

## The Paragraph: Unity, Order (Emphasis), Coherence

### Definition

A paragraph is a group of closely-related sentences which deal with and develop one idea. The first sentence of a paragraph usually introduces the idea; it is called the topic sentence. All writing of any length is, as you know, divided into paragraphs, and the first line of a new paragraph is indented.

### Structure

By the structure of a paragraph is meant the building or composition of it. The definition of a paragraph indicates that the sentences must be related; they must have a particular structure. This structure is determined by the relationship of the ideas, and it is by constructing the paragraph properly that you develop the idea. To develop an idea is to unfold or reveal it. For instance, when someone asks you how to do a mathematical problem, you explain the process by giving the steps in order. The last sentence of your explanation is, of course, the last step of the problem. The development of an idea in a paragraph follows the same procedure. The topic sentence may inform the reader that washing a cocker spaniel is a rather difficult process. From that point you proceed in the order in which you would if you were, in fact, washing a dog. The final sentence should bring the paragraph to a complete end; that is, it must leave the reader feeling that you have told him all you have to say. Such an ending may be: "Now the dog is clean and shiny, all ready, in his opinion, to go out and roll over in the dirt." If you follow this method of developing your idea, your paragraph will be well-organized.

Not only will your paragraph be well-organized, it will have one of the most important qualities of all paragraphs: COHERENCE. Coherence means "a sticking together." A coherent paragraph has all the sentences so well arranged that not one could be interchanged with another. For example, in the paragraph about washing the cocker spaniel, you would not put the instructions about brushing the dog ahead of those about drying him. All facts follow in a coherent paragraph.

Every good paragraph must have UNITY. Unity means "oneness." That is, a paragraph must deal with only one idea. In the paragraph about washing a cocker spaniel, you might feel that you should describe the way your dog behaves when you wash him; this description breaks the unity of your paragraph. Although it might be entirely appropriate to explain how you control the dog in the bath, that is not the place to tell a story about your dog. When you finish your paragraph, look it over and cross out any sentence that is not doing its work—which is developing the topic sentence.

The third and last requirement of a well-constructed paragraph is EMPHASIS. Emphasis means "force" or "stress." You may have a fairly well-organized, coherent, unified paragraph that is lacking in emphasis. The main idea of the paragraph must be stressed in

every sentence. It must not be hidden in a mass of useless details and unnecessary explanations. For instance, you should tell what kind of soap is best for washing a cocker spaniel, but you should not describe the soap or discuss the kinds of soap that will not do; such facts weaken the emphasis of your paragraph. You can be sure that you are stressing the main idea by keeping the same subject in every sentence, whenever this is possible. In the paragraph about washing the cocker spaniel, the subject of each sentence could be “you” understood. Such a subject would be better than “dog” because then each simple predicate would have too many helping verbs, and the object of all good writing is to avoid unnecessary words. In this way you are likely to improve the unity because it will not be so easy to go off the track. You are much less likely to introduce unrelated ideas if you are not changing subjects.

Detailed development is just as important in a paragraph as in a whole composition--indeed, no essay can be rounded out unless its paragraphs are.

### **COMPLETENESS**

#### **Poor:**

#### **Why I Came to College**

My chief reason for coming to college was to prepare myself for a position that would allow me to have a larger income than I would be likely to obtain as a high school graduate. There is no question that college graduates make more money. Another reason for coming to college was to provide myself with a cultural background that would help me to make a more satisfying use of my leisure time. A third reason for coming to college was to increase my social experience. Getting along with people is important, and college teaches a man to be a good mixer.

#### **Improved:**

#### **Why I Came to College**

My chief reason for coming to college was to prepare myself for a position that would allow me to have a higher income than I would be likely to obtain as a high school graduate. Even though some high school graduates make reasonably good wages these days, their economic opportunities are limited in two ways: without a college degree they are not eligible for most of the good jobs, and without a degree they have less chance of promotion. I want to be an engineer. If I graduate with an engineering degree, I can expect within fifteen years of graduation to have a responsible position in management at a salary between eight and twelve thousand dollars. If I have only a high school diploma, about the most

I can eventually hope for is to become a foreman at five or six thousand dollars. There is no question that in my field college graduates make more money.

Another reason for coming to college was to provide myself with a cultural background that would help me to make a more satisfying use of my leisure time. I won't be an engineer 24 hours a day. When I come home from the plant or office I expect to take an interest in what is going on in state and national politics. I expect to take an active part in community affairs. I expect to read good books, listen to good music, and engage in good talk with my wife and friends. I will owe it to myself, my wife, and my children to provide the kind of home environment in which these interests receive attention. By providing me with a wide variety of interests, college should make it easier for me to escape the limitations of my job, no matter how interesting or significant that job may be.

A third reason for coming to college was to increase my social experience. An engineer works as much with men as he does with machines. He must know how to get the cooperation of workmen, how to deal with labor leaders and government officials, how to express his ideas to management, how to represent his company in public. The ability to mix easily with people is therefore important to him. A college education, by giving him four years of intimate association with people from all parts of the country and from all walks of life, teaches a man to understand and get along with people.

### **ORDER**

1. A **time, or chronological, order** is the natural order of narration and is commonly used in explaining the steps in a process. Events are recorded in the order in which they occur--first, second, next, and so on to the last. Thus if you were telling a story or giving directions on how to reach a certain designation or how to bake a cake, the natural order would be a time order. Here is an illustration:

*While I jacked the fore end of the car up, and cleared away the snow from under it, Dan built a fire about a foot in front of the radiator to keep the car and us from freezing to death and to furnish light for the operation. The wheel*

*correction was surprisingly easy; we were ready to leave again in a few minutes. Then we discovered that it would be more difficult to get out of the lane than it had been to get in. Because of the density of the timber there was no way of turning around without serious risk of getting stuck, and the whirling snow made the visibility poor everywhere except directly within the beams of the head lights. Dan therefore very carefully directed my backing; yet in spite of this I bumped several small pines, which retaliated by dumping their burden of snow on top of the car. The Plymouth was little more than a snowdrift on wheels by the time we reached the highway.*

2. A **space order** is useful when the writer wishes to report what he sees. The movement of the paragraph thus follows the movement of his eyes. That movement must have some continuity which a reader can recognize and follow. It need not start at the far left and move steadily to the far right, or vice versa, since in any view an observer's gaze is likely to be drawn quickly to the most conspicuous object. But there should be some logical or natural progression from one descriptive detail to the next. It may be very confusing to flit haphazardly from left to right, then center to left again. Notice that the following paragraph begins with the front view, then moves right, down, and to the rear. This order reflects the relative conspicuousness of the objects described.

*I seated myself in the barber chair, which was only a rickety, straight-backed affair made of bamboo placed on a wooden box in the center of the room. Directly in front of this throne hung a dingy, blurred mirror, suspended by ropes from the roof. To my right stood a square table, upon which rested the barber's only tools--a pair of clippers, a dirty-looking comb, and a razor. As I cast my eyes downward, I was somewhat surprised to find that the floor was still in its natural state--dirt. It also showed evidence that hair had been cut here before. I noticed now for the first time an opening at the rear, over which a piece of gray material was draped. Evidently this archway led into the living quarters of the barber.*

3. **Particular to General:** A common order in expository paragraphs is from a succession of particular statements to the general statement or conclusion to which the particulars

lead. Huxley used this order when he began a paragraph by describing an experiment which shows that chalk contains lime, related a second experiment to show that chalk also contains carbonic acid, and finally stated the conclusion that chalk is composed of carbonate of lime. By this order the reader is led to the conclusion through details of evidence or illustration. Hence the order is often called inductive, from the Latin word meaning to "lead in." A paragraph so organized will have the topic sentence at or near the end. Notice how the author of the following paragraph leads up to his topic sentence ("Logic is fun").

*If you enjoy working out the strategy of games, tit-tac-toe or poker or chess; if you are interested in the frog who jumped up three feet and fell back two in getting out of a well, or in the fly buzzing between the noses of two approaching cyclists, or the farmer who left land to his three sons; if you have been captivated by codes and ciphers or are interested in cross-word puzzles; if you like to fool around with numbers; if music appeals to you by the sense of form which it expresses--then you will enjoy logic. You ought to be warned, perhaps. Those who take up logic get glassy-eyed and absent-minded. They join a fanatical cult. But they have a good time. There is one of the most durable, absorbing and inexpensive of pleasures. **Logic is fun.***

4. **General to Particular:** The most popular order for expository paragraphs is just the reverse of the one above. It begins with a general statement, then moves to particulars which explain or illustrate, or persuade the reader to accept the generalization. This order is similar to the illustrative pattern for developing an essay. In effect, the topic sentence at or near the beginning of the paragraph states the purpose, and the subsequent sentences illustrate it. In the paragraph that follows, the bold topic sentence is developed by three sentences, each of which adds an illustration.

***Beauty is the quality which makes to endure.** In a house that I know, I have noticed a block of spermaceti lying about closets and mantelpieces, for twenty years together, simply because the tallow-man gave it the form of a rabbit; and, I suppose, it may continue to be lugged about unchanged for a century. Let*

*an artist scrawl a few lines or figures on the back of a letter, and that scrap of paper is rescued from danger, is put in portfolio, is framed and glazed, and, in proportion to the beauty of the lines drawn, will be kept for centuries. Burns writes a copy of verses, and sends them to a newspaper, and the human race take charge of them that they shall not perish.*

In the next paragraph the topic sentence is followed by the details of evidence which spell out the meaning of the general statement that America has been going suburban.

***America has been going suburban.** The city moving out and the country moving in have met and mingled in this new melting pot--the urban belt. According to the latest United States census, the suburban population increased approximately thirty percent between 1930 and 1940, against little more than seven percent for the country as a whole. In the decade between 1920 and 1930, the suburbs grew five times faster than the rural districts and three times faster than the cities they encompassed. Already fifty-eight percent of the people in this country live in metropolitan areas, with a disproportionate number in nineteen centers such as Greater New York, Chicagoland, and Greater Los Angeles. Small towns, the traditional citadels of American provincialism, have become enveloped in some metropolitan area or another, and have become citified. Highway 67 is now the extension of Main Street, and the corner grocery has given place to the A&P.*

**Transitional Connective:**

*The statement that the German people were ultimately responsible for the war is a half-truth which encourages a convenient oversimplification. It is true that Hitler was the constitutionally appointed leader of the German nation and that, despite individual protests, his policies, as long as they were successful, had the approval, or at least the acquiescence, of the German voters. **But**, in the world in which we live no man, no nation causes war. To fix any ultimate responsibility for World War II we must go beyond Hitler and the Nazi ideology; we must look before Munich and the invasion of Poland. And the farther we look the more*

*clearly we will see that the roots of war were world wide, and that no nation was guiltless of nourishing them.*

OR

**Revised to Two Paragraphs:**

*The statement that the German people were ultimately responsible for the war is a half-truth which encourages a convenient oversimplification. It is true that Hitler was the constitutionally appointed leader of the German nation and that, despite individual protests, his policies, as long as they were successful, had the approval, or at least the acquiescence, of the German voters.*

*But, in the world in which we live no man, no nation causes war. To fix any ultimate responsibility for World War II we must go beyond Hitler and the Nazi ideology; we must look before Munich and the invasion of Poland. And the farther we look the more clearly we will see that the roots of war were world wide, and that no nation was guiltless of nourishing them.*

**5. Question to Answer, Effect to Cause:** Less common than any of the orders we have considered so far is the paragraph that begins with a question and moves toward the answer, or begins with an effect and moves toward the cause. Such a paragraph usually has no explicit topic sentence, since the answer to the question or the cause of the effect is explained by the paragraph as a whole. But the opening question, problem, or dilemma announces the purpose of the paragraph clearly if implicitly. The following example moves from question to answer:

*And when is water boiling? It can be said, with few people to argue the point, that water boils at two hundred and twelve degrees Fahrenheit. Myself, I would say that when it bubbles with large energetic bubbles, and looks ready to hop from the kettle, and makes a rocky rather than a murmuring noise, and sends off a great deal of steam, it is boiling.*

**Time order**

A chain of events recorded in the order in which they occurred. Paragraph begins with the first event and ends with the last one. Usually no topic sentence.

Event 1

Event 2

Event 3, and so on

**Space order**

Sentences in paragraph move from one area to the next as these areas are viewed, in turn, by the writer.

Movement may be in any direction but may be easy

To follow. Usually no topic sentence.

Left-right, front-rear,  
up-down, or any logical  
movement from one space to  
the next

**Particular to general (inductive)**

From a series of explanatory or illustrative statements to the conclusion drawn from them. Topic sentence at or near end of paragraph.

Details leading up to  
concluding topic sentence

**General to particular (deductive)**

From general statement to supporting details which explain, illustrate or prove it. Topic sentence at or near beginning of paragraph.

Conclusion or general  
statement followed by details  
of explanation or proof

*Variation 1*

Topic sentence is restated as conclusion at end of paragraph.

*Variation 2*

Topic sentence implies qualification or contrast which requires paragraph to develop first one phase, then the other of topic sentence. Point of reversal indicated by transitional connective: but, yet, still, on the other hand.

**Question-answer, Effect-cause**

Paragraph begins with question or effect then answers the question or shows the cause. Usually no topic sentence.

Question leads to answer  
or  
Effect leads to cause

**UNITY****Poor:**

*It is a good thing that we learn to speak as children. If the learning were postponed until we were adults most of us would be too discouraged by the difficulties to persevere in the task. "Perhaps, in that event, our political campaigns would be conducted in sign language and our radio broadcasters would be required to learn the Morse code." We take a child's learning to talk for*

*granted, and not infrequently parents grow worried when their four-year-old stumbles over his consonants and becomes snarled in his syntax. Yet compared with the intellectual achievement of learning to talk, the discovery of the theory of relativity is a trifling accomplishment.*

What is the paragraph about? What is the topic sentence? What do you believe the writer will tell the reader? In this poor example the writer has not made it clear why it is good that we learn to speak when we are children. Certainly, at the least, the last two sentences in this paragraph do not belong.

### Exercises in Unity

These exercises will help you to understand the idea of unity. Each passage has the topic sentence underlined. With that controlling idea in mind try to find the one sentence that has been inserted that does not belong there because it breaks the unity. Cross out the sentence.

#### Exercise I:

All these tales, told in that drowsy undertone with which men talk in the dark, the countenances of the listeners, only now and then receiving a casual gleam from the glare of a pipe, sank deep in the mind of Ichabod. The revel now gradually broke up. He repaid them in kind with large extracts from his invaluable author, Cotton Mather, and added many fearful sights which he had seen in his nightly walks about Sleepy Hollow.

- From *Legend of Sleepy Hollow* by Washington Irving

#### Exercise II:

All that was nearly fifty years ago. If Nolan was thirty then, he must have been near eighty when he died. He looked sixty when he was forty. But he never seemed to me to change a hair afterward. As I imagine his life from what I have seen and heard of it, he must have been in every sea, and yet almost never on land. Till he grew very old, he went aloft a great deal. He always kept up his exercise; and I never heard that he was ill. If any other man was ill, he was the kindest nurse in the world, and he knew more than half the surgeons do. These were the days when diseases were a serious problem on a long ocean voyage. Then if anybody was sick or died, or if the captain wanted him to, or any other occasion, he was always ready to read prayers. I have said that he read beautifully.

From *Man Without a Country* by Edward Everett Hale

**Exercise III:**

Each time a ship makes the fifty-one mile transit of the Panama Canal from ocean to ocean, fifty-two million gallons of water are required to lift it over the spine of the Continental Divide. Two ships use about what the city of Boston does in a day, and in 1954 the daily average was twenty-three ships. The lowest route the surveyors could find over the spine of the hemisphere required ships to soar three hundred and twelve feet up. To get this water, the engineers had to create, with the help of rainfall and the turbulent Chagres River, the one hundred and sixty-three square mile Gatun Lake. It meant the largest earth dam ever conceived at that time.

From *Seven Wonders of American Engineering* by Ira Wolfert.

**Exercise IV:**

Much rain fell in the night; and the next morning there blew a bitter wintry wind out of the northwest, driving scattered clouds. But I was young and spirited, and like most lads that have been country-bred, I had a great opinion of my shrewdness. For all that, and before the sun began to peep or the last of the stars had vanished, I made my way to the side of the burn, and had a plunge in a deep whirling pool. All aglow from my bath, I sat down once more beside the fire, which I had replenished and began gravely to consider my position.

From *Kidnapped* by Robert Louis Stevenson

**Exercise V:**

Boy after boy managed to get on the river. The minister's son became an engineer. The doctor's and the postmaster's sons became "mud clerks"; the wholesale liquor dealer's son became a barkeeper on a boat; four sons of the chief merchant, and two sons of the county judge, became pilots. Pilot was the grandest position of all. The pilot, even in those days of trivial wages, had a princely salary—from a hundred and fifty to two hundred and fifty dollars a month, and no board to pay. Two months of his wages would pay a preacher's salary for a year. Now some of us were left disconsolate. We could not get on the river—at least our parents would not let us. The ambition to be a steamboatman always remained.

From *Life on the Mississippi* by Mark Twain.

**Exercise VI:**

It is difficult to remember what we thought of things before we began to grow up. As a boy I had no clear understanding of why I wanted to run. The satisfaction we derive from games is not easy to explain. I just ran anywhere and everywhere—never because it was an end in itself, but because it was easier for me to run than to walk. My walk was ungainly, as though I had springs in my knees, I always felt impatient to see or do something new, and running saved time.

From *Four-Minute Mile* by Roger Bannister.

**Exercise VII:**

In the fields we cleared for corn, which we had ground at a local mill for our bread, my father left certain trees, not for shade, but because he liked them. In this same cornfield where my mother and I hoed while my father plowed, we never cut a wild rose. We left wild asters, blue cornflowers, wild primroses, whippoorwill flowers, mountain and oxeeye daisies in our cornrows. Neither my father nor my mother ever looked into a scientific book on wild flowers, plants, and trees. Our wild flowers grew with the corn. Mom always said the beauty of the flowers was as important to us as the corn which gave our bodies nourishment. One could hardly tell whether we were farming corn or wild flowers.

From “Earth was their Book” by Jesse Stuart.

**Exercise VIII:**

An overwhelming light swept me. My resolution was instantaneous. I would do the same. I would make my legs strong on the foothills. Thus I started my treks and used the foothills as one uses weights or bars in a gymnasium. These early hikes put me on intimate terms with the hills. First I tried to go up the hills without stopping. When I conquered that, I tried to go up without a change of pace. When that was achieved, I practiced going up not only without a change of pace but whistling as I went.

From *Of Men and Mountains* by William O. Douglas

**Exercise IX:**

How does interest help on the ball field? Well, for example, every time I step up to the plate in a game, I begin a duel of wits with another human being. Through books one learns how strangely, wisely, or amusingly people can act. Batting is not only a test of skill, experience, and physical power. The pitchers and batters who face each other in a big-league game have passed these physical tests. My success as a batter depends upon my ability to outthink the pitcher. I must know how his mind works, as well how his pitching arm works.

Taken from “Baseball and Books” by Wally Moon,

**Exercise X:**

I walk out along the fence line, gather up my lanterns, and station them around the plane. From the looks of the weather, it's not likely that I can take off before sunrise. If I drain the engine and tie my DH to the fence, I can ride to town on the mail truck and get a night's sleep. But then it would take two men, at least, to start up tomorrow morning, even if I pour boiling water into the radiator. Once a Liberty cools off, it's a devil's job to get it running again. The ground is starting to freeze; a sharp ridge dents the sole of my sheepskin moccasin. And you can't ask help from just anybody who comes along; it takes training to handle either throttle or propeller. I'd probably have to phone for a mechanic from Lambert Field. No, I'll stay with the plane, and start the engine every twenty minutes. That will keep it warm.

From *Spirit of Saint Louis* by Charles A. Lindbergh.

**COHERENCE****Poor:**

*(1) I was accepted and started work. (2) My experience had been derived chiefly from books. (3) I was not prepared for the difficult period of adjustment. (4) I soon became discouraged with myself and so dissatisfied with my job that I was on the point of quitting. (5) My employer must have sensed this. (6) He called me into his office and talked to me about the duties of my position and the opportunities for advancement. (7) I realized that there was nothing wrong with me or the job and I decided to stay.*

**Improved:** (Note that the bold-faced words help to connect the ideas.)

*I was accepted, and started to work. **Until that time** my experience had been derived chiefly from books, and **unfortunately** those books had not prepared me for the difficult period of adjustment **that every inexperienced secretary must face in a new position.** **Consequently** I soon became so discouraged with myself and so dissatisfied with the job that I was on the point of quitting. **I think** my employer must have sensed this, **for** he called me into his office and talked to me **both** about the duties of my position and the opportunities it offered for advancement. **That talk helped me considerably.** **From then on,** I realized that there was nothing wrong with me or the job **that experience could not cure,** and I decided to stay.*

**Coherence Through Pronoun Reference.** Since a pronoun refers to an antecedent, the use of a pronoun in one sentence to point back to an antecedent in the one before is a simple and natural connective device. Notice how the alternating use of pronoun and antecedent provides effective transitions in the following sentences:

*In the history of the American film no other single personality has so endeared himself to the world as Charlie Chaplin. His presence is as much alive as ever in the thousands of revivals of his work. Every generation takes him to its heart anew. As with all great characters, one sees in Chaplin what one brings to him.*

The use of pronouns often allows a writer to keep his subject running through the paragraph without falling into monotonous repetition. Notice how this is done in the following paragraph, in which nominative, possessive, and objective forms of the same pronoun bind the sentences together by inconspicuous repetition.

*He was a monster of conceit. Never for one moment did he look at the world or at people, except in relation to himself. He was not only the most important person in the world to himself in his own eyes; he was the only person who existed. He believed himself to be one of the greatest dramatists in the world, one of the greatest thinkers, and one of the greatest composers. To hear him talk, he was Shakespeare, and Beethoven, and Plato rolled into one.*

**Transitional Markers.** These are words or phrases placed at or near the beginning of a sentence or clause to signal to the reader the relationship between the new sentence and the one before it. The commonest of these markers are the simple connectives (*and, or, nor, but, for*) which serve as bridges over which the reader may easily pass from one sentence or clause to the next. Others--sometimes called transitional connectives--indicate the direction which the new sentence is about to take and prepare the reader for what is to follow. The commonest transitional connectives

1. introduce an illustration: *thus, for example, for instance, to illustrate.*
2. add another phase of the same idea: *secondly, in the second place, next, moreover, in addition, similarly, again, also, finally.*

3. point out a contrast or qualification: *on the other hand, nevertheless, despite this fact, on the contrary, still, however.*
4. indicate a conclusion or result: *therefore, in conclusion, to sum up, consequently, as a result, accordingly, in other words.* **(A more complete list of transitions is available as a handout in the JCCC Writing Center.)**

You have already seen a few of these transitional markers used in the revised versions of both faulty paragraphs discussed in the preceding pages. Here is another illustration:

*Such a controlling purpose, of course, limits the appeal of the book, and probably this work will have a greater attraction for the layman than for the professional historian. **Moreover**, it always runs the risk of producing a book which, because of its lack of any unifying theme, is merely another book about the subject with which it deals. There are, **indeed**, moments when one feels that the author has not sufficiently resisted the temptation to add another story merely because it is a good story, without concerning himself too much about the relationship of the story to the theme that he is developing. **Thus** the chapter dealing with Strang's kingdom on Beaver Island hardly escapes being an eight page digression, since it has no other claim to being an integral part of the story of the development of the Great Lakes than the fact that Beaver Island happened to be located in Lake Michigan. The story, of course, is interesting, **but** like a cuckoo in a seagull's nest, it would be more at home in other quarters.*

**Coherence Between Paragraphs.** We have been thinking of the single paragraph as a unit. But it is, of course, only one of several units in the larger scheme of the whole paper. Just as there should be coherence within the paragraph, so there should be coherence between paragraphs.

Thesis:

My reasons for coming to college were threefold: to improve my earning power, to provide myself with a cultural background that would help me to make a satisfying use of my leisure time, and to increase my social experience.

Topic Sentence 1: first factor of thesis:

My chief reason for coming to college was to prepare myself for a position that would allow me to have a larger income than I would be likely to obtain as a high school graduate.

Topic Sentence 2: second factor of thesis:

Another reason for coming to college was to provide myself with a cultural background that would help me to make a more satisfying use of my leisure time.

Topic Sentence 3: third factor of thesis:

A third reason for coming to college was to increase my social experience.

The clear relationship of each topic sentence to the thesis creates the effect of "signposting" each paragraph, of informing the reader in advance what each is going to do, what part of the thesis it is going to develop. Such signposts serve the double purpose of setting off each paragraph as a structural unit of the essay and of providing transitions between paragraphs. Notice the signposts in the next selection.

*The politicians tell us, "You must educate the masses because they are going to be masters." The clergy join in the cry for education, for they affirm that the people are drifting away from the church and chapel into the broadest infidelity. The manufacturers and the capitalists swell the chorus lustily. They declare that ignorance makes bad workmen. And a few voices are lifted up in favor of the doctrine that the masses should be educated because they are men and women with unlimited capacities for being, doing, and suffering, and that it is as true now, as ever it was, that the people perish for lack of knowledge.*

*These members of the minority, with whom I confess I have a good deal of sympathy, ...question if it be wise to tell people that you will do for them, out of the fear of their power, what you have left undone, so long as your only motive was compassion for their weakness and their sorrows. And if ignorance of everything which it is needful a ruler should know is likely to do so much harm in the governing classes of the future, why is it, they ask reasonably enough, that*

*such ignorance in the governing classes of the past had not been viewed with equal horror?*

*Again, this skeptical minority asks the clergy to think whether it is really want of education which keeps the masses away from their ministrations--whether the most completely educated men are not as open to reproach on this score as the workmen; and whether, perchance, this may not indicate that it is not education which lies at the bottom of this matter?*

*Once more, these people, whom there is no pleasing, venture to doubt whether the glory, which rests upon being able to undersell all the rest of the world, is a very safe kind of glory--whether we may not purchase it too dear; especially if we allow education, which ought to be directed to the making of men, to be diverted into a process of manufacturing.*

*... taken from Thomas Henry Huxley's "A Liberal Education"*

### **Exercises in Coherence**

Here are some exercises to help you to understand the process of developing a paragraph coherently. The topic sentence is first in each exercise. The rest of the sentences have been printed out of their correct order. On the blanks at the side put the letters of the sentences in their proper order.

#### **I**

- \_\_\_\_\_ a. Mitchell made his final rounds at ten o'clock that night, and Wags seemed comfortable.
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. It stood back from the street, as did the other houses in the vicinity, and in the moonless night it looked dark and gloomy, a two-story frame building, once white, and now a dirty gray against its background of low hills.
- \_\_\_\_\_ c. He decided to walk off his uneasiness, and it was a half-hour later when he found himself near the Hunt property.
- \_\_\_\_\_ d. It was unlighted save for a dim glow from a rear window—the kitchen, he thought—and rather amused at himself, he turned in and went quietly to the back of the house.

## II

- \_\_\_\_\_ a. To me spring was marked this year by the return of the male redwing blackbirds, who came back with a rush a month ago.
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. Everywhere, with scarlet epaulets flashing, the blackbirds have been singing and darting about, chasing each other, shooting up like pinwheels.
- \_\_\_\_\_ c. Before the females arrive, each male stakes out a homestead, and then with spectacular aerobatics defends and holds as much of the territory as he can.
- \_\_\_\_\_ d. Almost overnight the drear stretches of our winter swamp were filled with life.
- \_\_\_\_\_ e. It is a kind of Oklahoma land rush.

## III

- \_\_\_\_\_ a. Another game on horseback that the older boys played was “tournament.”
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. The runner takes a sharpened pole—the “tournament” pole—in his right hand and, holding it level, with the point out in front of him, runs lickety-split down the line of rings trying to spear them.
- \_\_\_\_\_ c. Three posts are erected in a line a hundred yards apart.
- \_\_\_\_\_ d. Each post has an arm of wood about a yard long.
- \_\_\_\_\_ e. The game requires great skill.
- \_\_\_\_\_ f. Hanging from this arm is a metal ring about two inches in diameter.
- \_\_\_\_\_ g. Buck was a wonderfully smooth-running horse, and he and I together hooked plenty of rings.
- \_\_\_\_\_ h. It is held by a spring clasp so that it can be easily disengaged.

## IV

- \_\_\_\_\_ a. On the second floor a few doors west of the Callender and Rodine office was the printing press and office of the *Galesburg Republican-Register*.
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. As the papers came off the flatbed press, we took them to a table and folded them with three motions.

- \_\_\_\_\_ c. To this place we carrier boys went as soon as school let out at half-past three in the afternoon.
- \_\_\_\_\_ d. I was more than satisfied with that weekly silver dollar.
- \_\_\_\_\_ e. The *Republican-Register* paid me one dollar a week.
- \_\_\_\_\_ f. When I had folded the fifty of sixty papers for my route, I counted them and took them to a man who counted them again to make sure my count was correct, with one “extra” for myself.

## V

- \_\_\_\_\_ a. Up to the late eighteen-nineties, when Father walked in the front door of his home and closed it behind him, he shut out the world.
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. If the bell rang late at night, Father looked out of the window to see who it was.
- \_\_\_\_\_ c. He thought nothing of this—homes had always been shut off since men began building them.
- \_\_\_\_\_ d. There was no way for anybody to get at us except by climbing up the front stoop and ringing the bell.
- \_\_\_\_\_ e. Telephones had been invented, but like most people, he hadn’t installed one.

## VI

- \_\_\_\_\_ a. When I consider how much time it took to keep IT (a model T) running, I wonder if there was time for anything else.
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. It magnified some of my faults and corrected others.
- \_\_\_\_\_ c. The Model T was not a car as we know them now—it was a person, crotchety and mean, full of jokes—just when you were ready to kill yourself, it would run five miles with no gasoline whatever.
- \_\_\_\_\_ d. It worked on the sin of patience and destroyed the sin of vanity.
- \_\_\_\_\_ e. It helped to establish an almost Oriental philosophy of acceptance.
- \_\_\_\_\_ f. I understood IT, but as I said before, IT understood me, too.

**VII**

- \_\_\_\_\_ a. Very few concepts are entirely original.
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. Many of them are wide open to modern application, and the exploration of old concepts with new tools offers one of the most inviting frontiers of research.
- \_\_\_\_\_ c. Most ideas are much older than that.
- \_\_\_\_\_ d. Charles F. Kettering of General Motors says he has never yet had an idea that was not at least twenty years old.

**VIII**

- \_\_\_\_\_ a. General Electric scientists discovered in a fifteen-year study of lightning that the Empire State Building was literally stealing the city's thunder.
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. In its vast height, the Empire State Building collects so much electrical charge from the ground that the charge in the air attracts it.
- \_\_\_\_\_ c. Eighty percent of the lightning there is born to fly upward mutely.
- \_\_\_\_\_ d. Since lightning that bolts upward creates no thunder, New Yorkers are relatively unaccustomed to its sound.
- \_\_\_\_\_ e. Lightning is caused by the collecting on the ground of an electrical charge great enough to attract the far greater charge in the air and make it come to a point.
- \_\_\_\_\_ f. The result is lightning that moves in reverse.

**IX**

- \_\_\_\_\_ a. In the baggage car young Edison had set up a chemical laboratory in which he conducted scientific experiments.
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. After the train crew had brought the flames under control, Edison and his paraphernalia were dumped at the first crossroad.
- \_\_\_\_\_ c. It ignited newspapers and other flammable odds and ends.
- \_\_\_\_\_ d. That was the end of his career on the Grand Track system.
- \_\_\_\_\_ e. One afternoon, as the train lurched over a rough stretch of track, a jar of highly combustible material broke on the floor.

## X

- \_\_\_\_\_ a. Few insects are fonder of the sun than ants.
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. I have watched them systematically clear their “back yards” of shrubbery, plants, and leaves.
- \_\_\_\_\_ c. Finally any low-lying vegetation that threatens to block out the sun’s rays from their paths may be liquidated by charges of formic acid aimed at the base of the plants.
- \_\_\_\_\_ d. They will go to great pains to bring as much sunlight as possible to their little worlds.
- \_\_\_\_\_ e. The stems of annoying plans or weeds are literally chewed off very close to the ground.

### Exercise in Emphasis

Study the following pairs of paragraphs. The first one appears as the author wrote it. The second has been reworded to appear as it might if it had been written by a beginning student in composition. Explain how the emphasis of the second version has been weakened or destroyed. Notice carefully how the less important ideas have been joined into the sentences in the better version.

#### Example I:

*Although he was then only twenty-three, Edison was known as “the Old Man” to his employees. There was an odd, raffish maturity about him. Heavysset, with sharp gray-blue eyes beneath heavy brows and an extraordinarily broad forehead, he shuffled around his shop in rumpled, grease-stained clothes, looking more like a wayward tramp than a rising young manufacturer. One applicant who inspected the place and then decided not to work for Edison said later, “It struck me that everyone in the shop—including the boss—acted sort of crazy.”*

From *Incandescent Genius* by C. B. Wall.

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**Example II:**

*A guard, sitting near the elevators, made as if to start in my direction to find out whom and what I wanted, when one of the elevators came down and a group of men hustled out. There were two men, evidently State Department escorts, neatly clad in gray, double-breasted suits, with three other men walking with them. The three men struck me as a little odd; they wore long black cloaks, big slouch hats with wide brims pulled down over their faces, and carried portfolios. They looked for all the world like cartoon representations of cloak-and-dagger spies. I supposed that they were some sort of foreign diplomats, and as they were coming directly toward me, I stood my ground, determined to see who they were.*

From *Sir!* by David Grinnell.

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**Example III:**

*Things came to a climax for me with a taunt and a challenge from another boy, which involved me in my first major sporting event. He was the class's bruiser, known to take lessons in boxing, which left me at a hopeless disadvantage. Luckily, the fight took place in the gym under official conditions and was stopped before I was damaged too much. I crept home that day, not so much hurt by the punishment as by the shame of being beaten. I never told my parents.*

From *Four-Minute Mile* by Roger Bannister.

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**Example IV:**

*Eddie Barnes looked at the huge Adirondack hills, browning in the strong summer afternoon sun. He listened to his brother Lawrence practice finger exercises on the piano inside the house, onetwothreefourfive, onetwothreefourfive, and longed for New York. He lay on his stomach in the long grass of the front lawn and delicately peeled his sun-burned nose. Sadly, he regarded a grasshopper, stupid with sun, wavering on a bleached blade of grass in front of his nose. Without interest, he put out his hand and captured it.*

From "Strawberry Ice Cream Soda" by Irwin Shaw.

Eddie Barnes looked at the huge Adirondack hills. They were brown in the strong summer afternoon sun. He listened to his brother Lawrence practice finger exercises on the piano inside the house, onetwothreefourfive, onetwothreefourfive. Eddie longed for New York. He lay on his stomach in the long grass of the front lawn and delicately peeled his nose. It was sun-burned. Sadly, he regarded a grasshopper. It was stupid with sun. It wavered on a bleached blade of grass in front of his nose. Without interest, he put out his hand and captured it.