Paragraph Writing Made Easy
A Practical Approach

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ABSTRACT: This manuscript seems a novel academic attempt. It in particular has been written for international school, college and university students who either wrestle with writing or desire to (re)learn writing through short and easy ways. This work in general targets the English language seekers as well. The current work differs at least from some other writing books as enclosed in the bibliography. It holds a diverse perspective (if not better). It is featured with briefness, clarity, and simplicity. It in plain English, trains students on how to develop academic paragraphs. It is an instructional endeavor to concentrate on the academic aspect of writing which as such deals with the way an acceptable paragraph comes to life. In effect, students might gain the benefits of being able to (i) communicate with their supervisors, faculty or university authorities persuasively, (ii) complete some sections of their journal papers, course assignments, academic projects, proposals, and research studies reasonably, and (iii) prepare for the next stage smoothly which is essay writing.
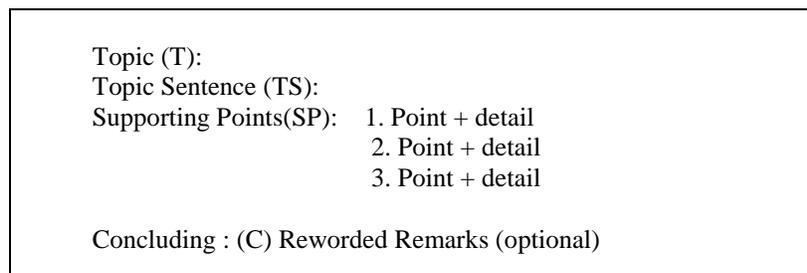
Key words: communication note, paragraph, writing, students, academic

HOW THIS NOTE WORKS

This communication note is composed of five sections that include view, grammar stop, review, bibliography, and appendix. View, offers the main ideas of the note and helps readers grasp some theoretical and practical points. Next, the grammar stop is a spot where grammar points are explained using examples. The review section then wraps the communication note by recapping its important points and central message. Bibliography enlists the cited sources of the note and finally, the note users could get down to exercises at the appendixes left at the end of the work where theory and practice meet.

VIEW

Letters come together to form a word (Morphology), then words juxtapose to make up a sentence (Syntax), and finally sentences cohere into a paragraph. As a unit of writing, a paragraph discusses one main idea. The main idea of a paragraph is named topic sentence (hereafter TS). An acceptable paragraph needs a topic sentence (TS), supporting points (hereafter SP) plus details (hereafter D), and a conclusion. TS serves as the main idea and usually should be placed in the first line of a paragraph followed by minimally three points to provide support to the TS plus some detail for each. A conclusion (hereafter C) can round off the TS and SPs nicely using a rephrase. In other words, a conclusion should not repeat the same words used in TS and SPs. The following figure is accordingly designed for better understanding.

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Topic (T):
Topic Sentence (TS):
Supporting Points(SP):    1. Point + detail
                          2. Point + detail
                          3. Point + detail

Concluding : (C) Reworded Remarks (optional)
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In the above figure, TS functions as a general statement that states the main topic. TS assists us to keep focused on the paragraph topic while writing. It ought not to be too general or too narrow. SPs, on the other hand, help to develop reasons and proof for convincing our readers. Readers are usually not convinced unless we are able to provide reasonable evidence to support our claims. And conclusion not only sums up the material of the paragraph, but also

relates the current paragraph to the paragraph that comes next. This technique is so useful in essay, proposal, and thesis writing as well.

It seems that a sampled paragraph in which the three levels of topic sentence (TS), supporting points (SP), and details exist, is necessary. So let's concentrate on the following descriptive paragraph:

I have a very old wallet that my friends tell me I should throw away, but I won't part with it for several reasons [topic sentence]. First of all, my name is sewn on the side of it [supporting sentence 1]. When my father bought me the wallet for my twelfth birthday, he asked the leather worker to stitch my name, Horacio, on it with red thread. Second, I believe that this wallet is meant to stay with me [supporting sentence 2]. Once I went fishing, and I dropped the wallet off the pier into the water, I thought it would sink and I'd never see it again. But it floated, and a guy with a net rescued it for me. Ever since then, I've felt that I could not lose or give up this wallet. Finally, the wallet is a style of leather work that is only done in the region in Mexico where I come from [supporting sentence 3]. I left my home six years ago and haven't been back since, but because I have my wallet, there's something from home always next to me.

As pointed out throughout the text, the above piece of writing observes to contain three componental levels: topic sentence (TS), supporting points (SP), and detail (D). Keep in mind that including a conclusion is always optional. A conclusion contributes to rounding off the whole paragraph which is so important though. In the box above, detail is provided in the form of examples, reasons, or explanations just after each supporting point. The detail element is not labeled in order to keep the text cleaner.

A writer may employ some transitional words to signal a sequence. These transitional words include first, second, also, in addition, for example, for instance, such as, like, third, final, finally, lastly to mention but a few. Transitions aim to help readers follow the organization of the paragraph. The above paragraph writer has made use of 'first of all', 'second', and 'finally' and has corresponded them to the three supporting points of the paragraph.

A paragraph is usually evaluated based on the content, organization, and language it contains. These are the three factors a paragraph should be equipped with: content – an academic writing criterion – tends to convey information and inspire critical thinking skill. In other words, ideas developed and presented in a paragraph, have to relate to the topic sentence and be supported by concrete evidence such as facts, research findings, statistics, reasons, personal observations, experiences, examples, or/and expert opinions. To make short, organization generally refers to the patterns and approaches through which ideas are sequentially presented throughout a paragraph. In this respect, two approaches stand out: deductive and inductive. Whilst the earlier suggests a movement from generality to specificity, the latter functions conversely. Simply, deduction happens when a paragraph begins with a general idea – a general statement, rule, etc. – followed by specific ones and induction is applied when a paragraph starts with specific ideas – examples, anecdotes, etc..- followed by a general one. Organization on the other hand, has a lot to do with cohesion. Cohesion binds the sentences of a paragraph together firmly. As mentioned in many books written about writing, cohesion refers to the use of cohesive devices which include (but are sure not limited to) transition words, synonyms, and pronouns. It is a possibility to add some other cohesive techniques that include anadiplosis, parallelism, and parataxis. Anadiplosis happens when the last word or phrase in a sentence is repeated at the beginning of the subsequent sentence; parallelism , as the name implies, refers to the usage of identical structures in two or more phrases, clauses, or sentences; and parataxis is referred to as a technique in which two or more clauses are conjoined. Halliday and Hassan maintain that there are many English texts with no explicit cohesion. These texts avail of underlying binding which is of more importance. Hence one can draw the conclusion that the use of cohesive devices do boost up the texture or connectedness of a paragraph, however their presence is no essential.

Finally, language is referred to as the employment of correct grammar, vocabulary, punctuation, and spelling. Avoidance of personal pronouns, hyperboles, and contractions are recommended; On the other hand, hedging and the impersonal pronoun 'one' are highly encouraged to be used in paragraphs or outlines.

GRAMMAR STOP

Punctuation

Punctuation is referred to as the use of semicolons, colons, parentheses, dashes, apostrophes, commas, periods, question marks, etc. Among these punctuation marks, the note would focus on a troublesome mark, the second language and foreign language learners of English might challenge with. As observed by the author, these learners too rarely employ the first four punctuation marks i.e. semicolons and colons, parentheses, and dashes when writing as if they don't own the adequate knowledge of how to use them. Therefore, 'semicolons' will be explained and exemplified for better understanding in this note.

Semicolons
Rule 1
Use a semicolon in place of a period to separate two sentences where the conjunction has been left out. Keep in mind that the two sentences ought to be related to each other in meaning in a way or another. Remember that the

first word of the sentence after the semicolon; i.e. 'we' and 'therefore' should not be capitalized.

Examples:
- Call us tomorrow; we will give you our answer then.

- I have paid my dues; therefore, I expect all the privileges listed in the contract.

Rule 2
It is preferable to use a semicolon before introductory words such as namely, however, therefore, that is, i.e., for example, e.g., or for instance when they introduce a complete sentence. It is also preferable to use a comma after the introductory word.

Examples:
- You will want to bring many backpacking items; for example, sleeping bags, pans, and warm clothing will make the trip better.
- As we discussed, you will bring two items; i.e., a sleeping bag and a tent are not optional.

Rule 3
Use either a semicolon or a comma before introductory words such as namely, however, therefore, that is, i.e., for example, e.g., or for instance when they introduce a list following a complete sentence. Use a comma after the introductory word.

Examples:
- You will want to bring many backpacking items; for example, sleeping bags, pans, and warm clothing.

- You will want to bring many backpacking items, for example, sleeping bags, pans, and warm clothing.

Rule 4
Use the semicolon between two sentences joined by a coordinating conjunction when one or more commas appear in the first sentence.

Examples:

- When I finish here, I will be glad to help you; and that is a promise I will keep.
- If she can, she will attempt that feat; and if her husband is able, he will be there to see her.

REVIEW

A paragraph consists of sentences which are cohered together. Each paragraph holds a topic sentence which tells of its main idea or message. The topic sentence should usually be supported enough by at least three points, plus

their respective examples and explanations. It is a nice idea to draw a conclusion at the end of a paragraph to sum up.

Three other factors also play an important part in a paragraph. They include content, organization, and language. Coming together, these three parameters, could construct a well-developed paragraph which stands out brilliantly.

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APPENDIX I
A short writing to describe a graph about fast-food expenditure

The chart [an imaginary chart] shows that high income earners consumed considerably more fast foods than the other income groups, spending more than twice as much on hamburgers (43 pence per person per week) than on fish and chips or pizza (both under 20 pence). Average income earners also favoured hamburgers, spending 33 pence per person per week, followed by fish and chips at 24 pence, then pizza at 11 pence. Low income earners appear to spend less than other income groups on fast foods, though fish and chips remains their most popular fast food, followed by hamburgers and then pizza. From the graph we can see that in 1970, fish and chips were twice as popular

as burgers, pizza being at that time the least popular fast food. The consumption of hamburgers and pizza has risen steadily over the 20 year period to 1990 while the consumption of fish and chips has been in decline over that same period with a slight increase in popularity since 1985.

APPENDIX II
A sampled paragraph

It has often been said that: 'Good news is bad news' because it does not sell newspapers. A radio station that once decided to present only good news soon found that it had gone out of business for lack of listeners. Bad news on the other hand is so common that in order to cope with it, we often simply ignore it. We have become immune to bad news and the newspapers and radio stations are aware of this. While newspapers and TV stations may aim to report world events accurately, be they natural or human disasters,

political events or the horrors of war, it is also true that their main objective is to sell newspapers and attract listeners and viewers to their stations. For this reason TV and radio stations attempt to reflect the flavour of their station by providing news broadcasts tailor-made to suit their listeners. preferences. Programmes specialising in pop music or TV soap operas focus more on local news, home issues and up-to-date traffic reports. The more serious stations and newspapers like to provide .so called. objective news reports with editorial comment aimed at analysing the situation.

Appendix III

WARM-UP
Here an outline has been prepared for you that contains the three levels of development: topic sentence (TS), supporting sentences (SP), and examples (EX).

I still remember and cherish Dr. Haney, my Research Methodology lecturer, because he taught me self-discipline and practicality. (TS)
1. He demanded self-discipline of his students and himself. (SP)
    A. He made us come to class on time; students who are late have to orally summarize the whole lecture note to the class at the end of the lecture. (EX)
    B. He was never late for class modeling a punctual lecturer. (EX)

2. He believed in practicality and real-life examples rather than sole theories. (SP)
    A. He taught us more practically than theoretically unlike other Research Methodology lecturers. He brought in his own research studies for analysis and instruction purposes. (EX)
    B. We analyzed some articles whose author was among us and that gave us a sense of freshness and motivation. (EX)

Appendix IV
The boxed outline in appendix III is almost complete although it contains two supporting points rather than three. Having at least three supporting points could add credit to the author. The readers might feel more convinced in

accepting the author's idea in the text. You make an attempt to expand the boxed outline in appendix III into a paragraph in which you may require to make changes or add materials when necessary. You might use the next box to write the paragraph in.

_____
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Appendix V
To practice, try to complete the following student outline by writing the supporting points in the blanks.

When my college is closed for vacation, I can continue learning English in several ways. (TS)
1. _____
    A. read newspapers and magazines
    B. do my English assignments
    C. surf the internet
2. _____
    A. Watch T.V.
    B. Listen to the lyrics of my favorite songs
    C. Play a sport with English speakers
3. _____
    A. write e-mails to friends
    B. write down the words of popular songs I hear on the radio

Vitae

Hassan Fartousi, an academician and researcher, is working at the faculty of Language and Education of the Geomatika College International. As well as Malaysia, he holds 16 years of experience in the English language teaching in the UAE and Iran. Hassan has published and presented tens of papers in Semantics, writing skill, English Language Teaching (ELT), and Rhetoric. Holding a Master's of Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) from the IIU, a public university in Malaysia, he has decided to create an instructional note different (if not better) with the intent of streamlining as well as facilitating the academic skill of writing.