court that has the dimensions of about twenty feet wide and forty feet long. However, the game of volleyball is typically played in a gymnasium with no enclosures, unless of course it's beach volleyball. Besides, Wallyball is typically played with two teams of two, but volleyball is played with two teams of six. In wallyball, a team can play a ball off of any of the walls on their side of the net; nevertheless, in volleyball, there is an out-of-bounds area. One more contrast is the size of the ball; the wallyball is slightly smaller and is made of a tougher material. If volleyball is a game that you like to play, then wallyball will most likely be one, too.

Paragraph 2:

There are many theories about why the dinosaurs vanished from the planet. One theory that many people believe is that a gigantic meteorite smashed into the Earth. Scientists believe that

the meteorite was very big and that the impact may have produced a large dust cloud that covered the Earth for many years. The dust cloud may have caused plants to not receive sunlight and the large plant eaters, or herbivores, may have died off, followed by the large meat eaters, or carnivores. This theory may or may not be true, but it is one explanation as to why these giant reptiles no longer inhabit the Earth.

Paragraph 3: The Similarities between Wallyball and Volleyball

There are many similarities between wallyball and volleyball. Both wallyball and volleyball are played over a net about seven feet tall. Each team is allowed three passes to each other before they send it over the net. These are usually a pass to the setter who sets it to the hitter, who then hits it over the net to the other team, who will try to do the same thing. Moreover, both teams play to twenty five points and play the best out of five games. Besides, only hands and forearms are allowed to move the ball. Knee Pads are also commonly used for both of these games. If volleyball is a game that you like to play, then wallyball will most likely be one too.

(E-Reading Worksheets)

### 3.1. Paragraph Structure

Like any paragraph, a cause and effect paragraph consists of a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence.

The topic sentence describes the event or situation the writer would like to explore or account for. The controlling idea of the topic sentence should show the organisation pattern the writer opts for, by specifying the main cause of an event or a situation and tackle its effects, for instance, which is a focus-on-effects paragraph. The opposite is to mention the major effect of an event or a situation and tackle its causes, which is a focus-on-causes paragraph.

The supporting sentences discuss the causes or effects, depending on the organisation pattern, in details. Indeed, writers explain, exemplify, illustrate, and use real-life situations to better explain the cause / effect.

The concluding sentence is a reformulation of the topic sentence and / or a summary of the main points discussed in the supporting sentences.

**4. Definition paragraph**

Read the following paragraph:

*According to Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary, the term "precocious" means exhibiting mature qualities at an unusually early age. A child who is precocious is more advanced or more mature than other children her own age. For example, this can be seen when some of these children start reading when they are still very young. They actually teach themselves to read at two or three years old. In addition, a precocious child is often referred to as "gifted." Many times these youngsters will be put into special schools where they have access to more complex material. This also allows them to have the opportunity to be with other children like themselves. Lastly, a child who is not precocious will show development right on target with his peers. They will start to read when the other children read. This typically occurs between kindergarten and first grade when the child is around five or six years old. In the end, though, it is important to remember that precocious children still need love and guidance like other children even if they have some amazingly mature qualities.*

(E-Reading Worksheets)

Reading this paragraph denotes that it defines and explains a word, a term, or a concept that may be unfamiliar or unknown to the reader. Indeed, sometimes readers are ignorant of words from different languages, especially if they are borrowed and have static use. Besides, there are some words that have different meanings, so when defining them, readers become aware of the different contexts where these terms are used. Moreover, some

words are controversial, especially technical ones, for scholars are in disagreement, and each one conceives those words from a different perspective. In this case, the term in question becomes multifaceted and multidimensional that each person defines it differently.

### 4.1. Definition Paragraph Structure

Like any paragraph, a definition paragraph consists of a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence.

The topic sentence should include a definition. It can be the dictionary definition, like in the paragraph above: *"According to Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary, the term "precocious" means "exhibiting mature qualities at an unusually early age."* Writers should make sure that they cite the exact words from the dictionary. Besides, writers can use their own definitions; e.g., *"A precocious child is a person who shows maturity beyond their years"* by pinpointing the category (*A precocious child)* and the identifier (what makes this category unique).

The supporting sentences discuss the term in details. The first supporting sentence is the writer's description of the term in his/her words; e.g., *"A child who is precocious is more advanced or more mature than other children her own age;'* after which s/he gives more details. In the paragraph above, in *"This can be seen when some of these children start reading. When they are still very young they actually teach themselves how to read at two or three years old"*, the writer explains that precocious children are advanced and more mature than their peers, then gives details of what their maturity looks like, and finishes by further explaining that some of these precocious children are actually self-study at earlier stages.

The second supporting sentence compares the term to a similar word; e.g., "A *precocious child is often referred to as "gifted""* to ease the process of understanding the term by juxtaposing it with what readers are familiar with.

The third supporting sentence can use the negative explanation of what the term is *not*; e.g., "*A child who is not precocious will show development right on target with his peers.*"

The fourth supporting sentence illustrates with examples; e.g., "*Some children use extremely advanced vocabulary when they speak. They are touted as precocious if this occurs at a very young age*" to provide a context that readers can relate to for better understanding of the term.

The concluding sentence of a definition paragraph plays the role of a reminder for readers to recall the topic sentence, and it is important to end the paragraph in an interesting way to keep readers thinking about what they have read.  For example, « *In the end, it is important to remember that precocious children still need love and guidance like other children even though they have some amazing abilities.*"

### 5. Opinion Paragraph

Read the following paragraph:

*Christmas*

*Christmas is all about money and things these days. Parents spend all their time and money trying to get the latest, most exciting gifts for their children. Children think about nothing but what their relatives and friends will give them. The most important Christmas decoration in most homes is the presents under the tree, not the baby Jesus in the nativity scene or the angel on top of the tree. Christmas should be about the things Jesus taught, about giving, not getting, about being together, not spending money on each other.*

(E-Reading Worksheets)

Reading this paragraph persuades readers about what is important in Christmas.  Thus, this paragraph is persuasive or argumentative, for it uses arguments that are not fact-oriented. Consider Sentences (1) and (2):

(1) Many language students prefer bilingual dictionaries to monolingual ones.

(2) People from many different cultures live in LA.

Sentence (1) is an opinion that the writer would like to defend. However, Sentence (2) is a fact that cannot be argued upon.

### 5.1. Opinion Paragraph Structure

Writing persuasively denotes presenting arguments for or against the topic. Indeed, a good opinion paragraph that aims at convincing readers with the viewpoint defended explains facts to support the opinion; refers to the counterargument (opposing view) and refutes it; and ends with a concluding sentence that reformulates the topic sentence and suggests a solution.

# Semester II

# Answers to

# Drills

## Answers to Drills

**Drill 13: Circle the topic and underline the controlling idea**

<u>Being punctual</u>, <u>committed</u> and <u>perseverant</u> are important (characteristics of a good worker)

**Drill 14: Consider the differences between the sentences below:**

Example 1 states that the person became stressed in simple terms as if it presents a fact. However, Example 2 sketches details of the different steps through which the person described became stressed.  In example 2, the writer uses accurate descriptions that make readers visualise the situation, and to feel as if they are present at the moment of anxiety.

**Drill 15. Identify the type of each paragraph and its organisation pattern**

Paragraph 1: Comparison/contrast paragraph, point-by-point organisation pattern

Paragraph 2: Cause and effect paragraph, focus-on-cause organisation pattern

Paragraph 3: Comparison/contrast paragraph, block-by-block organisation pattern

# Conclusion

This handout covers first year Licence Written Comprehension and Expression syllabus, including parts of speech, word combination, mechanics of writing, writing problems, constituents of a paragraph, the writing process, and different types of paragraphs.

The handout also engages students in constructing knowledge and in practicing what they have studied. Thus, the handout is a rich, theoretical resource that guides students in their learning, but it presents its content in simple language that all students with different levels can easily get access to.

Besides, the handout is a practical guide that allows students to have hands-on practice, so they do not only get exposed to content, but they can assimilate what they have learnt as well.

Finally, this handout is the basis behind the foundation of a handout for L2 Written Comprehension and Expression. Indeed, students' ability to write paragraphs paves the way to delve deep into writing larger compositions, including essays and their different types.

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## Useful links

Aston University LDC www.aston.ac.uk/ldc

Learn Higher http://www.learnhigher.ac.uk/

Open University http://www.open.ac.uk/openlearn/home.php

Royal Literary Fellowship http://www.rlf.org.uk/fellowshipscheme/writing/glossary.cfm -

Write Now http://www.writenow.ac.uk/

https://www.ereadingworksheets.com/text-structure/patterns-of-organization/cause-and-effect/cause-and-effect-example-paragraphs/