



Academic Writing

Paragraphs and Short Essays

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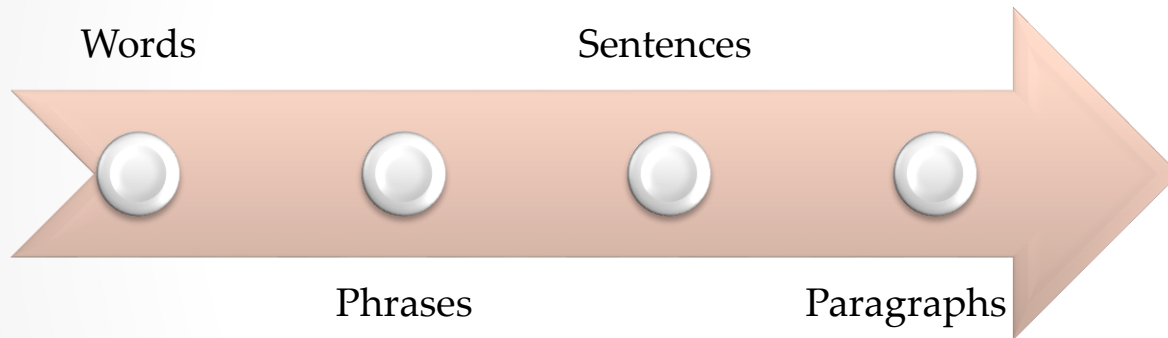
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PART 1

TEXT COMPONENTS

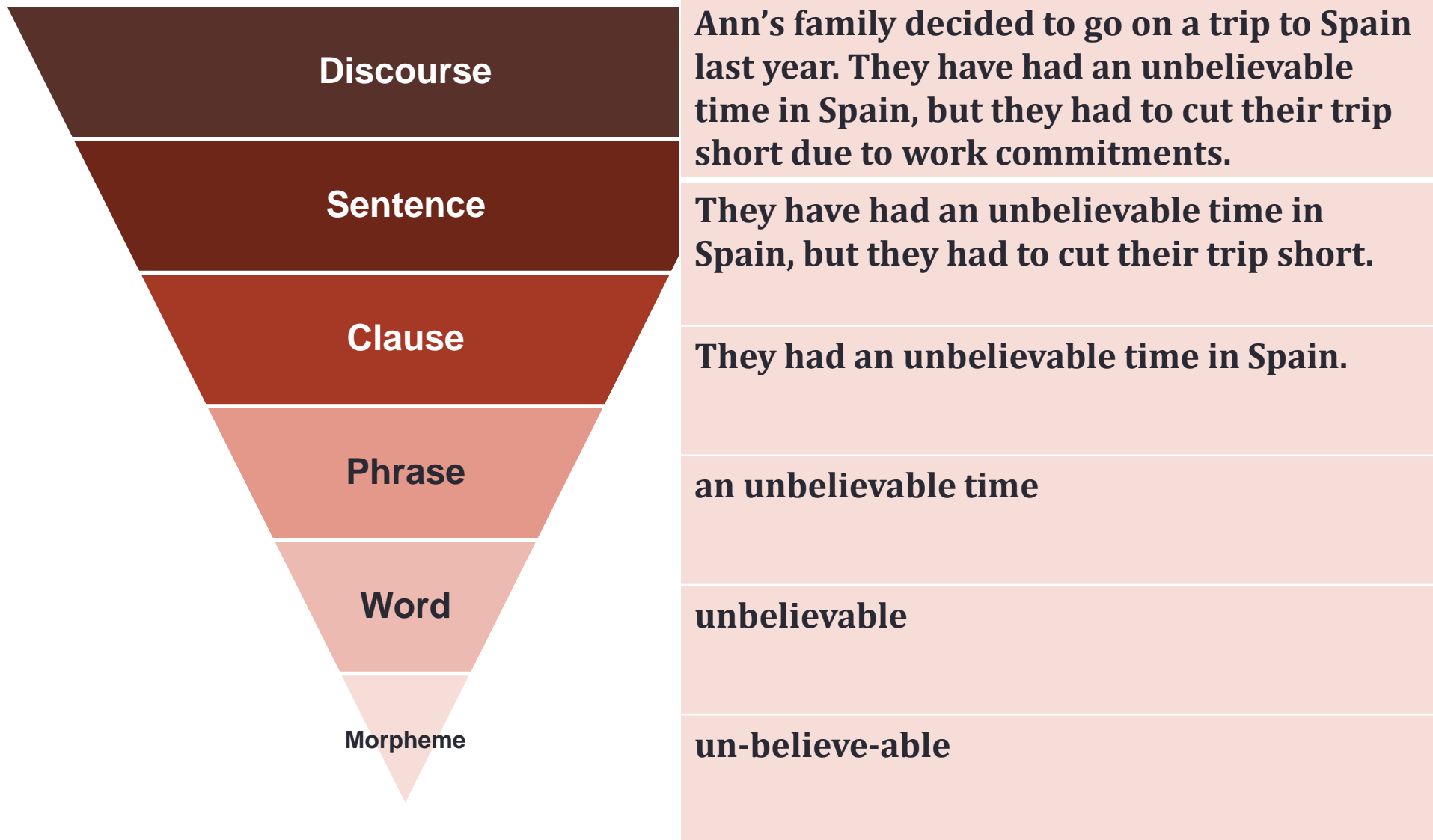


Text Components



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Levels of sentence structure



Paragraphs

A paragraph: “a group of sentences about a single topic. Together, the sentences of the paragraph explain the writer’s main idea about the topic. In academic writing, a paragraph is often between 5-10 sentences long, but it can be longer or shorter, depending on the topic. The first sentence of a paragraph is usually indented a few spaces.”

(Zemach & Rumisek 2005: 11)

Paragraph Structure

Topic sentence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This gives the main idea of the paragraph.• It is usually the first sentence of the paragraph.• It is the most general sentence of the paragraph.	There are three reasons why I prefer jogging to other sports.
Supporting sentences	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• These are sentences that explain the topic sentence.• They are most detailed ideas that follow the topic sentence.• They compose details, explanations and examples.	One reason is that jogging is a cheap sport. I can practise it anywhere at any time with no need for a ball or any other equipment. Another reason why I prefer jogging is that it is friendly to my heart. I do not have to exhaust myself or do excessive efforts while jogging. Finally, I prefer this sport because it is safe. It is not as risky as other sports like gymnastics, racing or horseback riding.
Concluding sentences	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This is the last sentence of the paragraph.• It can finish a paragraph by repeating the main idea, or• It can just give a final comment about the topic.	For all these reasons, I consider jogging the best sport of all.

Exercise 1 (3 minutes)

- Identify the topic of the paragraph. (1-2 words)
- Identify the main idea of the topic. (the topic sentence)
- Identify the sentences that support the main idea.
- Identify the concluding sentence.

Example 1

There are three reasons why Canada is one of the best countries in the world. First, Canada has an excellent health care system. All Canadians have access to medical services at a reasonable price. Second, Canada has a high standard of education. Students are taught by well-trained teachers and are encouraged to continue studying at university. Finally, Canada's cities are clean and efficiently managed. Canadian cities have many parks and lots of space for people to live. As a result, Canada is a desirable place to live.

Example 2

People do it everyday. They log on to their favorite website and browse for hours, checking out bargains. They dump every possible wish into their shopping carts, knowing they can cast each one aside before they finalize their purchases. On the way, they may enter a sweepstakes in the hopes of winning a trip to Cabo San Lucas, or maybe even a new SUV. And then, when they have decided on their purchases, they enter private information without giving it a thought. With a keystroke, they release their personal data into what may or may not be a secure zone. Despite what much of the public believes, internet shopping is not safe.

Example 3

Norwegians are reputed to be proficient in English. Not only is the English closely related to Norwegian, but Norwegians are also extensively exposed to the language through the media, and English has been a compulsory subject from the elementary to upper-secondary schools since 1959. It will therefore be argued that to the extent that academic English reading comprehension problems are found in Norway, these findings should be of interest to and relevant for other countries where English has a comparable or weaker position.

Hellekjar, G. O. (2009). 'Academic English reading proficiency at the university level: A Norwegian case study', *Reading in a Foreign Language* 21, 2.

Example 4

When a camera flash is used in a low-light environment, the subject's eyes may appear red in the finished photograph. What is known as "red-eye" is the result of light from the flash reflecting off the pupils of the eyes. The phenomenon of red-eye can be lessened by using the red-eye reduction feature found on many SLR cameras. This feature activates a lamp which shines a small light directly into the subject's eyes. When this happens, the diameter of the pupil is reduced, thus tightening the opening in the iris. Since a smaller pupil means a smaller host for the reflection, the chances of red-eye occurring are greatly reduced.

Exercise 2 (6 minutes)

Write a paragraph about the following topics:

- A favorite music
- A favorite food
- A favorite place to go for a trip
- Facebook
- Social networking
- Studying master program
- Higher Education abroad



PART 2

SHORT ESSAYS

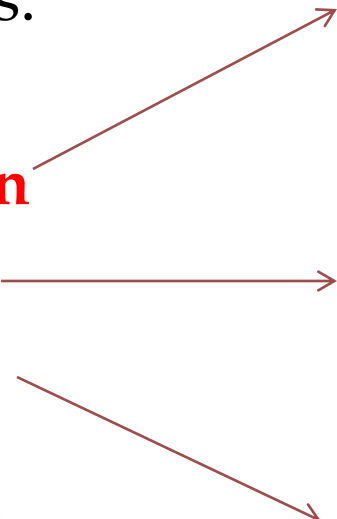


Short Essays

Essay: “a group of paragraphs written about a single topic and a central main idea”.

Its components:

- **Introduction**
- **Main body**
- **Conclusion**



Text text.
Text text.
Text text.

Introduction

What is it?

The first paragraph of an essay which usually comprises 5-10 sentences. It introduces the general topic of the essay and gives background information about the topic. In the introduction, the thesis statement is stated.

What is its purpose?

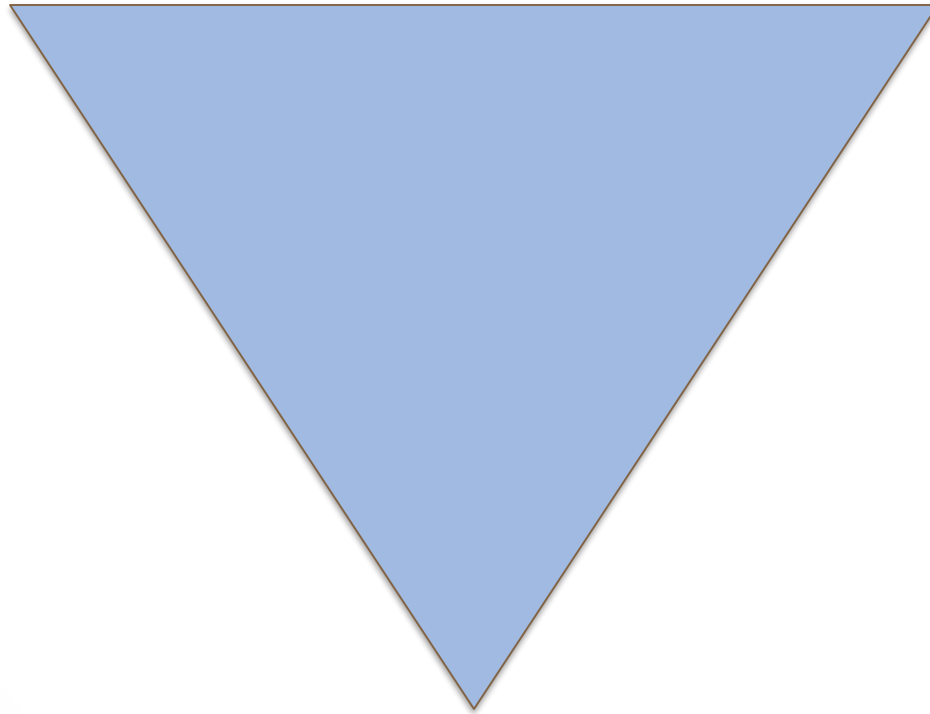
It is used to capture the reader's interest through introducing the topic.

What are its main components?

- General ideas
- Background information
- Thesis statement

Introduction structure

General ideas



**Thesis statement
(Specific idea)**

Exercise 3

Which of below could be available in an essay introduction?

- (i) A definition of any unfamiliar terms in the title.
- (ii) Your opinions on the subject of the essay.
- (iii) Mention of some sources you have read on the topic.
- (iv) A provocative idea or question to interest the reader.
- (v) Your aim or purpose in writing.
- (vi) The method you adopt to answer the question (or an outline).
- (vii) Some brief background to the topic.
- (viii) Any limitations you set yourself.

Thesis Statement

A thesis statement: “the sentence that tells the main idea of the whole essay. It can be compared to a topic sentence, which gives the main idea of a paragraph. It usually comes at or near the end of the introductory paragraph.”

(Zemach & Rumisek 2005: 58)

Thesis Statement

A good thesis statement usually includes:

- **Main idea of the paper**
- **Your opinion or point of view**
- **Purpose of the paper**
- **Answer to the research question**
- **An element of surprise**

Thesis Statement: Example

Styles of Popular Music

Music is truly the one universal language. Although all cultures have music, each culture develops its own musical forms and styles. In particular, popular music varies from culture to culture and from generation to generation. In the past 100 years or so, there has been an explosion of popular music styles in the West. **Three of the most successful styles are reggae, punk, and rap.**

One successful style of popular music is reggae, which was born on the Caribbean island of Jamaica in the 1960s and spread throughout the world in the 1970s. Reggae developed from a kind of Afro-Caribbean music called *mento*,

A second successful style of popular music is punk. Punk is a style of rock music that began in the mid-1970s as a reaction against previous forms of rock.....

A third successful style of popular music is rap, which is also called hip-hop. Rap is a type of dance music in which the singers - rappers – speak in rhythm and rhyme rather than sing.....

To sum up, popular music changes constantly. New styles are born, grow, change, and produce offshoots, which in turn grow, change, and produce offshoots. Some styles enjoy lasting popularity, but others disappear rather quickly. However, all contribute to the power and excitement of popular music in our time.

How to write a strong thesis statement?

- A. A thesis statement gives the author's opinion or states an important idea about the topic. [One way is through using *I think that*]
- B. It should give an idea that can be discussed and explained with supporting ideas
- C. It should be explained and supported by the next paragraphs in the main body of the essay.
- D. It should not be a sentence that only gives a fact about the topic.
- E. It should not state two sides of an argument equally.

Examples:

- ~~I think that~~ the qualifications for getting into university in my country are unreasonable.
- ~~I think that~~ when studying a foreign language, there are several ways to improve your use of the language.
- In the Northern Hemisphere, the summer months are warmer than the winter months.
- There are advantages and disadvantages to using nuclear power.
- Although there are some advantages, using nuclear power has many disadvantages and should not be a part of our country's energy plan.

Exercise 4 (5 minutes)

Write two-sentence opinions about:

- Technology
- University degree
- Internet
- Reading
- Travel
- TV advertisement
- Living abroad



Topic Sentence	Thesis Statement
It gives the main idea of a paragraph.	It gives the main idea of an entire essay.
It is the most general sentence of the paragraph.	It presents the writer's opinion.
It is usually the first sentence of a paragraph.	It is usually the last sentence of the first introductory paragraph.
Example: There are advantages and disadvantages to using nuclear power.	Example: Although there are some advantages, using nuclear power has many disadvantages and should not be a part of our country's energy plan.

Body paragraphs

- They support the thesis statement.
- Each paragraph has one main point to support the thesis which is named in a topic sentence.
- Each point (topic sentence) is supported in the paragraph with logical reasoning and evidence.
- Each sentence connects to the pre and post sentence. The sentences should be coherent.

Body paragraphs

Components:

- Detailed information
- Explanation
- Arguments
- Evidence
- Facts
- Examples
- Personal experience
- Experts' opinions and quotations

Conclusion

The conclusion is the final paragraph of the essay. A good concluding paragraph:

- summarises the main point(s) and findings of the essay,
- restates the thesis (using different words),
- makes a final comment about the essay's main idea,
- may emphasise an action that you would like the reader to take.
- shows the significance of your findings, and
- no new or superfluous information are presented.

Conclusion

Common expressions:

- In conclusion,
- To conclude,
- To summarize,
- At the end,
- To this/that end,
- Above all,
- All things considered,
- A persuasive or compelling statement (e.g. “The most compelling argument is presented by Scholar A.”)

PART 3

Arguments



Arguments

“An argument is an attempt to persuade someone of something. It is prompted usually by a disagreement, confusion, or ignorance about something which the arguers wish to resolve or illuminate in a convincing way.”

(Johnston 2000: 2)

“An argument is a set of claims in which one or more of them—the premises—are put forward so as to offer reasons for another claim, the conclusion. An argument may have several premises, or it may have only one.”

(Govier 2010: 1)

Arguments

Components:

- A claim (or conclusion): a position or point of view to be supported.
- A premise: reasons or evidence that support the claim.
- Warrants: logical connections/ reasoning

Example:

- I think (premise), therefore I exist (claim).
- He got lung cancer (claim), because he smokes (premise).

Arguments

GOALs

- To justify claims (e.g. a point of view, a position, an object)
- To rationally persuade others of our beliefs and opinions.
- To convince others that something is true and should be done (e.g. facts, outcomes)
- To show problems with something or that something is not the case (a theory, an approach, a course of action)

Arguments

An argument is NOT a fact

Compare:

- Many buildings have been demolished in Mosul during ISIS.
- Mosul needs rapid reconstruction, but this is unlikely to happen any sooner.

More examples

- The Giants will likely beat the Trojans this year, because Swanson is such a strong addition to the team.
- Universities need to have faculty who will do research, since research is necessary and there are few other institutions that support it.
- Fear can cause accidents among older people. Therefore, doctors should use discretion when counseling older people about the risks of falling.
- The number of Buddhists in North America is steadily growing, and business with countries such as Japan and India, which have large Buddhist populations, is becoming increasingly significant in North America. For these reasons we can see that understanding Buddhism has practical value.

Tools of Arguments

- **Clear definition**

(To make the claim clear and straightforward)

- **Deductive reasoning**

(To establish a logical process by which we move from something we already all agree to be true to the application of this general truth to a particular case, e.g. If you smoke, you might get lung cancer. You smoke. Therefore, you might get lung cancer.)

- **Inductive reasoning**

(To establish a logical process in which we proceed from particular evidence to a conclusion which, on the basis of that evidence, we agree to be true or probably true, e.g. they smoked and they have lung cancer. Therefore, if one smokes he/she will have a good chance of getting lung cancer.)

Premise Indicators

- since
- because
- for
- as indicated by
- follows from
- may be inferred from
- may be derived from
- on the grounds that
- for the reason that
- as shown by
- given that
- may be deduced from

Conclusion Indicators

- therefore
- thus
- so
- consequently
- hence
- then
- it follows that
- it can be inferred that
- in conclusion
- accordingly
- for this reason (or for all these reasons) we can see that
- on these grounds it is clear that
- proves that
- shows that
- indicates that
- we can conclude that
- we can infer that
- demonstrates that

Constructing Arguments

To develop arguments in short essays:

- In the opening sentence, announce the general subject.
- In the next two or three sentences, narrow the focus down to one particular aspect of that general subject.
- Finally, at the end of the introduction in the last one or two sentences, announce the opinion about that focus, the thesis of the essay.

Features of good arguments

- **Acceptability**

The premises should be acceptable and reasonable.

- **Relevance**

The reasons and evidence should be relevant.

- **Grounds**

The reasons should provide sufficient grounds to persuade the reader.

Exercise 5

(Analyse and identify the claim and the premise)

Shakespeare's Hamlet is, by common consent an ambiguous play, with many conflicting interpretative possibilities. At the heart of many disputes about the play is the character of the hero himself. Just what sort of person is Prince Hamlet? The play puts a lot of pressure on us to explore this question, simply because the motivation for Hamlet's actions and inaction is by no means clear, and yet it is obviously important. A comprehensive answer to this issue is beyond the scope of a short essay. However, whatever Hamlet's character adds up to exactly, one very curious feature about it is his attitude to and relationships with women. For there is a distinctive pattern in Hamlet's language and behaviour whenever he is thinking about or dealing with Ophelia and Gertrude. This pattern is so distinctive that we can reasonably assume it indicates something important about the prince. In fact, Hamlet's peculiarly aggressive and often cynical view of these two women and, beyond them, of women in general, is an important indication of the general unhealthiness of Hamlet's character.

Assignment

Write a short essay on:

The importance of the English Language in the world of academia



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