

Writing in the Workplace: Paragraphs

Name: _____

Outcomes

By the end of this booklet you will:

- Understand why writing a paragraph is an important skill
- Know what unity is and how to create a unified paragraph
- Know what cohesion is and apply it to paragraph writing
- Apply order of importance and chronological order to paragraph writing
- Recognize the parts and structure of a paragraph
- Create a workplace style paragraph that incorporates these outcomes

Date	Learner Comments	Instructor Comments

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Writing A Paragraph

Writing a good paragraph is an important workplace skill. This is one of the main skills that employers are looking for. If you can write a solid paragraph you will be successful in creating most other types of writing, like sentences, reports, emails, letters, and texts, because they all rely on the same skills.

So, what is a paragraph? A paragraph is simply a collection of related sentences. They are joined together because they have a related main point or idea.

Unity:

Unity means that there is only one idea in the paragraph. If you introduce a new idea you generally start a new paragraph.

Task 1:

Find the sentence in the paragraph below that isn't on topic and throws off the unity of the paragraph and highlight or underline it.

We are sorry to hear that the lamp you purchased at our store is defective. Unfortunately, we no longer carry the model of lamp that you are interested in. Therefore, we are not able to exchange your lamp. Instead, we would like to offer you a store credit towards another purchase. We carry many designs of sofas and love seats in both formal, modern and casual style. Please accept our apologies for the inconvenience. We look forward to doing business with you again.

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Coherence:

Coherence helps to keep your reader from getting lost or confused. Coherence is the way the ideas in a paragraph all flow together. Arranging your ideas with a logical connection between them is important. Think of it like building a house, you can't put a roof on before you have walls and you can't put up walls before you have a foundation. We will cover two ways to create coherence in your writing, order of importance and chronological order.

Order of Importance:

Task 2:

Often the best choice for writing at work is to begin a paragraph with the most important information. People are busy and will often skim read something you have written to them. If the important information isn't at the top of the page, they are likely to miss it. You don't want people to have to 'dig' for your message because you have 'buried' it.

From the perspective of Bill's shift supervisor, who needs to report the incident to Bill's manager, number the sentences below from most to least important:

- ___ Bill was working the midnight shift, which he arrived on time for.
- ___ It is recommended Bill be terminated from his position due to this behaviour.
- ___ Bill's duties were lock up the restaurant, to clean up the cooking surfaces, drain and replace the cooking oil and mop the floors.
- ___ Bill was under the influence of alcohol.
- ___ Bill continued to consume alcohol while on duty.
- ___ Bill vandalized the restaurant, causing \$1000 dollars' worth of damage.

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Chronological Order:

Task 3:

It's sometimes best to start with what came first, or what happened first and present your ideas in the order that they happened.

List the letters at the beginning of each of the sentences in the paragraph below so that the events are in chronological order and the paragraph becomes coherent.

a)After I got home, I suddenly began to feel dizzy and nauseous. b) My mother became concerned because I was pale and clammy looking. c) She decided to take me to the emergency room. d) The doctor shone a light in my eyes and then sent me to get an x-ray done. e) She decided that I might have a concussion. f) I was told to take it easy but not to go to sleep for several hours. g) The doctor instructed my mother to check in with me every half hour and to return to the ER with me if I became confused or couldn't be woken up. h) It was a beautiful day for a horseback ride in the country. i) My friend and I were having a great time until my horse spooked, and I fell off. j) I landed on the ground and hit my head on a stump. k) I was a little dazed and so we went home.

Answer: _____

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Paragraph Structure

A paragraph can be broken into three parts:

- 1) The topic sentence
- 2) Supporting sentences
- 3) Closing sentence

The topic sentence is usually the first sentence of the paragraph. This is the sentence that should give the main idea of the paragraph and tell your reader what your paragraph will be about. This is the “why”, the reason you are writing. This is sometimes called an introduction. Think about the purpose of writing. Answer the question “Why am I writing this?”.

The supporting sentences give details or support the topic sentence. They are meant to back up your main idea. In the case of less formal writing you can use bullet points. Stay on topic!

The closing sentence is the last sentence of the paragraph. It is meant to refer to the main idea in the topic sentence. When you are writing a traditional paragraph, you would always have a closing sentence that refers back to your topic sentence. For work place writing this is not always productive, and you will find that it often isn’t included.

Remember that it is also important to decide who you are writing to. This is also known as your audience. Knowing who is going to read your writing will help you set the tone and judge how formal you should be. However, it is important to always be polite and professional because you can never be sure who will end up seeing your writing once you have sent it into the workplace word.

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Task 4:

Read the paragraphs below and answer the questions:

It is very important that our company become more eco-friendly - recycling is the key! Current focus is on being environmentally responsible and our company should be too. I noticed that many of us do not recycle our waste. Scrap paper is often in regular garbage bins with plastic containers and paper coffee cups. Paper should be separated from plastic, glass and cans and should go into separate blue bins. Many of you do not dispose of used toner cartridges properly. This really needs to change because toner cartridges are highly toxic—so we should not put them into the garbage but instead put them in the designated box next to the photocopier. It is important to note that everyone should be responsible for disposing of their garbage properly. The blue, grey and green bins are placed throughout our offices. If you think we need more of them, please let me know. I hope we can resolve this problem quickly to do our part for the environment.

- 1) Highlight the introduction sentence.
- 2) Underline the supporting sentences.
- 3) Highlight the concluding sentence in a different colour.
- 4) Why: What is the purpose or intent of this piece of writing?

- 5) Who: who are they writing to? Who is the audience?

- 6) Is the tone appropriate for the workplace? Why or why not?

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Using a List to Plan Your Writing:

Lists can be used to help you with your paragraph writing. It is easy to get disorganized when we are trying to bring our thoughts together and put them down on paper. A list is a visual way to organize your thoughts simply.

Task 5:

In this exercise you are going to write a note to your boss. The following paragraph is long and rambling, you will use this information to write your note but communicate it more effectively.

You are trying to let your boss know that you need to take some time off from work as you have a medical procedure coming up. You are going to have a surgery on your right knee that you injured 5 years ago in a slip and fall accident. You will have to be in the hospital overnight and then your doctor has said that you will need two weeks to recover at home using crutches. When you return to work you will have to be on light duties for another two weeks. You will not be able to lift anything over 10 pounds and you will not be able to do a lot of bending, kneeling or squatting as it will put too much pressure on your right knee as it is healing. Your surgery is scheduled on January 12th. You will also have to have a follow-up appointment with your doctor on January 25th and February 8th to ensure you are healing properly, these appointments will only take an hour of your time for each one. Your boss is busy, and you want to give them only the information they need, but you also need them to understand the details that will impact your job attendance and performance. If your boss is not given the information, they need it could result in misunderstandings that might negatively impact your health or your future at the company.

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What is the important information that your boss needs to be able to understand what is going on with your schedule and health? Remember that they need to know why you won't be at work, how long you will be gone, and what your limitations are once you return to work, and any other instructions from the doctor. Make a list below of all the relevant information you need to pass on. Put the most important information first.

What: what is the information you are trying to communicate?

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

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Task 7:

If you had written more formally about your knee surgery using the list that you developed it might have read something like the paragraphs below. Highlight the topic sentences. Underline the supporting sentences. In this case there is a closing sentence, so circle it.

I am writing to let you know that I need to take two weeks off work because I am scheduled to have knee surgery on January 12th. My doctor has said that I will spend the night in hospital and then I will need two weeks at home to recover. If there are no complications I can return to work on January 26th. I have a follow up appointment on January 25th to ensure that I can return on the 26th.

When I return to work my doctor has ordered that I be on light duties for another two weeks. I will not be able to lift anything over 10 pounds and I will not be able to do much bending, kneeling or squatting. I have a second follow up appointment on February 8th, from 9am -10am, after which I should be able to return to regular duties.

To recap: I will be off work from January 12th to the 26th, I will need to be on light duties from January 26th to February 8th, I will miss one hour on February 8th from 9am to 10am for a follow up doctor appointment and I will be able to return to regular duties on February 8th, as long as I have no complications.

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Task 8:

Your Turn! Choose three topics from the list below to write a paragraph on. If these don't inspire you choose your own topic but remember it is usually easier to write about something that actually happened to you. Make sure that you are thinking about unity, and coherence. Plan each paragraph out so that you have a topic sentence and supporting sentences. You will decide if you need a closing sentence based on what your paragraph is about. You can write your paragraphs on a separate piece of paper and staple it to the back of this booklet.

1. Write an email to your employer explaining that your pay-cheque was incorrect
2. Describe a time when you were experiencing a lot of stress and how you managed it.
3. Write about a time when you had to use problem solving skills.
4. What is your proudest accomplishment and why?
5. Describe a time when you had to deal with a difficult customer or co-worker. How did you handle the situation?
6. What are your greatest strengths that you will bring to your chosen career?

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Answer Key

Task:1

We carry many designs of sofas and love seats in both formal, modern and casual style.

Task 2:

5, 1, 6, 3, 4, 2

Task 3:

H, I, J, K, A, B, C, D, E, F, G

Task 4:

1), 2), 3)

It is very important that our company become more eco-friendly - recycling is the key!
Current focus is on being environmentally responsible and our company should be too. I noticed that many of us do not recycle our waste. Scrap paper is often in regular garbage bins with plastic containers and paper coffee cups. Paper should be separated from plastic, glass and cans and should go into separate blue bins. Many of you do not dispose of used toner cartridges properly. This really needs to change because toner cartridges are highly toxic—so we should not put them into the garbage but instead put them in the designated box next to the photocopier. It is important to note that everyone should be responsible for disposing of their garbage properly. The blue, grey and green bins are placed throughout our offices. If you think we need more of them, please let me know. I hope we can resolve this problem quickly to do our part for the environment.

4) To get the other staff members to recycle/save the environment.

5) Fellow staff members

6) Answers may vary

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Task 5:

- let your boss know that you need time off due to knee surgery on January 12th
- overnight in hospital and two weeks to recover at home
- return to work on light duties for two weeks
- no lifting anything over 10 pounds
- limited bending, kneeling or squatting
- follow-up appointment with doctor on January 25th and February 8th (1 hr each)

Task 6:

Answers will vary, hand in to mark. Answer should contain an intro sentence, bulleted supporting points, and concluding sentence or sign off.

Task 7:

I am writing to let you know that I need to take two weeks off work because I am scheduled to have knee surgery on January 12th. My doctor has said that I will spend the night in hospital and then I will need two weeks at home to recover. If there are no complications I can return to work on January 26th. I have a follow up appointment on January 25th to ensure that I can return on the 26th.

When I return to work my doctor has ordered that I be on light duties for another two weeks. I will not be able to lift anything over 10 pounds and I will not be able to do much bending, kneeling or squatting. I have a second follow up appointment on February 8th, from 9am -10am, after which I should be able to return to regular duties.

To recap: I will be off work from January 12th to the 26th, I will need to be on light duties from January 26th to February 8th, I will miss one hour on February 8th from 9am to 10am for a follow up doctor appointment and I will be able to return to regular duties on February 8th, as long as I have no complications.

Task 8:

3 paragraphs on the listed topics or topics of their choice.

End of Module Reflection

After completing this module, answer the questions below. If you answer agree (3) for each question, ask for a review or a final assessment from an instructor. If you answer maybe (2) or no (1), have a discussion with an instructor to make a plan to improve your performance and confidence.

1 – No

2 – Maybe

3 – Yes

A	I understand all of the outcomes covered in this module.	1	2	3
B	I do not need any further assistance from an instructor on the material covered in this module.	1	2	3
C	I do not need more practice questions or assignments	1	2	3
D	I am confident in my abilities to complete tasks related to this module.	1	2	3
E	I am ready to complete a review and/or a final assessment related to this module.	1	2	3

Reflection
