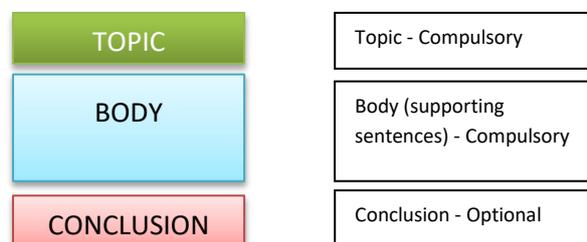


Writing a Paragraph for an Academic Writing

Academic writing is a type of writing that is widely used in the academic community. It often refers to a particular style of expression which is used by researchers to define the intellectual boundaries of their disciplines and their areas of expertise¹. Many experts agree that there are several characteristics of an academic writing, namely: (1) is cohesive and possess a logically organized flow of ideas; this means that the various parts are connected to form a unified whole; (2) uses appropriate narrative tones and present the arguments of others fairly; (3) uses proper dictions (or words) according to our academic convention; (4) is precise, concise, and use formal language; (6) has well-structured paragraphs and clear topic sentences; (7) follows the scholarly convention of citing; (8) demonstrates a sound understanding of the pertinent body of knowledge and academic debates that exist within, and increasing external to, our discipline; (9) presents a logical argument supported with quality evidences; (10) is thesis-driven,” meaning that the starting point is a particular perspective, idea, or “thesis” applied to the chosen research problem, such as, establishing, proving, or disproving solutions to the questions posed for the topic; (10) describes higher-order thinking skills. While all of these characteristics are important to produce a quality piece of an academic writing like a thesis or a journal article, this summary will only focus on writing a good paragraph for academic writing.

A paragraph is a unit of thought presented in our writing and normally consists of between four and eight sentences. It discusses and elaborates a particular point that we need for our argument. A well-written paragraph is not a random collection of sentences; it is a unit of thought, argument and/or evidence made up of a group of related sentences that focus on one central idea. Each sentence contributes to the unity, coherence, and development of the paragraph². The first principle of a good paragraph is unity. It means that only one idea is discussed in each paragraph. The idea is normally presented at the first part of the paragraph, and it is followed by supporting sentences that contain elaboration, examples, evidence, reasoning, etc. The paragraph can be closed with a conclusion, as shown in the following picture.

Figure 1 Paragraph Structure



¹ Taken from *Organizing Your Social Sciences Research Paper: Academic Writing Style*. Retrieved from <http://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/academicwriting>

² Taken from *Creating great academic writing: planning your work; writing paragraphs and abstracts.ppt* Retrieved from https://egrs.jcu.edu.au/workshops/academic-and-thesis-writing-workshops-2/seminar-1-presentation/view?utm_content=bufferb9b87&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer

The second principle of a good paragraph is coherence (or connectedness of all parts). The coherence can be reached by paying attention to the cohesion and clarity. Cohesion in a paragraph is indicated by the presence of a link that makes logical connections from one sentence/ paragraph/ section to the next. This can be done in two ways. The first one is by using proper transition devices/ logical connectors as presented in Table 1 below. The second strategy for cohesion is by introducing the new information from the old information that is placed in the last sentence (also known as rheme and theme principles)³. The following examples illustrate the theme and rheme principles (or old and new).

To stop the outbreak of the disease, **two medical teams** were sent immediately to the affected area in Sichuan to diagnose the disease. **Each medical team** was formed by **ten doctors selected from the first-rate hospitals across the country**. The expertise of all **the doctors** was well-known in China, and some ...⁴

In the above example, ‘each medical team’ (old information) is introduced to refer to the previous idea (‘two medical teams’), and placed at the beginning of the sentence to introduce the new idea ‘ten doctors...’ (new information). This principle makes sure that our paragraph is cohesive.

Table 1 Paragraph Links through Transition Devices

Order of Importance	Contrast	Result	Comparison
More/most importantly, more/most significantly, above all, primarily, it is essential	However, on the other hand, on the contrary, by (in) comparison, in contrast	As a result, as a consequence, therefore, thus, consequently, hence	Similarly, likewise, also
Reason	Alternative use		
The cause of The reason for	A contrasting view ... The first issue for discussion ... In addition to ... other factors to consider include ...	As well as ... it is also necessary to consider ... Similar arguments/research suggest ...	As a result of ... a number of consequences have arisen

In terms of clarity, we have to make sure that we use clear sentence structure: obvious subjects and active verbs, using abstract concepts/nouns wisely (and avoid too many heavy nouns just to sound academics), and using technical/jargon terms wisely⁵. The following is an illustration how removing many heavy nouns results in a clearer writing.

Heavy Nouns	Better and clearer
The inequity in the distribution of wealth in Australia is an indicator of its lack of egalitarianism .	Because wealth is unequally distributed in Australia, it is not an egalitarian society

The final principle of a good paragraph is the development of the paragraph that provides enough specific information so that the idea is completely understandable. Structurally, a well-written paragraph contains a pleasing mixture of sentence lengths. We should follow a short sentence with a longer one because a diversity of lengths is easier to read. While a paragraph must not have more than one main idea, it must be fully explained. In principle, all

³ Taken from Clarity and Cohesion in academic writing ppt. presented by Ingrid Reiner from the Learning Hub UQ Student Services at IAP big group presentation for AA scholars January 2017.

⁴ ibid

⁵ ibid

the sentences after the theme sentence describe, illustrate, develop and exemplify the point introduced by the theme sentence. Content-wise, we have to provide a paragraph that is critically thought by making sure we are answering readers' questions. We can do this by asking 'focus questions' for our topic.

References

Creating great academic writing: planning your work; writing paragraphs and abstracts.ppt

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