***University of* *M'sila Department of English***

***Second Year LMD Students Written* *Expression Courses***

**PARAGRAPH WRITING**

Constructing a clearly defined paragraph is paramount in English language. A good paragraph is *the key* to a good essay.

**1. Paragraph Definition**

A paragraph is a group of sentences *organized* around a *central topic*. In fact, the cardinal rule of paragraph writing is to focus on *one idea.* A solidly written paragraph takes its readers to a clear path without detours.

A simple dictionary definition declares that a paragraph is “a subdivision of a written composition that consists of one or more sentences, deals with one point ,or gives the words of one speaker” (Merriam-Webster). *A Writer’s Reference* ( AWR) explains that the author should “aim for paragraphs that are clearly focused, well developed, organized, coherent, and neither too long nor too short for easy reading”.

A paragraph is also defined as a disctinct unit of thought, usually a group of related sentences.The content of a unified paragraph deals with *one controlling idea* ,i.e.every sentence contributes to this idea.Besides,each sentence fits into logical pattern of organisation ,so it is related to other sentences in the paragraph.

**2.** **Paragraph Purposes**

Paragraphs draw definitive boundaries around you ideas, giving each one a unique location in the landscape of the larger essay. Paragraphs also display your thoughts in singular frames, where each one can be easily identified. Learning how to craft well-written and explicitly transitioned paragraphs allows your writing to sound more purposeful and energetic. Paragraphs acts as a staircase in our essay, leading from the bottom floor of the introduction to the top floor of the conclusion. Basically speaking, paragraphs serve several purposes :

1- Paragraphs introduce and conclude essays.

2- They draw mile markers between “important points” and “significant transitions” (Aaron and Fowler 70).That is, to ***emphasize*** an important element or to ***indicate*** a significant transition between points .

3- Paragraphs merge and shift lanes between similar and opposing interpretations,i.e.to *shift* approach. For example, from pros to cons, or from problem to solution .

**3.Four Essential Elements**

In order to write a good paragraph, you need to understand the four pivotal elements (guidlines / criteria) of paragraph writing : **unity,order,coherence ,and completeness** , and how each one contributes to the whole.

**a.Unity** **:** It begins with the topic sentence.Unity means «*oneness* ».Every paragraph has one single controlling idea that is expressed in its topic statement.A paragraph is unified around this main idea, with the supporting sentences providing details and discussions.To achieve unity,i.e. to develop a main point , one may ask questions like : Does the paragraph I have written explore only the intended idea? Did I get off topic?

**b.Order**: It refers to the way you organise your supporting sentences.Whether you choose chronological order,order of importance,or another logical presentaion of detail, a solid paragraph always has a definite organisation.In a well-ordered paragraph, the reader follows along easily aided by the pattern you have established.

**c.Cohenerence :**Coherence is the quality that makes your writing understandable**.**It simlpy means thatsentences in a paragraph should flow *smoothly* and *logically*.Sentences within a paragraph need to connect to each other and work together as a whole. One of the best ways to achieve *coherency* is to use *transition words* .These words create bridges from one sentence to the next. Using a *consistent* verb tense,a consistent number, and a consistent point of view is also an important ingredient for paragraph coherence. In addition, repeating key words as synonyms or pronouns and using parallel structures are vital to keep the reader focused on your main points.

**d. Completeness :** A paragraph is complete means it is *well-developed*. If all sentences clearly and sufficiently support the main idea, then your paragraph is complete. If there are not enough sentences or enough information to prove your thesis, then your paragraph is incomplete.

Development requires us to ask questions like: Do I have *the right amount*of information*?* Have I *fully supported*my intended thesis? Have I used details, facts, and examples *appropriate*for my thesis?

**4.Paragraph Structure**

A paragraph has three principal parts :the topic sentence, the supporting sentences, and the concluding sentence .

**4.1.The Topic (Focus) Sentence**

The topic sentence sets the parameters for a paragraph.It is the essential sentence which describes the paragraph content and direction.It states the main topic and the overall idea that you want to discuss later.It usually occurs as the first sentence of the paragraph.

**4.1.1.Writing the Topic Sentence**

When writing the topic sentence, try to introduce the main point of the paragraph as clearly and as accurately as possible. *Do not* make the topic sentence *too general* or *too specific.*

**Example One :**

* **Too general**

Studying overseas was deemed to be very difficult.

* **Too specific**

Studying overseas was deemed to be very difficult for 63% of the people surveyed who cited a range of difficulties including homesickness, loneliness, difficulty in making Australian friends, changes to diets, health problems, weight gain, and difficulties with money and jobs.

* **Good**

Studying overseas was deemed to be very difficult in three main respects for 63% of the people surveyed.

* **Good**

Studying overseas was deemed to be very difficult for 63% of the people surveyed due to the impacts of culture shock, financial issues,and health concerns.

**4.1.2. The Topic Sentence Structure** : A topic sentence contains:

**a. A topic**  **E.g.** Studying overseas

**b. A controlling idea (What you say about the topic)**

**E.g**. …was deemed to be very difficult…

- The topic is best placed at or near the begining of the sentence. The topic should not be a pronoun (he, she, his, this, it) as starting with a pronoun often makes the focus of the paragraph unclear.

- The controlling idea *controls* everything else in the paragraph; it indicates what you want to say about the topic.

**Example Two :**

*My hometown is famous for several amazing natural features.*First, it is noted for the Wheaton River, which is very wide and beautiful.Also,on the other side of the town is Wheaton Hill,which is unusual because it is vey steep.

* Notice that the first line is *indented* , so all paragraphs in Englsih must begin with ***an indentation***

**4.2.Supporting Sentences ( Body / Details / Convining Reasons)**

A paragraph contains facts, statements,and examples which guide you to a full understanding of the main idea Supporting sentences are called so because they give details *to support* , *to explain* , *to*  *clarify, to illuminate ,to describe, to illustrate ,and to expand* the idea expressed in the topic sentence. So, they come after it making up the body of a paragrpah. Generally, a paragraph has more than two supporting sentences.

**Example** :

German shepherds are good pets. ***First, I have never met a German shepherd whose intelligence wasn’t above average****.**They can learn how to turn door knobs, follow a trail, or identify illegal substances.* ***In addition, German shepherds are dedicated to their owners.*** *My dog Max waits patiently at the end of**the driveway every night until I come home. Not even a**juicy bone will tempt him to move.* ***Finally****,* ***he is usually suspicious of all strangers,*** *so he barks or growls when anything or anyone unknown is near his family.*

**4.3.The Concluding (Closing) Sentence**

The concluding sentence is the last sentence of the paragraph .It summarises and restates the information that has been presented.The closing sentence is important as it wraps up your writing and leaves the reader with a final thought. The easiest way to write an acceptable conclusion is to reword the introductory sentence.

**Example :** Here is a possible conclusion for the paragraph on German shepherds.

*German shepherd dogs make a great addition to any family.*

* Notice how the concluding sentence summarises the main idea of the paragraph.It looks like the topic sentence, but not exactly the same.

**Task One :** Develop the following topics into paragraphs :

1. Music shapes our moods
2. Television shows are influential
3. The best wealth is health

**« Happiness is a habit, cultivate it »**