



ДОНСКОЙ ГОСУДАРСТВЕННЫЙ ТЕХНИЧЕСКИЙ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ
УПРАВЛЕНИЕ ЦИФРОВЫХ ОБРАЗОВАТЕЛЬНЫХ ТЕХНОЛОГИЙ

Кафедра «Мировые языки и культуры»

Учебное пособие
«LEARN TO WRITE EFFECTIVELY»
по дисциплинам

**«Практикум по межкультур-
ной коммуникации»,**
**«Практический курс перво-
го иностранного языка»,**
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Аннотация

Учебное пособие предназначено для студентов очной, заочной форм обучения направления 45.03.02 «Лингвистика».

Учебное пособие посвящено рассмотрению характерных для английского языка способов выражения в письменной коммуникации. Работа адресована студентам-бакалаврам, магистрантам, аспирантам и исследователям, занимающимся проблемами межличностной и межкультурной коммуникации современного английского языка. Предлагаемый материал способствует эффективному обучению излагать свои мысли в ясной логически завершенной форме на английском языке. В пособии предлагаются планы проектных заданий, вопросы для самопроверки знаний, содержатся образцы, как написания, так и анализа эссе, а также разнообразные устные и письменные задания для самостоятельной работы.

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ВВЕДЕНИЕ

Communicating effectively means not only speaking but also writing.

The main goals of writing are those of communication: to inform, to educate, to persuade and to entertain the audience of readers. Researchers have determined the relative proportion of time spent in various communication activities by university students. Rang-ordered from most to least (listen, read, speak write) they show that they spend 32%of the time listening to mass media, 21% in face-to-face listening, 17% reading, 16% speaking and 14% writing. Nevertheless, it is a very important skill which enables you to communicate effectively.

Writing is a complex form of communication which is developed on the basis of thorough knowledge of grammatical structure of the language, laws of communicative syntax, lexical combinability of words in the flow of speech, words having different stylistic and soci-cultural connotations, rich vocabulary and phraseology that reflects cultural heritage of the people.

Thus the manual invites you to explore step by step each element of good writing, beginning with pre-writing techniques and proceeding to grammatically correct sentences, effective word choice, writing effective paragraphs and ending in writing short essays.

STAGE I. WRITING EFFECTIVE SENTENCES

Parallel Structures and Modifiers

Parallelism means balance in a sentence. Often, sentences include two or three (or more) related ideas, examples, or details. If you express these ideas in a parallel structure, they will be clearer, smoother, and more convincing.

Faulty parallelism occurs when items in a series are not placed in equal grammatical structures.

To create sentences with parallelism, remember these rules:

1. Words in a series should be the same parts of speech.

Of all the sports I've played, I prefer **tennis, handball, and playing** golf. (not parallel)

Of all the sports I've played, I prefer **tennis, handball, and golf**. (parallel)

2. Phrases in a series should be the same kinds of phrases (infinitive phrases, verb phrases, noun phrases,

participial phrases).

My friends like **to play chess, to read science fiction, and working hard** in the gym. (not parallel)

My friends love **to play chess, read science fiction, and to work hard** in the gym. (parallel)

If you're looking for the keys, you should look **under the table, the kitchen counter, and behind the refrigerator**. (not parallel)

If you're looking for the keys, you should look **under the table, on the kitchen counter, and behind the refrigerator**. (parallel)

3. Clauses in a series should not be mixed with phrases.

He is a good choice for manager because he **works hard, he keeps calm, and well-liked**. (not parallel)

He is a good choice for manager because he **works hard, he keeps calm, and he is well-liked**.

To achieve parallelism take the following steps:

Sample sentence:

Three characteristics of a good leader are **strength, being dependable, and to have** determination.

Step I: look for the list.

Three characteristics of a good leader are:

1. strength
2. being dependable
3. to have determination

Step II: put the parts of the list in to a similar structure:

1. strength
2. dependability
3. determination

Revised sentence:

Three characteristics of a good leader are strength, dependability, and determination.

Note: Sometimes achieving parallelism means adding something to a sentence because all the parts of the list cannot match exactly.

She was amused and interested in the silly plot of the film.

The list is:

1. amused
2. interested in

The sentence needs a preposition added to the make the structure parallel.

She was amused by and interested in the silly plot of the film.

Dealing with Other Parallel Structure Patterns

Certain pairs of connecting words also call for parallel structure:

Either + or	both + and	whether + or
Neither + nor	not only + but also	

These pairs are especially useful to you as a writer because they enable you to focus on two ideas in the same sentence:

Neither snow	nor rain
Either do risk sports	or crave adventure
Both dull	and constricting
Not only bored	but also depressed
Whether in sickness	or in health

Example: My brother is **not only** *self-confident* **but** he is also *ambitious*.

When I am not busy with my job, I am **either** *watching* TV **or** I *can also visit* my friends. (faulty)

Revising sentences for parallel structure

Exercise 2

Each of the following sentences contains faulty parallelism. Underline the word, phrase, or a clause that is not parallel and revise the sentences to correct faulty parallelism.

1. Our new teacher is brilliant, patient, and she is also helpful.
2. Her depression was a result of the loss of her job, the breakdown of her marriage, and her teenage daughter who was a problem.
3. Both playing tennis and writing poetry demand concentration, time, and to give a lot of effort.
4. As a friend he was extremely loyal, told the truth, and had compassion.
5. Going to college is not the same as when you go to high school.
6. The greatest challenges for me in school are to keep up with my homework and studying for exams.
7. I was greeted with a dazzling smile, and he was courteous in an old-fashioned way.
8. The most distinctive feature about her is her laugh, and she

is a very cheerful person, and has a very optimistic view of the world.

9. He is a player with great energy and who is ambitious.

10. Three ways to spend a rainy Sunday are to take a nap, TV, and reading a book.

11. She is not only very talented, but she is also acting kindly to everyone.

12. My goals in attending college are both to prepare for a career and developing confidence.

13. He stood perplexed: he neither spoke nor could he move.

14. He was such a pain in the neck: he was either grumpy or fall out with us completely.

15. He is such a daredevil: he either does risk sports or is craving adventure.

16. Jamie liked reading more than to watch television.

17. Bill found that it was harder to be fair to himself than being fair to others.

18. Leonardo understood things others did not – the flow of water, the movements of animals, and how birds flew.

Using Modifiers Correctly

Modifiers can make your writing more specific and more correct. Used effectively, modifiers give the reader a clear, exact picture of what you want to say. When used incorrectly modifiers may create some special problems.

A misplaced modifier is a modifier that has been placed in a wrong, awkward, or ambiguous position.

1. The modifier is in the wrong place.

The team doesn't like the umpire that lost the game.

Revised: The team that lost the game doesn't like the umpire.

2. The modifier is positioned awkwardly interrupting the flow of the sentence, as in the following split infinitive:

When we criticized her performance, she was ready to nearly cry.

Revised: When we criticized her performance, she was nearly ready to cry.

3. The modifier is in an ambiguous position: it could refer to word or words on either side.

Straining against the leash, Jim pulled his dog.

Revised: Jim pulled his dog, straining against the leash.

Here is the rule to remember:

A modifier should be as close as possible to the word, phrase,

or clause it modifies. Be sure to put words like *almost, even, exactly, hardly, just, merely, nearly, only*, etc. as close as possible to the word they modify.

A dangling (hanging) modifier is a modifier without a word, phrase, or clause that the modifier can describe.

Driven to desperation by hunger, a frog will make a passable meal.

Revised: Driven to desperation by hunger, you could eat a frog.

Here is the rule to remember:

To correct a dangling modifier, you have to give a modifier something to modify; you have to add something to the sentence.

Revising misplaced or dangling modifiers.

Exercise 3

Revise each sentence so that there are no dangling or misplaced modifiers.

1. Lost in the fog, the lighthouse could not be seen.
2. Looking through the binoculars, the distant eagle seemed to be preparing to swoop on its prey.
3. When she goes shopping she only wants to buy necessary items.
4. Hoping to see the news, the television set was turned on.
5. After considering the alternatives, a compromise was reached by the two sides.
6. To make friends at school, an outgoing personality is necessary.
7. She nearly saved a hundred dollars by putting the money aside every month.
8. I saw a man driving a car wearing a tuxedo.
9. Many colourful birds could be seen strolling through the tropical forest.
10. Follow the directions for writing the essay carefully.
11. Inflated to huge dimensions, he spoke of his self-esteem.
12. She nearly studied every book in the library to prepare for the grammar exam.
13. Thinking the student was playing truant, the instructor told him off in class.
14. Trying to think of a way to begin my speech, a funny story

- came to my mind.
15. When acting on the stage, a good memory helps.

Passive and Active Voice

The passive voice can make your sentence wordy without saying anything more clearly than the one in the active voice. It can also slow the sentences down, thus making them boring. The sentence loses effectiveness in the passive voice. The emphasis should be on the doer who is carrying out the action.

Compare these two sentences:

I painted the house.

The house was painted by me.

Of course, you may have to use the passive voice, when you do not know who did something.

Our house was broken into last night.

A leather bag was left behind in the classroom.

Here is the rule to remember;

You should use the active voice in order to achieve direct, economical, more vigorous writing. Most writing, therefore, should be in the active voice.

However, choose the passive voice if the receiver of the action is more important than the doer.

Exercise 4.

Rewrite sentences, changing the Passive Voice into Active where necessary.

1. The picture executed by the old man was called "Trees Dressed in White".
2. Last night our neighbours' house was broken into and ransacked.
3. The referee was approached by the furious player.
4. Several words were spelled incorrectly in the article.
5. After the heavy snowfall the flight was cancelled.
6. The chemistry experiment was completed by the students long before the end of the class.
7. A groan was heard from the students when they got the results of their work.
8. A disciplinary letter was handed in to the employee.
9. The mugger was put into prison by the police.
10. We were asked a number of confusing questions at the interview.

Exercise 5

Rewrite each sentence so that it contains a form of *have something done* do not include the agent.

1. A painter painted our house last month.
2. The hairdresser is cutting my hair this afternoon.
3. Someone has stolen my motorbike.
4. The dentist has taken out all of the boy's teeth.
5. My trousers need to be pressed before I leave.
6. Ann's publishers have just published her book.
7. Mary's hair still needs cutting.
8. Someone broke Harry's arm in a fight.
9. The wounded man had gone an operation and the doctors amputated his leg.
10. Isn't it time someone fixed your television?

Choosing the right word

Using precise language

One way to improve your writing is to pay attention to your choice of words. As you write look for words that have rich and appropriate meanings and associations. Try to be as specific as you can in explaining and describing. Avoid using vague, general words or phrases, and look for more precise language.

For instance, if you were describing somebody's smile, which variant would be better?

He gave me a nice smile. (very general)

He gave me a friendly smile.

or: He gave me a reassuring smile.

or: He gave me a welcoming smile.

Maggie is a good friend. (vague and inexpressive)

or: Maggie is a loyal friend.

or: Maggie is a devoted friend.

Exercise 6

The words *to eat, to drink, to speak, to walk, to shine, a house, a cold* are common neutral words. For each neutral variant supply three-four words, each one having its own more precise meaning. Give a definition for each word and compose sentences to illustrate these meanings.

Example: thin

slender

lean

skinny

gaunt

Exercise 7

Read the following passage, decide what is wrong with it.

Rewrite the passage, trying to include the following verbs. You may also need to change some prepositions: *arrive, clamber, cut, drive, emerge, lead, reach, wade, walk, hack one's way*.

We went down the rough track towards the jungle until we reached the river that went across the road. We parked in the shade of some rubber trees and got out. We went across the river, which fortunately was not too deep, and then, as we were in no hurry, went through the rice fields on the other side towards the forest. The path that went through the trees was entirely overgrown, so we went along it with considerable difficulty. It was nearly mid-afternoon when we finally went out of the thick undergrowth and went to the bottom of the mountain. Although we were all by now feeling exhausted, we went up the steep slope and went to the rendezvous point just as the sun was going down.

Using loaded words

The denotation of a word is its strict dictionary, agreed-upon meaning. It is rather fixed, unchanging, and objective.

The connotation of a word is the meaning that a person attaches to a word because of the person's personal experience with the word. Connotations are subjective, usually emotional, can change quickly in meaning.

For instance, the word *home* denotes the place where one lives, but the word also connotes family ties and feelings, privacy, familiarity, sometimes negative thoughts.

The denotation of *lamb* is "a young sheep". The connotations of lamb are numerous: *gentle, weak, peaceful, blessed, pure, innocent*, etc.

Choosing words that are not neutral but that have more exact or appropriate meanings is a powerful skill for writing effectively.

Exercise 8

Each pair of words has a similar denotative meaning. Look at the following words and decide which are positive and which are negative. Compose sentences to illustrate their meanings.

Unimaginative –practical

Cautious – cowardly

Fat – heavy

phony - impostor

sensitive - touchy

tight - thrifty

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Gullible – trusting	come clean - acknowledge
Proud – conceited	noise - racket
Original – weird	slender - skinny
Arrogant – proud	obese - overweight
Adventurous – reckless	stubborn – pig-headed

Exercise 9

Choose the word most appropriate to the connotation indicated in the brackets.

- As the boys played video games, their parents (scrutinized / observed) their actions. (negative)
- After graduating from college, my best friend has very (enterprising / pretentious) plans for his future. (positive)
- After graduating from college, my best friend has very (ambitious /grandiose) plans for the future. (negative)
- My history teacher gives very (difficult / challenging) assignments. (positive)
- Her teacher thinks that Dorothy is a very (headstrong /determined) young woman. (positive)
- The book is difficult to understand because of its (intricate / subtle) plot. (negative)
- She criticizes her son-in-law as a mere (doctor / pill-pusher). (negative)
- I am firm in my belief. You are (hard-working/ a workaholic) (negative)
- They constituted (hard-core / tough) opposition to the government. (negative)
- The food looks (mouth-watering / appetizing) to me. (positive)

Avoiding Wordiness

Wordiness is the use of unnecessary words. If you can say the same thing in fewer words, do so.

Here is a list of some wordy expressions and possible substitutes:

at the present time	now
blend together	blend
blue in colour	blue

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by the fact that	because
for the reason that	because
past history	history
I felt inside	I felt
I personally feel	I feel
connect together	connect
due to the fact that	because
in the neighbourhood of	about
in my opinion, I think	I think
on a daily basis	daily
two different kinds	two kinds
repeat again	repeat
refer back	refer
with the exception	except for
take action	act
mutual cooperation	cooperation
make an assumption	assume
give consideration to	consider
is of the opinion	believes
comes into conflict with	conflicts

Recognizing appropriate language for formal writing.

In speaking or writing to our family or friends, an informal style is always appropriate because it is relaxed and conversational. On the other hand, writing and speaking at school or at work requires a more formal style, which is less personal and more detached in tone.

Here are some specific points to keep in mind:

Trite expressions (or clichés) are those expressions which may have been fresh at one time but now have become stale from overuse. Avoid expressions that spring into your mind ready made.

Trite expressions

Cool as a cucumber
 A golden opportunity
 Beat around the bush
 Blind as a bat
 Busy as a bee
 Dead as a doornail
 Slowly but surely
 A drop in a bucket

Acceptable substitutes

calm
 an exceptional opportunity
 hesitate
 blind
 busy
 dead
 gradually
 lonely

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Last but not least	finally
Hustle and bustle	hurried pace
As quick as a wink	quickly
Work and slave	work hard
Light as a feather	light as foam
When all is said and done	after all
Shoulder to cry	someone to fall back on/ support
make ends meet	to pay/ get by

Avoid apologetic, tentative expressions.

Right now, it seems to me that finding a job in my field is very difficult.

Revised: Right now finding a job in my field is very difficult.

Avoid flowery or pretentious language (“Gobbledygook”).

Some writers like to sound impressive. But the person who *lives in a residence* instead of *a house*, or prefers *to commence* instead of *start* it is on the wrong track. “Write to express, not to impress.”

Gobbledygook is viewed as a type of noncommunication, which may be found in government documents, legal and medical contracts, and, unfortunately, in academic writing.

Examples:

(1) Under the Reagan Administration, the MX-Missile was re-named “The Peacekeeper.” During war-time, civilian casualties are referred to as “collateral damage,” and the word “liquidation”, “pacification” is used as a synonym for “murder.”

(2) Car mechanics may be called *automotive internists*.

(3) A *negative patient care outcome* means that the patient died.

(4) If your house is burned down, or your car is stolen or destroyed in an accident, you, in legal jargon, suffered an *involuntary conversion* of your property.

Slang words and expressions are not appropriate in formal academic writing unless they are used purposefully.

Slang or informal words

kids
cops
A bummer
off the wall
groovy
conned
corny

Acceptable

children
police
a bad experience
crazy
excellent, wonderful
mislead
sentimental

A characteristic of a slang word or expression is that it is often faddish and short-lived.

The party was *grand*. (1940s)

The party was *awesome*. (1990s)

Jargon is a specialized language of a particular group of profession, such as football players, computer programmers, or doctors.

Example:

Be *proactive* and *interface* with your customers. *Start networking*. *Finalize* sales. We've got *world-class*, *state-of-the-art*, *user-friendly* products.

Jargon is inappropriate in academic writing because it can confuse or even stop communication.

Clipped language is the use of shortened words to make communication more relaxed and informal. Clipped language is not appropriate in formal writing, which requires Standard English.

Clipped language

Doc
Fridge
Prof
TV

Acceptable

doctor
refrigerator
professional
television

Sexist language is the use of single gender nouns and pronouns to refer to both men and women. This was standard usage in the past, but writers today avoid such language.

Everybody should bring **his** composition next week.

There are three ways to avoid sexist language:

1. Revise the sentence using plural pronouns and plural antecedents.

All students should bring **their** compositions next week.

2. Change the pronoun to an article.

Everyone should bring **the** composition next week.

3. Change the sentence into the passive.

All the compositions **should be brought** next week.

Sexist language

fireman
 businessman
 chairman
 stewardess
 common man
 mankind

The teacher is an important man.
 He can influence the lives of many chil-

dren

Acceptable

firefighter
 businesswoman
 chairperson
 flight attendant
 average person
 humanity

Teachers are important peo-
 ple. They can influence the lives of
 many children.

Exercise 9

Revise the following sentences eliminating wordiness, slang, clichés, jargon, big words, and sexist language.

1. Due to the fact that their lives are stressful, people have a need for exercise on a daily basis.
2. You can't go on hiking unless you have the basic essentials.
3. The lecturer could not refer back to that point in time unless he consulted his notes.
4. Many people are stressed by the hustle and bustle of the city.
5. When I learnt that my dog had to be put down, I cried my eyes out.
6. Don't beat about the bush; just come straight to the point.
7. My father really hit the nail on the head when he said I would have to work and slave to climb the ladder of success.
8. There were times when I felt exhausted and was in a need of a shoulder to cry.
9. As far as mechanical ability is concerned, my husband is very handy.
10. In my opinion, it would seem to me that the reasons for unemployment are complex.
11. They work till two or three in the morning and then crash.
12. George wants to interface with me at lunch.
13. Please inquire of your boss if you can leave early.
14. Don't bug me about studying.
15. The thought of the coming exam caused her to be in a constant state of tension.
16. The price of the book was in the neighbourhood of fifty dollars.
17. I tiptoed down the stairs on my toes in order to surprise eve-

ryone.

18. Even though I am not an expert, I think that more research should be done in the field of economics.
19. The scientists have guts to continue the research.
20. I highly recommend him for this position; he is a hard worker and stays as busy as a beaver.

Exercise 10

Read the sentences containing figurative language. Point out the ones that are *clichés* and those that hold *much descriptive power* and answer the following questions:

a) What kind of figurative language (similies or metaphors) is being used?

b) What is being described?

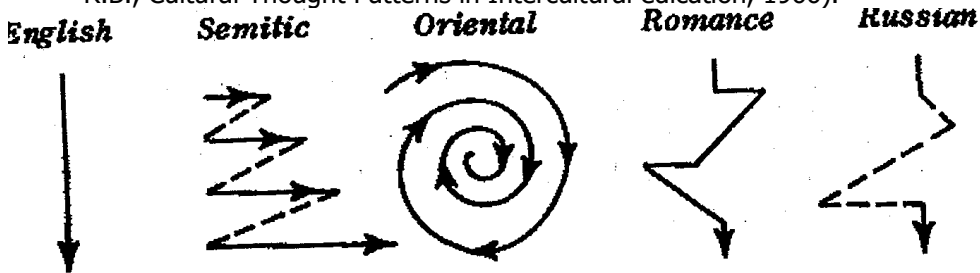
c) What can you infer about the images created?

1. Helen sat on pins and needles waiting for the test results.
2. The boat cut through water like a knife through dough.
3. Be careful not to throw out the baby with the bath water.
4. Last night I slept like a log.
5. The pen is mightier than the sword.
6. March comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb.
7. The new father held his baby as though he were holding delicate flowers.
8. The shirt fit him like a glove.
9. The wind forced the row of flowers to sway like ballerinas, twisting and turning to an unheard tune.
10. Their relations looked like the web of a spider gone mad.
11. "He put his shoulder against the door, and his long black body slanted like a ramrod. He pushed." (Langston Hughes, "On the Road")
12. "...She lay back among the whispering flowers." (Ten. Williams, "The Field of Blue Children")

STAGE II. WRITING EFFECTIVE PARAGRAPHS

A **paragraph** is a group of closely related sentences that develop one main idea. A paragraph may stand by itself as a complete piece of writing, or it may be a section of a longer piece of writing, such as an essay. An effective paragraph usually consists of at least six sentences and no more than ten or twelve sentences. A well-written paragraph has several distinguishing characteristics: a clearly stated or implied topic sentence, adequate development (supporting sentences), unity, coherence, and an appropriate organizational strategy

As **Robert Kaplan** observes in his article *Cultural Thought in Intercultural Education* logic as well as rhetoric is culturally-related, is evolved out of culture; it is not universal. Thus it is logical for a writer in English to develop a subject directly. It can be seen from the following graphic presentation (*Language Learning*, 16 (1-2), Caplan, R.B., *Cultural Thought Patterns in Intercultural education*, 1966).



In English there are two types of paragraphs that are logical and direct: *inductive and deductive*. Deductive paragraphs have three parts that provide logical development:

1. Topic sentence (often 1 sentence in length)
2. Subject developing supporting sentences (usually 3-8 sentences)
3. Summary sentence (often 1 sentence)

Contrarily, the English paragraph may use the reverse procedure; it may state the whole series of examples and then relate those examples into a single statement at the end of the paragraph (inductive). Though, *deductive paragraphs* are by far more common in English.

- **The topic or subject** is what the selection is about in general.
- **A topic sentence** states the main idea of a paragraph and thus limits and controls the subject of the para-

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graph. It is the most general statement in the paragraph. All the other sentences serve to explain, describe, extend, or support the topic sentence.

- Most paragraphs **begin with the topic sentence**, but a topic sentence may come in the **middle or at the end** of the paragraph. Some paragraphs **have no topic sentence** at all. **It is implied**, and in those cases we have to infer what the main idea is by examining the details presented in the paragraph.
- **Supporting sentences** are more specific, giving details, descriptions, examples taken from history or personal experience, comparisons, reasons that support the main idea.

For example, read the following paragraph:

Television is different from all other media. From cradle to grave, it reaches nearly every home in the land. Unlike newspapers and magazines, television does not require literacy. Unlike the movies, it runs continuously, and once purchased it costs little to run. Unlike radio, it can show as well as tell. Unlike the theatre or movies, it does not require leaving home.

Outlined, paragraph looks like this:

Topic:	Television
Topic sentence:	Television is different from all other media.
Supporting ideas:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It reaches nearly every home. 2. Unlike newspapers and magazines, it doesn't require literacy. 3. Unlike movies, it runs continuously. 4. Once purchased, it costs little to run. 5. Unlike radio, it can show and tell. 6. Unlike movies or the theatre, it doesn't require leaving your home.

Now read the following paragraph from a psychology text. Notice how the topic sentence presents the main idea *last*.

Topic: Reactions to stress

Many people find working under pressure or against deadlines highly stimulating, motivating them to do their best. They rarely seem affected by bad stress reactions. To slow down such "racehorses" to the pace of a turtle would be as stressful as trying to make a turtle keep up with the horse. Yet others crumble when the crunch is on or the overload light flashes. Some take life's large and small problems in a stride, seeing them as a challenge to succeed in spite of everything. And others are upset by every unexpected turn of events, from a traf-

fic delay to a serious illness in the family. **Truly, different people react differently under stress.**

Four different ways people respond to stress support the last, more general sentence, which states the main idea: Different people react differently to stress.

As we mentioned earlier, some paragraphs have no topic sentence; instead, the main idea **is implied.**

Now read the following paragraph, looking for the topic and the main idea:

More expensive than yachts, noisier than the street parades, dirtier than your average bum, they get up at ungodly hours with only the purpose of giving their parents a long day. In addition to encouraging dogs in the home and playing baseball, they keep far too many bad marriages together. They are given excessive holidays from school and spend perfectly good whiskey money on such fluff as dental work and bicycles.

There is no one general statement or topic sentence that covers all the details. Each sentence adds specific information that implies or suggests both the topic and the main idea.

The **topic**, of course, is **children.**

As for the main idea, we can infer that the author, with a touch of humour, feels children are bothersome, expensive and not worth the trouble they cause.

Writing a topic sentence

To write a good topic sentence, you can do the following:

- Review a list of related details and see if you can group them together to form some general idea that summarizes the details.
- Write a topic sentence that summarizes the details.
- Check that your topic sentence is a sentence not a topic. Topic sentences do not announce; they make a point.

For example, the topic is: *Advantages of watching a movie at home* (announcement).

Below are lists of related details:

- a) Can watch a movie in the comfort of your own room.
- b) Watching a film at home costs nothing.
- c) No need to dress up.
- d) No crowds to fight.
- e) Can watch it at your convenience.

f) Can watch it several times.

So, your topic sentence might be: *Watching a film at home has several advantages over seeing a film at a theatre.*

Be sure your topic sentence leads easily into a discussion of the topic.

Example:

Learning to write takes practice. (weak and seems to lead to nowhere)

My writing skills have improved since I started reading more books and magazines (stronger and could lead to a fully developed paragraph)

Exercise 1

Read the following paragraphs and identify the topic and the main idea in each. If the main idea is implied, write what you infer is the topic and the main idea.

A. What is the difference between the students who do well and the students who do poorly? Research shows that the key difference between successful test-takers and poor test-takers is self-preoccupation. Poor test-takers focus on their inadequacies and shortcomings, allowing themselves to get anxious about how well they will do on a test. They use their energy and attention for worrying about their performance instead of learning the material. Their energy and attention are focused on the activity of the test, not themselves.

Topic: _____

Main idea: _____

B. Communication is the tool that lets us tell the hairstylist to take just a little off the sides, the doctor where it hurts, and the plumber that the broken pipe needs attention now! Communication is the means of learning important information in school. It is the method you use to convince the prospective employer that you are the best candidate for the job, and it is the way to persuade your boss that you deserve a raise. It is the way you relate socially with others, the way you tell your loved ones how much you appreciate and love them.

Topic: _____

Main idea: _____

C. Most anthropologists (those who study man's different races and ways of living) believe that the first Americans arrived from Asia

LEARN TO WRITE EFFECTIVELY

over 30,000 years before Columbus. The exact date when these first men arrived is not known, but most authorities believe they came from Asia by crossing the Bering Strait between Russia and Alaska. It is thought that during the Ice age, Siberia and Alaska were joined together by a land bridge which made travel from Asia to North America possible. As the climate became warmer, the glaciers melted, covering the land bridge with water. Most authorities believe that the bulk of the earliest settlers to America had migrated from Asia by 20,000 B.C.

Topic: _____

Main idea: _____

D. When you remember something, your brain uses more than one method to store information. You have short-term memory, which helps you recall recent events; you have long-term memory, which brings back items that are further in the past; and you have deep retrieval, which gives you access to long-buried information that is sometimes difficult to recall. Whether these processes chemical or electrical, we do not yet know, and much research remains to be done before we can say with any certainty. The brain is one of the most remarkable organs, a part of the body that we have only begun to investigate. It will be years before we even begin to understand all its complex processes.

Topic: _____

Main idea: _____

Exercise 2

- a) Distinguish a topic sentence from a topic (title).
 - b) Find the topic in the topic sentence.
 - c) Write the topic sentence for a topic.
1. The benefits of a college education.
 2. A student who goes to university full time and also works part time has to make careful use of every hour.
 3. The Japanese diet is perhaps the healthiest diet in the world.
 4. Dreams can be frightening.
 5. The worst experience of my life.
 6. Growing up near a museum had a profound influence on my life.
 7. Spanking is the least successful way to discipline a child.
 8. Television violence causes aggressive behaviour in children.
 9. Scientists cannot yet explain how an identical twin often has an uncanny knowledge of what the other twin is doing or feeling.

10. The disadvantages of being an only child in the family.
11. Many television news programmes are more interested in providing entertainment than newsworthy information.
12. One of the undisputed goals in teaching is to be able to offer individualized instruction.
13. The consequences of telling a "white lie" will be the subject of this paper.
14. In certain kinds of writing, particularly in art criticism and literary criticism, it is normal to come across long passages which are completely lacking in meaning.
15. The crucial effects of your body language.

What is a controlling idea?

A topic sentence should contain not only the topic but also a controlling idea.

The controlling idea of a topic sentence is **the attitude or point of view** that the writer takes toward the topic.

To find the controlling idea of a topic sentence ask yourself a question: What is the writer's attitude towards the topic?

For example:

Vigorous exercise is a good way to reduce the effects of stress on the body.

Or: Shakespeare's plays are *difficult for today's students* because English has undergone many changes since the sixteenth century.

Exercise 3

Learn to write topic sentences choosing controlling ideas. Develop each of the following topic into a topic sentence. First, decide on an attitude you might take toward the topic and then use that attitude to write a topic sentence.

For example:

Topic: Fitness and Health
Controlling idea: increased popularity of health clubs.
Topic sentence: The high level of interest in physical fitness and health has resulted in a widespread growth of health clubs across the country.

Or:

Topic: Einstein's personality
Controlling idea: genuine modesty

LEARN TO WRITE EFFECTIVELY

Topic sentence: One quality of Einstein’s personality that stood out was his genuine modesty.

1. **Topic:** Camping

Controlling idea: a satisfying experience

Topic sentence: _____

2. **Topic:** Teaching a child good manners

Controlling idea: painstaking

Topic sentence: _____

3. **Topic:** Why I hate giving oral reports

Controlling ideas: stage fright, make fool of oneself

Topic sentence: _____

4. **Topic:** Going in for sports

Controlling ideas: pushed by parents, physically not fit for the sports

Topic sentence: _____

5. **Topic:** rainy weekends

Controlling ideas: catch up on chores, watch a movie, read a book

Topic sentence: _____

Developing Paragraphs

Many written passages (paragraphs, essays, stories, novels, etc.) contain writing patterns that can help the writer locate the main idea from the supporting points: narration, description, process analysis, cause and effect analysis, comparison and contrast, argument. We use these patterns because it is the way we clarify and organize our thoughts and ideas.

What is narration?

Narration is the oldest and best-known form of verbal communication. To narrate is to tell a story, to tell what happened. A good narrative paragraph (or an essay) has **four essential features**. The first is **context**: the writer makes clear when the action happened, where it happened, and to whom. The second is **point of view**: the writer establishes and maintains a consistent relationship to the action, either as a participant or as a reporter simply looking on. The third is **selection of detail**: the writer carefully chooses what to include, focusing on those actions and details that are most important

to the story while merely mentioning or actually eliminating others. The fourth is **organization**: the writer organizes the events of the narrative into an appropriate sequence, often a strict chronology with a clear beginning, middle and end.

In the following narrative paragraph, taken from Helen Keller's autobiography (the girl became deaf and blind at the age of eighteen months), she tells the story of her meeting with Anne Sullivan, which was wonderful in that it brought together two lives of such contrast. Keller defines her most important day as the day Anne Sullivan came into her life.

The most important day I remember in all my life is the one on which my teacher, Anne Mansfield Sullivan, came to me. I am filled with wonder when I consider the immeasurable contrast between the two lives which it connects. It was the third of March 1887, three months before I was seven years old.

***On the afternoon of that eventful day**, I stood on the porch, dumb, expectant. I guessed vaguely from my mother's signs and from the hurrying to and fro in the house that something unusual was about to happen, so I went to the door and waited on the steps. **The afternoon** sun penetrated the mass of honeysuckle that covered the porch and fell on my upturned face. My fingers lingered almost unconsciously on the familiar leaves and blossoms which have just come forth to greet the sweet southern spring. I did not know what the future held of marvel or surprise for me. Anger and bitterness had preyed upon me continually for weeks and a deep languor had succeeded this passionate struggle.*

Narrative was probably the most effective way for Keller to make her point. In her opening paragraph she characterizes her relationship with Sullivan, not as merely one between a teacher and student, but as one that proved to be loving and intimate. The narrative lends itself to a more personal, intimate portrayal of Keller's discovery of language than any other form would have.

Hints for writing a narrative paragraph

- Be clear
- Be interesting
- Stay in order of time sequence
- Pick a topic that is not too big

Be clear. Put in all the information the reader needs to follow your story. Sometimes you need to explain the time or place or the relationships of the people in your story or how much time has

elapsed between one action and another.

Be interesting. Good specific details make the difference between an interesting story and a dull one. (Notice how Keller is careful to use only those details that are relevant to her story)

Stay in order of time sequence. Put the details in a clear order so that the reader can follow your story. Use words and phrases (**transitions**) that help both a reader and a writer to move smoothly from one idea to another.

Below is a list of **transitions** the writers often use in writing narration:

After, again, always, at first, at last, at once, at the same time, before, during, finally, first (second, etc.), frequently, immediately, in the meantime, later, meanwhile, next, soon, soon after, suddenly, then, until, when

Pick a topic that is not too big. Don't try to write about too many events in

a short space. You cannot describe anything well if you cover too much.

Exercise I

Write your own narrative paragraph using the suggested topics.

1. Write a paragraph about some event (a fight or confrontation) that you will never forget. Choose an experience that left a deep impression on you.
2. Write a paragraph that tells a story of how you became close to another person (your fellow student, or your relationship with your sister or brother changed).
3. Write a paragraph that tells a story how you found yourself in a difficult or frustrating situation (when you were accused of something you didn't do; when something terrible happened just before the big day).

What is Description?

Description is one of the basic types of prose that tells how a person, place or thing is perceived by the five senses. **Objective description** reports these sensory qualities factually, while **subjective description** gives the writer's interpretation of them. It is the use of **sensory images** that will largely determine whether the reader will be able to imagine what you are describing. **Sensory images** are those details that relate us to our senses: sight, smell, touch, taste, or hearing.

The following paragraphs (from *Liam's Story* by Ann Victoria Roberts) are examples of descriptive writing.

Objective descriptive paragraph

Georgina's bedroom was not very big. It contained a three-quarter bed, a small wardrobe, a chest of drawers and a wash-stand, and those items almost filled it. Overlooking the mews at the back was a tall window draped with lace and a pair of gold brocade curtains, and on the floor, between one side of the bed and the wall, was a warm Turkey rug. The room was small and **overcrowded** but, compared to her **spartan** quarters at the hospital, it was **luxurious**. The feather bed was soft, the eiderdown matched the curtains, there were pictures on the walls and a triple mirror on the chest of drawers. It was **a haven of comfort and privacy** and Georgina loved it.

Subjective descriptive paragraph

She looked up, **clear grey** eyes **wide and questioning**, as though his thoughts had somehow changed the atmosphere between them; as perhaps they had. He did not look away and nor did she; he saw her expression change, **a quick rush of blood colour** her cheeks. **Intense physical awareness crackled between them like a sustained electric charge**. The **letter** she held **trembled**; she bowed her head and **a fall of dark curls** hid that **sudden warmth**, but did not obscure the sharp rise and fall of her breasts.

While reading these model paragraphs, you might note the specific details and the sensory images the writer uses to produce an overall impression.

Hints for writing a descriptive paragraph

- Give enough details
- Check that your details use sense words to create sensory images.
- Avoid using vague, general details.

The ineffectiveness of the following paragraph is the result of the continued use of vague words:

I had a typical day. The weather was nice and my job was interesting. The food for lunch was okay; supper was really good. After supper I saw my girl-friend, who is really beautiful. That's when my day really became fun.

Well-chosen, specific details help to create **a dominant impression**.

The **dominant impression** is the overall impression created by a descriptive piece of writing. This impression is often summed up

by one word or phrase in the topic sentence.

e.g. Georgina's bedroom was not very big. (topic sentence **without** a dominant impression)

The room was **small** and **overcrowded** but, compared to **her spartan** quarters at the hospital it was **luxurious**. (topic sentence **with** a dominant impression)

- Put the supporting details **in a logical order**.

Order in descriptive writing is often a spatial order. Details can be arranged as one's eyes might move, for example, from top to bottom, left to right, outside to inside, or around in a circle.

Read the description of the house and note the particular order the supporting details follow one another (the writer starts with the outside of the house and then describes the inside).

The house, a short walk from Stephen's flat, was only a few hundred yards outside the city wall. **From an attic window** the top of Monk Bar could be seen, which would, Stephen thought, prompt some keen young estate agent to describe it as having views of the city's north-eastern gateway. It was, **however**, a pleasant late-Victorian house, with deep bay windows and an imposing front door. **Apart from** a first-floor bathroom installed during the early fifties, and a kitchen of roughly the same era, the house had escaped much modernisation. Fireplaces, picture-rails and dados were all intact, together with door knobs, cast-iron coat pegs in the hall, fancy floor tiles and stained glass in the porch door. For someone with sympathy and plenty of money to spend on re-wiring and a damp-proof course, the place would be a delight. If he could bear to give up his view of the Minster, Stephen thought, he might be half-tempted himself...

To link one supporting idea to another and make the descriptive writing smoother and content clearer you may use the following **transitions**:

To show ideas brought together: and, also, in addition, next

To show a contrast: but, although, on the other hand, however, in contrast, unlike, yet, on the contrary

To show a similarity: both, like similarly, all, each

To show a time sequence: after, always, before, first, second, often, meanwhile, next, soon, then, while, while

To show a position in space: above, ahead of, alongside, among, around, away, below, beside, near, nearby, next to, underneath, on top of, etc.

Exercise 1.

Read the topic sentence with a dominant impression and supply five or six most important details. Be sure that they support the dominant impression.

For example:

Dominant impression: The atmosphere in the examination room was tense and silent.

Details:

- a) Thirty students sat looking in consternation at the tests before them.
- b) A few students tapped nervously with their pencils.
- c) The only sounds were the pacing of the examiner and the rustling of pages.
- d) The teacher held a watch in her hand.
- e) One student's knees were shaking.
- f) Another student's palms were sweating and heart-beat was quickening.
- g) Some of them were ready to faint.

Topic sentence: I knew I was passing a kindergarten from the sounds I could hear.

Details: _____

Topic sentence: The best part of my holiday last year was the sight that greeted me when I woke up in the morning.

Details: _____

Topic sentence: It is a luxury to wear things made of natural wool because the feeling is quite different from synthetics.

Details: _____

Topic sentence: When I walk past the bakery I can't help stopping because the smells are so good.

Details: _____

In the summertime this part of the forest is so relaxing because the sounds you hear are so subdued.

Details: _____

Exercise 2

The details following each topic sentence are not in the right order. Put the details in logical order. Use the transitions listed above.

Topic sentence: The old Victorian house looked haunted (describe it from outside)

Details: The house was covered by a dark green vine.
The tall iron fence around the house was rusted and crumbling.
The front door creaked and groaned.
The front hall smelled of must.

Topic sentence: A long, twisting staircase loomed in the end of the hall.
She took him in from head to heels – he was a frightening person (from top to bottom)

Details: His fists were half clenched.
His cold eyes stared straight ahead.
He stood poised on his feet, ready to jump.
His mouth never moved.
His wide shoulders strained against the fabric of his shirt.
His neck was as thick as a tree trunk.

Topic sentence: My aunt's kitchen is a very neat place. (Describe it from near to far)

Details: In the center of the table stands a vase of fresh flowers.
Nearby on the refrigerator, a magnet holds the week's menu.
Sitting at the kitchen table, I am struck by the freshly pressed linens.
Looking through the stained glass doors of her kitchen cupboard, I see a set of dishes, exactly eight each, matching the colour of the wallpaper.

Exercise 3 Write your own descriptive paragraph using the suggested topic:

- Describe a place that creates one of these impressions:

peace	tension
excitement	danger
friendliness	depression
- Describe a person who conveys one of these impressions:

pride	warmth
hostility	strength
withdrawal	independence
- Describe the sights, sounds, your feelings, and events of a particular day you will never forget.

What is comparison and contrast?

Comparison or contrast in writing is the careful look at the similarities and differences between two or more subjects in the same class or category (between people, objects, ideas). The function of any comparison or contrast is to clarify – to reach some conclusion about the items being compared. An effective comparison and contrast will not dwell on obvious similarities and differences; it will tell readers something significant that they may not know yet. **Comparison** emphasizes things that are **similar**; **contrast** emphasizes **differences**. However, **comparison** can cover both **similarities and differences**.

Read the following paragraph and notice how the passage compares and contrasts two principle types of meaning, denotation and connotation:

There are two principle types of meaning, denotation and connotation. Denotations are the relationships or connections society makes as a whole between symbols (such as words, flags, gestures) and the things they refer to. Denotations are the shared meanings of a group, the meanings that remain rather fixed and unchanging. Denotations are considered objective. Connotations, on the other hand, are the associations or connections we make individually between symbols and the objects or things that are represented by these symbols. Connotations are personal or private meanings. They are subjective, usually emotional, can change quickly in meaning, and develop from our unique experiences with symbols (Rothwell, 1982).

The paragraph does not try to define these two principle types of meaning, but to show the differences in them. The phrase “on the other hand’ alerts us to the change or the contrast that is going to be drawn.

Hints for Writing a Comparison or Contrast Paragraph

- Choose a two-part topic that you feel is not too limiting and not too broad.
- Devote an equal or nearly equal amount of space to each of the topics. If you are interested in only one of the topics, the paragraph may end up being one-sided.
- Choose the method for ordering material in a comparison-contrast paragraph: **point-by-point method or block method**.

In the ***point-by point method*** you compare a point of one topic with a point of the other topic thus going back and forth between the two items.

The following paragraph is an example of this method.

All your children, whatever their culture, are alike in their charm and innocence—in being a clean slate on which the wonders and ways of the world are yet to be written. But during the three years I worked in a school in Milan, I learned that American and Italian children are different in several ways. **First**, young **American children** tend to be active, enthusiastic, and inquisitive. Italian children, on the other hand, tend to be passive, quiet, and not particularly inquisitive. **Second**, American children show their independence, while their Italian counterparts are still looking to their parents to tell them what to do or not do. **Third**, American children generally surpass their Italian schoolmates in math, mechanical, and scientific abilities. But American children are overshadowed by their Italian counterparts in their language, literature, art, and music courses.

In ***the block method*** you present all of the facts and supporting details about your first topic, and then you give all of the facts and supporting details about your second topic. The block method is most often used in shorter pieces of writing, such as a paragraph, because in a shorter piece it is easier to keep the blocks of information in mind.

The following paragraph is an example of this method.

Female infants speak sooner, have larger vocabularies, and rarely demonstrate speech defects. (Stuttering, for instance, occurs almost exclusively among boys.) Girls exceed boys in language abilities, and this early linguistic bias often prevails throughout life. Girls read sooner, learn foreign languages more easily, and, as a result, are more likely to enter their occupations involving language mastery. Boys, in contrast, show an early visual superiority. They are also clumsier, performing poorly at something like arranging a row of beads, but excel at other activities calling on total body coordination. Their attentional mechanisms are also different. A boy will react to an inanimate object as quickly as he will to a person. A male baby will often ignore the mother and babble to a blinking light, fixate on a geometric figure, and, at a later point, manipulate it and attempt to take

it apart.

Use **transitions** effectively for comparison and contrast.

To show similarities: additionally, again, also, and, as well as, both, each of, equally, furthermore, in addition, in the same way, just like, like, likewise, similarly, similar to, so, too.

To show contrast: although, but, conversely, different from, despite, even though, except, however, in contrast to, instead of, in spite of, nevertheless, on the other hand, otherwise, still, though, unlike, whereas, while, yet.

Other related words and phrases:

a bit; considerably better / worse than; far; a good /great deal; infinitely; a little; somewhat; exactly the same as; just as good / bad as; rather (too); on the one / other hand; looks as if / though / like

Observe the following steps for writing the comparison or contrast paragraph:

1. Write a topic sentence.
2. Make a list of possible comparisons or contrasts.
3. Choose the three or four items that you believe most important.
4. Choose either the point-by-point method or block method.
5. Write at least one complete sentence for each of the points you have chosen.
6. Use appropriate transitions
7. Write a concluding statement that summarizes the main points or makes a judgment.

Exercise I

Combine two sentences into one using appropriate transitions for a comparison or contrast paragraph.

e.g. Naomi may have a fiery temper at times.

It is universally accepted that she can be delightful.

Even though Naomi may have a fiery temper at times, it is universally accepted that she can be delightful.

1. She has a grim face. She has a sparkling sense of humour.
2. She was brought up in an unhappy home background. She is a very cheerful person and has a very optimistic view of the world.
3. American children show their independence of their parents.

- Italian children are still looking to their parents.
4. He is very good at mathematics. He overshadows his peers in literature and music courses.
 5. The weather is fantastic. The people are also incredibly friendly.
 6. The gadget teaches kids time management. It leaves the child to turn to other activities such as reading or playing in the fresh air.

Exercise 2

Compare or contrast positive or negative characteristics of the two of your friends or fellow students using the hints below.

The following list suggests a few adjectives and phrases describing **positive qualities**:

Punctual, dependable, conscientious, responsible, free and easy, self-confident, good-humoured, gets on well with those around her, introverted, extraverted, tends to keep oneself to oneself, lacks in self-confidence, is easily led, a bit of a troublemaker, sociable, integrates well, imaginative, has a capacity for original ideas, trustworthy, sincere, spontaneous, decisive, well-organized, articulate, eloquent, well-spoken.

The following phrases describe **negative qualities**:

can be a little impatient with other people's weaknesses as yet, she is lacking in self-confidence, but while it is true that she is easily led though he doesn't always show a total commitment to his work, though occasionally she has trouble expressing herself clearly though his arguments are not always entirely coherent passive, bossy, arrogant, unsociable and disruptive, unscrupulous, ruthless, impulsive.

Topic sentence: Once I realized that two of my friends are very much alike/different in temperament, I realized why they do not get along.

- Point 1 _____
 Point 2 _____
 Point 3 _____
 Point 4 _____

Point 5 _____

Concluding statement: Only after I realized how similar/different these two people are, I understood why two inflexible people are likely to clash.

What is cause and effect?

Cause and effect analysis answers the question *why*. It explains the reasons for an occurrence or the consequences of a particular event. Whenever the question asks *why*, answering it will require discovering a cause or series of causes for a particular effect; whenever a question asks *what if*, its answer will point out the effect or effects that can result from a particular cause.

The following **model paragraph** looks at the causes for the loss of life in the sinking of the Titanic on its maiden voyage over 80 years ago.

One of the most tragic events of the twentieth century was the sinking of the British ship Titanic in the Atlantic Ocean on April 15, 1912, with the loss of over 1500 lives. The **immediate cause** of this terrible loss of life was a large iceberg that tore a three hundred foot gash in the side of the ship, flooding five of its watertight compartments. Some believe that the tragedy took place **because** the crew members did not see the iceberg in time, but others see **a chain of different events** that contributed to the tragedy. **First** was the fact that the ship was not carrying enough lifeboats for all its passengers: it had enough boats for only about half of the people on board. **Furthermore**, the ship's crew showed a clear lack of caring about the third class or "steerage" passengers, who were left in their cramped quarters below decks with little or no help as the ship went down. It has often been said that this social attitude of helping the wealthy and neglecting the poor was one of the real causes of the loss of life that night. Indeed, some of the lifeboats that were used were not filled to capacity when the rescue ships eventually found them. **Finally**, the tragedy of the Titanic was magnified by the fact that some ships nearby did not have the radio crew on duty and therefore missed the distressed signals sent by the Titanic.

The main idea of this paragraph is that the sinking of the Titanic resulted from an incredible combination of a natural disaster and human errors.

Immediate or direct cause was the iceberg that the ship had actually hit.

The rest of the paragraph gives at least **three underlying reasons (or causes)**:

- (1) not enough boats;
- (2) lack of caring about the third class passengers;
- (3) no radio crew on duty.

It is obvious from this paragraph that what often appears to be a single cause or a single effect is a much more complex problem.

Hints for writing a cause or effect paragraph

- After you have chosen **your topic**, plan your **topic sentence**. Make sure your topic sentence indicates whether your paragraph is about causes or effects.

e. g. Together with the benefits it brings, a mobile phone may become a nuisance when used in public. (indicates that effects will be discussed)

Jack had several motives for resigning from his job. (indicates that reasons will be discussed)

- Write at least three causes or effects for your paragraph. Consider immediate causes alongside with underlying causes or long-range effects.
- Put your reasons or effects in the **clear and logical order**. You may organize them in a **time order** (start with the immediate effect, then discuss what happened later, and end with what happened last). If the effects are not time-related, you may organize them from **least important to most important**.
- Write at least one complete sentence for each of the causes or effects you have chosen. Make your causes or effects clear and specific by giving specific details that explain, illustrate, or describe a cause or effect, thus making your paragraph more convincing and understandable.
- Write a concluding statement.
- Make sure you use **transitions and expressions** that are particularly useful when writing about causes and effects.

Common transitions **for cause**:

Because, caused by, results from, the reason is that... + a complete sentence, since, due to, on account of

Common transitions **for effect**:

Accordingly, as a result, consequently, resulted in, for this reason, so, so that, then, therefore, thus, hence

Exercise I

Recognize cause and effect in topic sentences.

1. Whole generations are growing up addicted to telly.
2. Television encourages passive enjoyment.
3. The birth of my little sister had an unexpected impact on my life.
4. Definitely, videocassette recorders have changed the movie industry.
5. Naomi's runaway success was due to her hard work.
6. People buy fashionable clothes because they want to impress others, to feel successful, and to feel accepted into a higher social class.
7. There are a number of objections to the planned construction of a new motorway.
8. Owing to the increased demand for parking spaces, the company has decided to enlarge the car park behind the main building.
9. We did some constructive thinking and came up with a number of interesting results.
10. My friend had to drop out of college to support his family.

Exercise 2

Use the appropriate transitional words and expressions to join the sentences or clauses.

1. She went out without an umbrella even though they had forecast rain.she caught a terrible cold and had to spend a week in bed.
2. There are not many good football players in our country.teams try to recruit foreign players.
3. Sales are down.there'll be no pay rise this year.
4. I drank three cups of coffee last night.I couldn't sleep.
5. I had a bad attitude toward homework in high school. ..
.....I did poorly in my first-year college courses.
6. Some mothers work only occasionally during the school year
.....they feel their children need the supervision of a parent.
7. Many mothers experience deep emotional crisis.....of

their need to combine the financial obligations of their home with their own emotional needs as parents.

8. University marks are important.....they motivate students to study and to attend classes regularly.

Exercise 3

For each of the following topic sentences write three causes or effects. The first is done for you.

1. There are many reasons why teens join gangs.
 - a) Parents don't set limits for their children.
 - b) Some people see gangs as a substitute family.
 - c) Others join to gain a sense of power.

2. Everyone in social services knows the danger of locking up a child.
 - a) _____
 - b) _____
 - c) _____

3. Women should not work if they have young children.
 - a) _____
 - b) _____
 - c) _____

4. It is bad for teenagers to have part-time jobs after school.
 - a) _____
 - b) _____
 - c) _____

Exercise 4

Write your own cause and effect paragraph. Use the suggested topics:

1. The causes and effects of high stress among college students.
2. The causes of high school dropouts.
3. The effects of excessive parents' permissiveness.
4. How friends make my life better.
5. How a mobile phone has become a nuisance for me.

What is Definition?

Sometimes writers will provide the definition of terms they are using, especially when an understanding of the term is necessary for comprehension of the main idea.

The starting point for a good definition is to group the word into a **larger category** or **class**.

Then you start looking for **the identifying characteristics** that make it different from other members in the class. To define a word or notion you may start with a dictionary definition. But it is only the beginning. You will need to expand the definition into what is called **extended definition**. Extended definition seeks to analyze a concept so that your reader will have a more complete understanding.

Notice the way definition is used in this paragraph from a sociology textbook:

Do you know of any culture that is better than your own? If not, you are like most people in assuming that your own culture, group and behaviours are superior to those of others. The attitude that our own culture is **superior to others**, that our **beliefs, values, and behaviours** are **more correct than others**, and that other people and cultures **can be evaluated in terms of our own culture** is known as **ethnocentrism**. Ethnocentrism was defined by **Sumner** (1906) as "that view of things in which one's own group is **the center of everything** and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it." (J.Ross Eshleman, et al., *Sociology: An Introduction*, 4th ed. HarperCollins, 1993, 102)

Hints for writing a definition paragraph

1. The topic sentence should have three parts:
 - the term you are defining
 - the broad class or category into which your term fits
 - the specific distinguishing characteristics that make the term different from all the others in the class or category

The specific distinguishing characteristics:

ethnocentrism is the term you are defining;

attitude is the class or category into which your term fits;

superior to others,

more correct than others,

can be valued in terms of our own culture

is the center of everything

2. Express your attitude toward the term you are defining. Make the attitude clear and specific.

For ex.:

Not this: Anxiety is the feeling that can be bad for a person.

But this: Anxiety is the fear of being hurt or of losing something.

3. Use specific and concrete examples to explain your definition.

Happiness takes place when you feel the joy of reaching a special goal. (Avoid defining one abstract term by using other abstract terms).

I felt happiness when I saw my name on the list of students picked for the prize.

STAGE III. WRITING AN ESSAY.

An essay is a short piece of writing (but longer than a paragraph) that discusses, describes or analyzes one topic. It can discuss a subject directly or indirectly, seriously or humorously, describe personal opinions or just report information. An essay can be written from any perspective, but essays are most commonly written in the first person (I), or third person (he, she, or they).

According to the subject matter and the treatment it receives, **essays** may be divided **into the following main types: narrative, descriptive, comparison/contrast, cause and effect, definition, argumentative and critical.** The division is, by no means clear cut; in fact most essays have features characteristic not of one particular type, but of several.

A narrative essay is a description of happenings as they follow one another. It can also be called a "short story." Generally the narrative essay is conversational in style, and tells of a personal experience. It is most commonly written in the first person (I) and could tell of a single, life-shaping event, or simply a daily experience.

The descriptive essay is more difficult to write because the order in which your ideas follow one another is determined not by the sequence of events, but rather by certain qualities of your ideas and the logical connection between them. The descriptive essay provides details about how something looks, tastes, smells, makes one feel, or sounds. These essays generally use a lot of sensory details. The essay could be a list-like description that provides point by point details. Or it could function as a story, keeping the reader interested in the plot.

The **comparison/contrast essay** discusses the similarities and differences between two things, people, concepts, places, etc. The essay could be an unbiased discussion, or an attempt to convince the reader of the benefits of one thing, person or concept. The essay could discuss both similarities and differences, or it could just focus on one or the other. A **comparison essay** usually discusses the similarities between two things, while the **contrast essay** discusses the differences.

The **cause/effect essay** explains why or how some event happened, and what resulted from the event. This essay is a study of the relationship between two or more events or experiences. The essay could discuss both causes and effects, or it could simply address one or the other. A **cause essay** usually discusses the reasons why something happened. An **effect essay** discusses what happens after a specific event or circumstance.

A **definition essay** defines a specific term. It could try to pin down the meaning of a specific word, or define an abstract concept (love, friendship, honesty, etc.). The analysis goes deeper than a simple dictionary definition; it should try to explain why the term is defined as such. It could define the term directly or it could imply the definition of the term, telling a story that requires a reader to infer the meaning.

An **argumentative/persuasive essay** is one of the attempts to win the reader over to the writer’s point of view. An argumentative essay is based on a premise (a statement based on reasoning) with which readers may disagree. The essay may argue openly, or it may attempt to subtly persuade the reader by using irony or sarcasm. The writer can be either serious or funny, but always tries to convince the reader of the validity of his or her opinion. Essays about topics that have social significance generally express argumentative or debatable points of view.

A **critical essay** analyzes the strengths, weaknesses and methods of someone else’s work. Generally these essays begin with a brief overview of the main points of the text, movie, or a piece of art, followed by an analysis of the work’s meaning. A critical essay can be written about another essay, story, book, poem, film, or work of art.

The division of essays into different types is, by no means clear cut; in fact most essays have features characteristic not of one particular type, but of several.

Essay Organisation

An essay is organized much like a paragraph. They have the same basic structure; an essay is simply longer.

<i>The Paragraph</i>	<i>The Essay</i>
1. Topic sentence	1. Introductory paragraph
2. Supporting sentence	2. Body paragraphs
3. Concluding sentence	3. Concluding paragraph

Following is a short essay with boxed comments in the right-hand margin. First read the essay through; then read the boxed comments on how the essay is structured.

Passive Students and Dull Teachers

Title gives clue to subject.

1 Few people would argue that the quality of teaching and learning on college campuses is diminishing. This is not to say that there is no excellence in teaching occurring, but overall there seems to be a lack of concern on the part of many instructors as well as students with the type of education taking place.

1. Opening paragraph states thesis: Both students and teachers seem to show a lack of concern with quality in college teaching and learning. Subject: quality of education and learning.

2 Recently, a concerned group of educators was asked by the National Institute of Education to report on an agenda that would give directions for improvements in instruction in higher education. Their report, "Involvement in Learning," cites two major problems: passive students and dull instructors.

2. *Supporting paragraph*: Uses an actual study done on the problem to back up the thesis. Two problems cited.

3 Passive students were defined as "those who soak up lecture information and then spit back required bits of it on tests." However, this passivity is often created in students because that is the way many colleges run education.

3. *Supporting paragraph*: Defines passive students and gives one probable cause—the way colleges are run

4 According to the report, a better way to teach would be to require discussions or even arguments with professors. "This would encourage students to engage more intensely in their own education, learning to feel confident about learning independently."

4. *Supporting paragraph*: Offers suggestion for improvement cited in the report

5 There are major imperfections in the quality of teaching, according to the report. It is suggested that many scholarly experts may have knowledge of their subjects, but have no idea how to teach. Consequently, their lectures are dull. They are not skilled as teachers. Exposing teachers to methods courses on how to teach would help, but there is great resentment among some college faculty, who tend to "look down their collective nose at methodology courses."

6 "The critical issue," says one member of the reporting committee, "is how to increase student involvement in learning. There is enough research around now that tells us that the more time and effort students invest in the learning process and the more intensely they engage in their own education, the greater will be the growth, achievement, and satisfaction with education and persistence in college." It is not enough to just educate oneself for a job; that type of education is too narrow. Students should be required to study some problem in the real world and be forced to bring the many academic disciplines they are learning to solve the problem. In addition, the report suggests that more liberal-arts courses should be required of students.

7 In order for things to change, the report states: "Taking education seriously is the student's responsibility as well as the educator's. We must expect that from our students, and we must expect it from ourselves."

5. *Supporting paragraph:* Discusses what's wrong with teachers. Scholarly experts don't always know how to teach their subjects, and many don't want to learn how.

6. *Supporting paragraph:* Discusses what's wrong with students—not enough involvement and the need to engage more intensely in their own education.
 — Should be required to apply academic disciplines to real problems.
 —Need for more courses in liberal arts.

7. *Ending paragraph:* Summarizes what is needed to solve the problem mentioned in thesis.

What kinds of paragraphs are in an essay?

Title

1. The introductory paragraph introduces its topic trying to get you into the subject. It is intended to arouse the reader's interest. The introduction has two parts: several general statements and one thesis statement. **General statements** provide background information on the topic of the essay, add a few interesting details to attract the reader's interest. The **thesis statement** introduces the **main idea** of the essay. A thesis states what the author is going to explain, defend, or prove about the topic.

Once you know the thesis, you can notice what supporting information or facts support the thesis. Often the thesis appears somewhere in the opening paragraph. Occasionally, it is the first sentence, but more often than not, the first paragraph leads up to the thesis and ends with the thesis statement. Sometimes the opening paragraph leads into the thesis, which appears in the second paragraph.

Sometimes the thesis appears at the end of an essay. An author generally waits to state the thesis if the readers need many examples and explanations before the main idea becomes clear. Also, special importance is sometimes gained when the thesis is left to be emphasized at the end. Sometimes the thesis is never stated directly, only suggested by the way the subject is treated.

There is no one way to write an **introduction**. But here are the examples of the more typical patterns.

- Begin with a general subject that can be narrowed down into the specific topic of your essay.
- Begin with specifics (a brief anecdote, a specific example or a fact) that will broaden into the more general topic of your essay.
- Give a definition of a concept that will be discussed.
- Make a startling statement.
- Start with an idea that is widely held point of view. Then surprise your reader by stating that this idea is false or that you hold a different point of view.
- Start with a familiar quotation or a quotation of a famous person.
- Give a number of descriptive images that will lead to the thesis of your essay.
- Ask a question that you intend to answer.
- Use classification to indicate how your topic fits into the larger class to which it belongs, or how your topic can be divided in-

to categories that you are going to discuss.

2. Supporting paragraph (sometimes called **body paragraph**) with the main idea related to the subject. An essay must have at **least three** well-developed support (body) paragraphs. Each of the body paragraphs must support the thesis statement. One paragraph must flow logically into the next. This is accomplished by the careful use of **transitional expressions**.

3. The concluding paragraph summarizes the main ideas, or repeats the thesis statement in different words or draws a conclusion. Conclusions are what readers are most likely to remember. Be sure your conclusion is the strongest, most dynamic part of your paper by demonstrating the importance of your argument.

The concluding paragraph has two parts: the **concluding sentences** and the **final thoughts**. The first sentence of a concluding paragraph sometimes (but not always) begins with a concluding transitional signal such as *In brief, In short, or To sum up*. In the final thoughts you may express your opinion, make a judgment, or give a recommendation. However, new ideas should not be added in the conclusion because it is the end of the essay. Otherwise you will end up in the air, leaving the reader frustrated.

Here are some of the most frequently used patterns to write a **concluding paragraph**:

- Come full circle. That is, return to the material in your introduction. Remind the reader of the thesis. Be sure to restate the main idea using a different wording.
- Summarize by repeating the main points.
- Show the significance of your thesis by making predictions, giving a warning, advice, offering a solution, suggesting an alternative, or telling the results.

Exercise 1

Read the introduction and conclusion to an essay "Confessions of a News Addict" (by Stanley Milgram) and analyze which of the typical patterns were used.

Let me begin with a confession. I am a news addict. Upon awakening I flip on the *Today* show to learn what events transpired during the night. On the commuter train which takes me to work I scour *The New York Times*, and find myself absorbed in tales of earthquakes, diplomacy and economics. I read the newspaper as reli-

giously as my grandparents read their prayerbooks. The sacramental character of the news extends into the evening. The length of my workday is determined precisely by my need to get home in time for Walter Cronkite. My children understand that my communion with Cronkite is something serious and cannot be interrupted for light and transient causes. What is news, and why does it occupy a place of special significance for so many people?

Living in the modern world, I cannot help but be shaped by it, suckered by the influence and impact of our great institutions. *The New York Times*, *CBS*, and *Newsweek* have made me into a news addict. In daily life I have to come to accept the supposition that if *The New York Times* places a story on the front page, it deserves my attention. I feel obligated to know what is going on. But sometimes, in quieter moments, another voice asks: If the news went away, would the world be any worse for it?

Exercise 2

Read the following openings from essays and answer the questions that follow them.

A. Here is an example of an introductory paragraph that gets right to the point:

Parents, teachers, and other adults across the country have expressed alarm about several aspects of the influence of computers on children. Many are concerned about the violent content of some computer games, especially those in video arcades. Others fear that computing may become addiction. Still others wonder whether too much computer use encourages withdrawal and an inactive life. But these fears are exaggerated. Children's love affairs with the computer are encouraging.

1. What do you think is the subject of the essay?
2. What do you think is the thesis?
3. What are some words that describe the tone of the essay?
4. How would you describe the author's attitude towards the subject?

B. Here is an example of an introductory paragraph that doesn't state the thesis until the second paragraph.

Following in father's footsteps (and lately in mother's footsteps) is a well-established tradition in many fields ranging from farming to stage acting. Despite this, the prevailing view of such action is pessi-

mistic. Sociologists in particular tend to view it as a job immobility and thus a serious social evil.

Our interpretation, based on economic theory and research, is much more optimistic. Children are not necessarily stuck in their parents' profession, but may choose it freely to benefit from the knowledge and skill passed from one generation to the next. They are motivated by the valuable free training from their parents.

1. What do you think is the subject of the essay?
2. What do you think is the thesis?
3. What are some words that describe the tone of the essay?
4. How would you describe the author's attitude towards the subject?

STAGE IV. WRITING YOUR OWN ESSAY FROM READING MODEL ESSAYS AND SAMPLES OF ANALYSIS.

Read a model essay and the sample analysis to discover how the writer uses **narrative** to develop a topic

The Day the Language Came into My Life.

By Helen Keller

Helen Keller (1880-1968) became blind and deaf at the age of eighteen months as the result of a disease. It wasn't until she was seven years old that her family hired Anne Sullivan to be her teacher. As Keller learned to think and communicate through language, the world opened up to her. Thus, she is in a unique position to remind us of what it is like to pass from the "fog" of prethought into the world where 'everything had a name, and each name gave birth to a new thought.'

(1) The most important day I remember in all my life is the one on which my teacher, Anne Mansfield Sullivan, came to me. I am filled with wonder when I consider the immeasurable contrast between the two lives which it connects. It was the third of March 1887, three months before I was seven years old.

(2) On the afternoon of that eventful day, I stood on the porch, dumb, expectant. I guessed vaguely from my mother's signs

and from the hurrying to and fro in the house that something unusual was about to happen, so I went to the door and waited on the steps. The afternoon sun penetrated the mass of honeysuckle that covered the porch and fell on my upturned face. My fingers lingered almost unconsciously on the familiar leaves and blossoms which had just come forth to greet the sweet southern spring. I did not know what the future held of marvel or surprise for me. Anger and bitterness had preyed upon me continually for weeks and a deep languor had succeeded this passionate struggle.

(3) Have you ever been at sea in a dense fog, when it seemed as if a tangible white darkness shut you in, and the great ship, tense and anxious, groped her way toward the shore with plummet and sounding-line, and you waited with beating heart for something to happen? I was like that ship before my education began, only I was without compass or sounding-line and had no way of knowing how near the harbor was. "Light! give me light!" was the wordless cry of my soul, and the light of love shone on me in that very hour.

(4) I felt approaching footsteps. I stretched out my hand as I supposed to my mother. Someone took it, and I was caught up and held close in the arms of her who had come to reveal all things to me, and, more than all things else, to love me.

(5) **The morning after** my teacher came she led me into her room and gave me a doll. The little blind children at the Perkins Institution had sent it and Laura Bridgman had dressed it; but I did not know this **until afterward**. When I had played with it **a little while**, Miss Sullivan slowly spelled into my hand the word "d-o-1-1." I was **at once** interested in this finger play and tried to imitate it. When I **finally** succeeded in making the letters correct I was flushed with childish pleasure and pride. Running downstairs to my mother I held up my hand and made the letters for doll. I did not know that I was spelling a word or even that words existed; I was simply making my fingers go in monkey like imitation. **In the days that followed** I learned to spell in this uncomprehending way a great many words, among them *pin, hat, cup* and a few verbs like *sit, stand* and *walk*. But my teacher had been with me **several weeks** before I understood that everything has a name.

(6) One day, while I was playing with my new doll, Miss Sullivan put my big rag doll into my lap also, spelled "d-o-1-1" and tried to make me understand that "d-o-1-1" applied to both. Earlier in the day we had had a tussle over the words "m-u-g" and "w-a-t-e-r." Miss Sullivan had tried to impress it upon me that "m-u-g" is *mug* and that "w-a-t-e-r" is *water*, but I persisted in confounding the two. In des-

pair she had dropped the subject for the time, only to renew it at the first opportunity. I became impatient at her repeated attempts and, seizing the new doll, I dashed it upon the floor. I was keenly delighted when I felt the fragments of the broken doll at my feet. Neither sorrow nor regret followed my passionate outburst. I had not loved the doll. In the still, dark world in which I lived there was no strong sentiment or tenderness. I felt my teacher sweep the fragments to one side of the hearth, and I had a sense of satisfaction that the cause of my discomfort was removed. She brought me my hat, and I knew I was going out into the warm sunshine. This thought, if a wordless sensation may be called a thought, made me hop and skip with pleasure.

(7) We walked down the path to the well-house, attracted by the fragrance of the honeysuckle with which it was covered. Someone was drawing water and my teacher placed my hand under the spout. As the cool stream gushed over one hand she spelled into the other the word *water*, first slowly, then rapidly. I stood still, my whole attention fixed upon the motions of her fingers. Suddenly I felt a misty consciousness as of something forgotten—a thrill of returning thought; and somehow the mystery of language was revealed to me. I knew then that "w-a-t-e-r" meant the wonderful cool something that was flowing over my hand. The living word awakened my soul, gave it light, hope, joy, set it free! There were barriers still, it is true, but barriers that could in time be swept away.

(8) I left the well-house eager to learn. Everything had a name, and each name gave birth to a new thought. As we returned to the house every object which I touched seemed to quiver with life. That was because I saw everything with the strange, new sight that had come to me. On entering the door I remembered the doll I had broken. I felt my way to the hearth and picked up the pieces. I tried vainly to put them together. Then my eyes filled with tears; for I realized what I had done, and for the first time I felt repentance and sorrow.

(9) I learned a great many new words that day. I do not remember what they all were; but I do know that *mother*, *father*, *sister*, *teacher* were among them—words that were to make the world blossom for me, "like Aaron's rod, with flowers." It would have been difficult to find a happier child than I was as I lay in my crib at the close of that eventful day and lived over the joys it had brought me, and for the first time longed for a new day to come.

Sample analysis

This essay is organized as a chronological narrative. Narrative was probably the most effective way for Keller to make her point that language is the key to life and learning. Throughout the essay Keller traces the development of her language skills by first describing the day Ann Sullivan came into her life and finishing with the description of the day when language came into her life. She defines it as the most important day because Sullivan would eventually “reveal all things” to her through language. Keller was also awed by the “im-measurable contrast between the two lives which it (that first day) connects.

In her opening paragraph Keller characterizes her relationship with Sullivan, not as merely one between a teacher and a student but as one that turned out to be loving and intimate. The narrative lends immediacy and believability to this very personal, intimate portrayal of Keller’s discovery of language. A third person narration or any other form would definitely sacrifice this personal tone.

Notice how the time transitions (an important tool for narration) used in paragraph 5 make the order of events clear. “*The morning after*” gives the reader the sense that the action of the story is being told day by day. In the second sentence Hellen Keller gives information she learned later –*afterward*. The writer then tells us that when she played with the doll *a little while*, she suddenly – *at once* – became interested in the connection between an object and the word for that object. This realization was one of the central lessons in young Hellen Keller’s education, and it became the starting point for all her later learning. She uses two more transitional phrases to tell us about the beginning of this education – in the days that followed – we learn that she mastered a great many words, although it took her several weeks before she learned that every word had a name. Much of the meaning of this paragraph would not have been clear without the careful use of these time transitions

Until she learned language, Keller could not express her feelings. Nevertheless she experienced many emotions, which are specified in paragraph 2 – *anger, bitterness and a deep languor* brought on her frustrated attempts to understand the world around her.

In paragraph 3 Keller guides us into her sightless and soundless world by her use of metaphor and simile. Note the effectiveness, suitability and originality of the figurative language. She uses the metaphor of being lost in a fog to explain her feeling of helplessness and her frustration at not being able to communicate.

In her opening sentence Keller says her meeting with Ann Sullivan was wonderful in that it brought together two lives of such contrast. The writer is dexterous in telling details to enhance this contrast. Reading her story we can infer Keller's and Sullivan's traits of character. Sullivan is loving and tender while Keller is not. In paragraph 4, describing her first meeting with Sullivan she writes that she was "caught up and held close in the arms of her who had come to reveal all things to me, and more than all things, to love me." By contrast, in paragraph 6, Keller shows no remorse at breaking her doll: "I had not loved the doll. In the still, dark world in which I lived there was no strong sentiment or tenderness."

Sullivan is persistent, patient, self-assured and kind. Throughout the essay Sullivan reveals an unrelenting patience in her effort to get through to Keller, who is impatient, cross, and vengeful. After an unsuccessful lesson Keller deliberately breaks her new doll, and is relieved when the cause of her "discomfort" has been removed. By contrast, Sullivan does not fly into a rage of her own. Instead, after sweeping the debris aside, she resumes her effort "at the first opportunity" and takes the girl outside for a stroll.

In paragraphs 7 and 8, Keller explains how "mystery of language" was revealed to her and how it affected her. That day at the well-house, Keller finally understood that words are more than a scribbled line on a hand or on a page; "words are the names we give to the things in our world, and when we speak those names we bring the world to life in our minds." And on the day language came to her, Keller was able to understand that she had destroyed her doll.. For the first time in her life, she experienced feelings of repentance and sorrow. Keller found that comprehending and using words affected her thoughts, feelings, and behaviour, for indeed all are inextricably connected. Language not only allows to share our feelings, but as Keller realized, it can shape them as well: "The living word awakened my soul, gave it light, joy, set it free!"

The concluding paragraph is written effectively and convincingly. It gives us the sense of reaching a satisfying ending to the topic discussed. A professional writer, Keller comes full circle, that is returning to the idea of the opening paragraph. Restating the main idea she reminds us of that eventful day and the joys it had brought her.

Summing up, it would be appropriate to say that Helen Keller comes to us as a richly endowed person (an abundant use of figurative language, allusion "like Aaron's rod with flowers" speak volumes about it). We can only wonder at her awareness of language.

Writing Topic

In paragraph 3, Keller uses the metaphor of being lost in a fog to explain her feeling of helplessness and her frustration at not being able to communicate. Consider some memorable situation in which you were so overwhelmed by an emotion—joy, fear, frustration, amazement, etc.—that you could not speak. In an essay describe these feelings using a metaphor or some other figure of speech of your own creation.

Read a model essay to discover how the writer uses **comparison or contrast** to develop a topic. **Comparison or contrast** is the careful look at the similarities and/or differences between people, objects, or ideas, usually in order to make some conclusion or judgment.

The Computer and the Brain

(by Isaac Asimov)

*In the following selection from his book **Please, Explain**, science writer Isaac Asimov compares the workings of the modern computer with the workings of the human mind.*

(1)The difference between a brain and a computer can be expressed in a single word: complexity.

(2)The large mammalian brain is the most complicated thing, for its size, known to us. The human brain weighs three pounds, but in that three pounds are ten billion neurons and a hundred billion smaller cells. These many billions of cells are interconnected in a vastly complicated network that we can't begin to unravel as yet.

(3) Even the most complicated computer man has yet built can't compare in intricacy with the brain. Computer switches and components number in the thousands rather than in the billions. What's more, the computer switch is just an on-off device, whereas the brain cell is itself possessed of a tremendously complex inner structure.

(4) Can a computer think? That depends on what you mean by "think." If solving a mathematical problem is "thinking," then a computer can "think" and do so much faster than a man. Of course, most mathematical problems can be solved quite mechanically by repeating certain straightforward processes over and over again. Even the simple computers of today can be geared for that.

(5) It is frequently said that computers solve problems only be-

cause they are "programmed" to do so. They can only do what men have them do. One must remember that human beings also can only do what they are "programmed" to do. Our genes "program" us the instant the fertilized ovum is formed, and our potentialities are limited by that "program."

(6) Our "program" is so much more enormously complex, though, that we might like to define "thinking" in terms of the creativity that goes into writing a great play or composing a great symphony, in conceiving a brilliant scientific theory or a profound ethical judgment. In that sense, computers certainly can't think and neither can most humans.

(7) Surely, though, if a computer can be made complex enough, it can be as creative as we. If it could be made as complex as a human brain, it could be the equivalent of a human brain and do whatever a human brain can do.

(8) To suppose anything else is to suppose that there is more to the human brain than the matter that composes it. The brain is made up of cells in a certain arrangement and the cells are made up of atoms and molecules in certain arrangements. If anything else is there, no signs of it have ever been detected. To duplicate the material complexity of the brain is therefore to duplicate everything about it.

(9) But how long will it take to build a computer complex enough to duplicate the human brain? Perhaps not as long as some think. Long before we approach a computer as complex as our brain, we will perhaps build a computer that is at least complex enough to design another computer more complex than itself. This more complex computer could design one still more complex and so on and so on and so on.

(10) In other words, once we pass a certain critical point, the computers take over and there is a "complexity explosion." In a very short time thereafter, computers may exist that not only duplicate the human brain—but far surpass it.

(11) Then what? Well, mankind is not doing a very good job of running the earth right now. Maybe, when the time comes, we ought to step gracefully aside and hand over the job to someone who can do it better. And if we don't step aside, perhaps Supercomputer will simply move in and push us aside.

Analyze the writer's strategies

1. An essay of comparison usually emphasizes the similarities between two subjects, while an essay of contrast emphasizes

- the differences. Is the essay you have just read an essay of comparison or contrast?
2. How does this essay help to explain why a human can still beat a computer in a game of chess?
 3. Does the writer provide an equal number of details that relate to both computers and the human brain or does he concentrate mostly on one part of the two-part topic? Go through the essay and underline each comparison or contrast that is made.
 4. Specifically, how does the writer demonstrate the complexity of a computer and the complexity of the human brain?
 5. Study the conclusion. How serious is the author's final suggestion?

Writing Topic

1. In an essay of your own contrast something you did in the past with the way you do the same thing today (ways of studying, treating your friends, spending your free time, or getting along with a parent or friend).
2. Watching television versus reading a book.
3. Compare or contrast yourself with the kind of person you think is typical of your age group.

Read a model essay and the sample analysis to discover how the writer uses arguments and persuasion to develop a topic

Language on the Skids

by Edwin Newman

Edwin Newman, besides being a television newsman and commentator, is the author of Strictly Speaking and A Civil Tongue—two very popular books that have established his reputation as an advocate of correct usage and a guardian of American English. In "Language on the Skids," Newman provides numerous examples of redundant, flabby, and self-important language. He believes the English language is being abused and argues for the responsible use of language.

(1) It is typical of the English spoken on this side of the Atlantic that enough is almost never enough. Cecil Smith, television critic of

the Los Angeles *Times*, considered CBS's "Bicentennial Minutes" not merely unique but singularly unique. Sen. Abraham Ribicoff of Connecticut was worried not only about nuclear proliferation but about the spread of nuclear proliferation. And Reggie Jackson, the *New York Times* advised its readers, "stole second successfully," which is better than stealing it unsuccessfully.

(2) All of this is redundancy, to which we have become addicted. A large part of our speech and writing is unnecessary and boring, which makes reading and conversation a chore. We slog through the repetitious, and tarry when we should be moving on. Redundancy triumphs.

(3) One reason for our extravagant use of words is the feeling that an idea is more effective if it is repeated and reinforced. That is why Jimmy Carter once described the international situation as very dormant. (Those were the days!) It is why he said that the place where he would meet Leonid Brezhnev would depend not merely on a mutual decision but on "a mutual decision between us." You can't be too careful when dealing with the Russians.

(4) Another cause is a failure to understand what words mean. The New York *Daily News* would not have said of a motion picture that it "extolled the evils of the advertising business" if it knew what *extolled* meant. The weather forecaster at the CBS station in Washington, D.C., would not have said, "Tomorrow afternoon, the temperature will gradually plummet. ..." And what could have led the New Bedford, Mass., *Standard Times* to run this headline: "Tie vote kills bottle bill, but not fatally"?

(5) There is a third reason for our extravagant use of words—a desire to make what is being done, however simple and routine it may be, sound grand and complicated. Thus, two newspapers in Nevada announce that they intend to put up a building. Do they call it a building? No. It is to be "a community-information center." The Postal Service issues statements about "sortation" of mail. Not sorting. Sortation. The Los Angeles City Teachers' Mathematics Association, at its Annual Recognition Dinner, schedules an associative hour rather than a cocktail hour. What does one do during an associative hour? Get acquainted? Not since computer language has descended on us. One interfaces on a personal basis. By the way, if am well-dressed women are present, it is possible that their dress reflects "Executive Wardrobe Engineering."

(6) Why is such language used? Self-importance, of course, but also because it serves as a fence that keeps others outside and respectful, or leads them to ignore what is going on inside because it is

too much trouble to find out. So you may hear about "a horizontal analysis spanning the formal vertical departmental structure" intended to "identify multi-purpose citizen contacts requiring timely responses." Or you may hear of a California school district that closes schools not because there are fewer pupils than expected but because of "accelerated enrollment slippage."

(7) This sort of language is increasingly characteristic of a society where engaged couples are said to be in a commitment situation, and where an economist may refer to work as labor-force participation. In Boston, the Metropolitan District commission did not want to say, "Keep off the ice." It urged that "all persons terminate using any body of water under MDC control for any ice-related recreation." It could have been worse. It could have been ice-related recreation-oriented activity.

(8) There is, of course, a technique involved, but it is easy to grasp. Never say that a tank may spring a leak. Say there may be a "breach of containment." Never say of a product that people won't buy it. Say that it "met consumer resistance." In Knoxville, Tenn., a nurse won a product-naming contest with the suggestion that dust covers for medical equipment be called instead "sterility maintenance covers." That was worth \$500 and a lunch at the Hyatt Regency Hotel.

(9) An ironic thing is happening now. As we demand more and more openness from those in public life—unwisely, it seems to me—our language becomes more and more obscure, turgid, ponderous and overblown. The candor expected of public officials about their health, their money, their private lives is offset in public matters by language that conceals more than it tells, and often conceals the fact that there is little or nothing worth telling.

(10) We ought to demand that our leaders speak better English, so that we know what they are talking about and, incidentally, so that they do. Some safety does lie in more sensible public attitudes, especially toward the public-relations and advertising techniques now widely used by politicians. It lies also in independent reporting by those of us in the news business, and in greater skepticism on the part of the public, and in an unremitting puncturing of the overblown. In all of this, language is crucial.

(11) I have been told that my view is cranky and pedantic, that I want to keep the language from growing, and to impose a standard and rigid English. Far from it. Our language should be specific and concrete, eloquent where possible, playful where possible, and personal so that we don't all sound alike. Instead, high crimes and mis-

demeanors are visited upon it, and those who commit them do not understand that the crimes are crimes against themselves. The language belongs to all of us. We have no more valuable possession.

Sample Analysis

As we read the opening paragraph, we begin to see that the essay's subject will deal with the English language and its correct usage. In his opening paragraph Newman gives three examples of extravagant use of words: "singularly unique," "the spread of nuclear proliferation," and "stole second successfully."

In the second paragraph he states that in each of these cases the problem is redundancy: "unique" means "singularly"; "proliferation" means "the spread of"; and "stole second" implies that it was done successfully.

In the second paragraph Newman clearly shapes his critical attitude to the subject by directly stating that we have become addicted to redundancy and "a large part of our speech and writing is unnecessary and boring", and reading and conversation becomes a chore. His opinion is further signaled by the metaphor "we slog through the repetitious... when we should be moving on", "redundancy triumphs".

Newman believes that Americans are extravagant with words ("enough is almost never enough") and in the subsequent paragraphs (3, 4, 5) he gives the causes of this extravagance: they believe "that an idea is more effective if it is repeated and reinforced" (3), they fail "to understand what words mean" (4), and they "desire to make what is being done, however simple and routine it may be, sound grand and complicated" (5).

Each of the sentences serves as the topic sentence to a paragraph and the sentences that follow demonstrate how people use words without understanding what they mean. Numerous examples of redundant, flabby, and self-important language do such a good job of clarifying of Newman's ideas and give substance and authority to the essay. Without them the essay would be much less persuasive.

Paragraph 6 begins with the rhetorical question "Why is such language used?" which is pivotal. It allows Newman to move from a description of the problem to an analysis of it. According to Newman people use language that promotes self-importance "because it serves as a fence that keeps others outside and respectful, or it leads them to ignore what is going on inside because it is too much trouble to find out" (6). Newman's metaphor turns an abstraction into a concrete image and makes it easier for the reader to understand his argument.

In paragraph 10 Newman expresses his belief that we could improve our use of the language by demanding “that our leaders speak better English, so that we know what they are talking about and, incidentally, so that they do”. The combination of the modal verb “ought to” with the verb “demand” makes this belief sound weighty and assertive. The writer gradually builds up the reader to the understanding of the idea that “language is crucial”. The shortness of the final sentence arrests the reader’s attention and emphasizes the sense of its importance.

Newman’s thesis is stated in paragraph 11: “Our language should be specific and concrete, eloquent where possible, playful where possible, and personal that we don’t all sound alike.” This is just the case when the thesis appears at the end of the essay. Before stating the thesis the author provides many examples and explanations that make the main idea clear.

Though Newman’s tone shows that he is irritated by the misuse of language, his essay does not seem “cranky and pedantic” because he is also able to see the humour in the misuses he exposes. For example, after presenting an example, in paragraph 3 that illustrates the tendency to repeat and reinforce, Newman finishes the paragraph with a humorous remark “You can’t be too careful when dealing with the Russians.” Many of his paragraphs end in this light-hearted manner. Using irony in paragraph 8 Newman does not really mean that we should use these terms. His irony lets us share in his ridicule of overblown language.

Read the summary of the guides to writing the argumentative (persuasive) essay:

1. State a clear thesis. Use words such as *must, ought, should* (e.g. Our language should be specific, concrete...)
2. Give evidence or reasons for your beliefs. Show your logic by providing the best evidence from your personal experience, statistics, comparisons.
3. Use examples. Well-chosen examples are the best types of evidence for an argument. Without examples, essays of persuasion will be flat, lifeless, and unconvincing.
4. Point out the results to show what will happen if your argument is (or is not) believed. But make sure that you avoid exaggerations of any kind. (Avoiding exaggerations helps Newman not to sound “cranky and pedantic”)
5. Use special words and phrases to signal parts of the argu-

ment:

To signal the thesis of an argument

I agree that...

I support that idea...

I am in favour...

I propose...

...must (not) be changed, should be adopted (should not)

It is clear that...

It is therefore quite right/wrong...

To signal a reason

because, just because, since

in the first place

in view of

can be shown

The first reason is...

An additional reason is...

The most convincing piece of evidence

To suggest another way to think about something

Most people assume that...

One would think that...

It has been argued that...

Popular thought is that...

Consider the case of...

There is no comparison between...

To discredit the opposing view

This is partly true but...

To a certain limited extent, there is some truth in this but...

...is an over-simplification.

This argument has a certain superficial logic to it, but, on closer examination...

To signal a conclusion

Therefore, thus, consequently, so

As a result

We can conclude that...

This proves (shows, demonstrates) that...

This suggests that...

This leads to the conclusion that...

Read the model argumentative essay and analyze the writer's strategies.

The Internet? Bah!

Clifford Stoll

(1) After two decades online, I'm perplexed. It's not that I haven't had a gas of a good time on the Internet. I've met great people and even caught a hacker or two. But today I'm uneasy about this most trendy and oversold community. Visionaries see a future of telecommuting workers, interactive libraries and multimedia classrooms. They speak of electronic town meetings and virtual communities. Commerce and business will shift from offices and malls to networks and modems. And the freedom of digital networks will make government more democratic.

(2) Baloney. Do our computer pundits lack all common sense? The truth is no online database will replace your daily newspaper, no CD-ROM can take the place of a competent teacher and no computer network will change the way government works.

(3) Consider today's online world. The Usenet, a worldwide bulletin board, allows anyone to post messages across the nation. Your word gets out, leapfrogging editors and publishers. Every voice can be heard cheaply and instantly. The result? Every voice is heard. The cacophony more closely resembles citizens band radio, complete with handles, harassment and anonymous threats. When most everyone shouts, few listen. How about electronic publishing? Try reading a book on disc. At best, it's an unpleasant chore: the myopic glow of a clunky computer replaces the friendly pages of a book. And you can't tote that laptop to the beach. Yet Nicholas Negroponte, director of the MIT Media Lab, predicts that we'll soon buy books and newspapers straight over the Internet. Uh, sure.

(4) What the Internet hucksters won't tell you is that the Internet is an ocean of unedited data, without any pretense of completeness. Lacking editors, reviewers or critics, the Internet has become a wasteland of unfiltered data. You don't know what to ignore and what's worth reading. Logged onto the World Wide Web, I hunt for the date of the Battle of Trafalgar. Hundreds of files show up, and it takes 15 minutes to unravel them—one's a biography written by an eighth grader, the second is a computer game that doesn't work and the third is an image of a London monument. None answers my question, and my search is periodically interrupted by messages like, "Too many connections, try again later."

(5) Won't the Internet be useful in governing? Internet addicts clamor for government reports. But when Andy Spano ran for county executive in Westchester County, N.Y., he put every press release and position paper onto a bulletin board. In that affluent county, with plenty of computer companies, how many voters logged in? Fewer than 30. Not a good omen.

(6) Then there are those pushing computers into schools. We're told that multimedia will make schoolwork easy and fun. Students will happily learn from animated characters while taught by expertly tailored software. Who needs teachers when you've got computer-aided education? Bah. These expensive toys are difficult to use in classrooms and require extensive teacher training. Sure, kids love video-games—but think of your own experience: can you recall even one educational filmstrip of decades past? I'll bet you remember the two or three great teachers who made a difference in your life.

(7) Then there's cyberbusiness. We're promised instant catalog shopping—just point and click for great deals. We'll order airline tickets over the network, make restaurant reservations and negotiate sales contracts. Stores will become obsolete. So how come my local mall does more business in an afternoon than the entire Internet handles in a month? Even if there were a trustworthy way to send money over the Internet—which there isn't—the network is missing a most essential ingredient of capitalism: salespeople.

(8) What's missing from this electronic wonderland? Human contact. Discount the fawning techno-burble about virtual communities. Computers and networks isolate us from one another. A network chat line is a limp substitute for meeting friends over coffee. No interactive multimedia display comes close to the excitement of a live concert. And who'd prefer cybersex to the real thing? While the Internet beckons brightly, seductively flashing an icon of knowledge-as-power, this nonplace lures us to surrender our time on earth. A poor substitute it is, this virtual reality where frustration is legion and where—in the holy names of Education and Progress—important aspects of human interactions are relentlessly devalued.

Analyze the writer's strategies.

1. How many paragraphs make up the introduction of this essay? Explain what the author does in his introduction. Is this an effective method for introducing a controversial issue?
2. Find the author's thesis and underline it in the text.
3. Find an example of the author's use of a quotation from an expert. Does he agree or disagree with the expert?

LEARN TO WRITE EFFECTIVELY

4. Students are taught not to include slang or informal language in their essays. Clifford Stoll, however, has used several slang words. How many of these words or expressions can you find? Why do you think the writer decided to use slang?
5. An effective argument considers the opponent's point of view. Review each paragraph in the essay and underline those sentences where Clifford Stoll presents the point of view of his opponents. What are Stoll's responses to each of his opponent's points? Do you think Stoll's point of view represents a majority or minority position?
6. Where does the writer use examples? Mark the paragraphs that contain examples. In each case, does he use a listing of examples or give an extended example?
7. What does the writer claim are the results of the continuing use of the Internet?
8. Based on what you know about the Internet and the information provided in this essay, do you feel persuaded that the Internet is a poor substitute for human interaction?

Writing Topic

1. The writer tells us that "computers and networks isolate us from one another." In an argument of your own, agree or disagree with this statement.
2. Stoll concludes that using the Internet devalues human interaction. Write an essay in which you argue that for some people the Internet makes possible a human interaction that would not otherwise be possible.
3. In paragraph 6, the writer argues against the use of computers in schools. Write an essay in which you agree or disagree that electronic methods of teaching have an important place in the classroom.

Read the following essay and analyze the writer's strategy.

Education

Malcolm X.

On February 21, 1965, Malcolm X, the Black Muslim leader, was shot dead as he addressed an afternoon rally in Harlem. He was thirty nine years old. In the course of his brief life he had risen from the

LEARN TO WRITE EFFECTIVELY

world of thieving, pimping, and drug pushing to become one of the most articulate and powerful blacks in America during the early 1960s.

In this selection from The Autobiography of Malcolm X, coauthored by Alex Haley, Malcolm X explores how his studies during his time in prison affected him. As a result of reading about his experience, what do you discover about the power of writing?

(1) It was because of my letters that I happened to stumble upon starting to acquire some kind of a homemade education.

(2) I became increasingly frustrated at not being able to express what I wanted to convey in letters that I wrote, especially those to Mr. Elijah Muhammad. In the street, I had been the most articulate hustler out there - I had commanded attention when I said something. But now, trying to write simple English, I not only wasn't articulate, I wasn't even functional. How would I sound writing in slang, the way I would *say* it, something such as, "Look, daddy, let me pull your coat about a cat, Elijah Muhammad-"

(3) Many who today hear me somewhere in person, or on television, or those who read something I've said, will think I went to school far beyond the eighth grade. This impression is due entirely to my prison studies.

(4) It had really begun back in the Charlestown Prison, when Bimbi first made me feel envy of his stock of knowledge. Bimbi had always taken charge of any conversations he was in, and I had tried to emulate him. But every book I picked up had few sentences which didn't contain anywhere from one to nearly all of the words that might as well have been in Chinese. When I just skipped those words, of course, I really ended up with little idea of what the book said. So I had come to the Norfolk Prison Colony still going through only book-reading motions. Pretty soon, I would have quit even these motions, unless I had received the motivation that I did.

(5) I saw that the best thing I could do was get hold of a dictionary-to study, to learn some words. I was lucky enough to reason also that I should try to improve my penmanship. It was sad. I couldn't even write in a straight line. It was both ideas together that moved me to request a dictionary along with some tablets and pencils from the Norfolk Prison Colony school.

(6) I spent two days just riffling uncertainly through the dictionary's pages. I'd never realized so many words existed! I didn't know *which* words I needed to learn. Finally, just to start some kind of action, I began copying.

(7) In my slow, painstaking, ragged handwriting, I copied into

my tablet everything printed on that first page, down to the punctuation marks.

(8) I believe it took me a day. Then, aloud, I read back, to myself, everything I'd written on the tablet. Over and over, aloud, to myself, I read my own hand-writing.

(9) I woke up the next morning, thinking about those words-immensely proud to realize that not only had I written so much at one time, but I'd written words that I never knew were in the world. Moreover, with a little effort, I also could remember what many *of* these words meant. I reviewed the words whose meanings I didn't remember. Funny thing, from the dictionary first page right now; that "aardvark" springs to my mind. The dictionary had a picture *of* it, a long-tailed, long-eared, burrowing African mammal, which lives off termites caught by sticking out its tongue as an anteater does for ants.

(10) I was so fascinated that I went on - I copied the dictionary's next page. And the same experience came when I studied that. With every succeeding page, I also learned *of* people and places and events from history. Actually the dictionary is like a miniature encyclopedia. Finally the dictionary's A section had filled a whole tablet -- and I went on into the B's. That was the way I started copying what eventually became the entire dictionary. It went a lot faster after so much practice helped me to pick up handwriting speed. Between what I wrote in my tablet, and writing letters, during the rest of my time in prison I would guess I wrote a million words.

(11) I suppose it was inevitable that as my word-base broadened, I could for the first time pick up a book and read and now begin to understand what the book was saying. Anyone who has read a great deal can imagine the new world that opened. Let me tell you something: from then until I left that prison, in every free moment I had, if I was not reading in the library, I was reading on my bunk. You couldn't have gotten me out of books with a wedge. Between Mr. Muhammad's teachings, my correspondence, my visitors – usually Ella and Reginald – and my reading of books, months passed without my even thinking about being imprisoned. In fact, up to then, I never had been so truly free in my life.

Analyze the writer's strategy

1. What motivated Malcolm X "to acquire some kind of home-made education"?
2. In paragraph (2) Malcolm X points to the difference between being "articulate" and being "functional" in speaking and writ-

- ing. What actually is the distinction that he makes?
3. In what ways is the dictionary like a “miniature encyclopedia” (10)? How are dictionaries and encyclopedias different?
 4. Find the sentence in which Malcolm X implies that although he is still in prison, his mind has been liberated by his ability to read and write. What makes this sentence sound so forceful?
 5. Malcolm X narrates his experiences as a prisoner in the first person. Why is the first person especially appropriate?
 6. How has Malcolm X organized his essay? Trace the development of his language skills.
 7. The sentence of the first paragraph is a short declarative sentence. Why is it especially effective as an introductory sentence? Does it arrest the reader’s attention as a dramatic assertion?
 8. What does the shortness of paragraphs (6), (7), (8) emphasize? What would be gained or lost if they were to be combined?
 9. Does Malcolm X’s relatively simple vocabulary emphasize the drama and realism of the narrative?

Read the following essay and analyze the writer’s strategy

Suicide Solution

Anna Quindlen

In this selection, written when she was a New York Times columnist, Anna Quindlen writes about a 1990 lawsuit against the heavy metal group Judas Priest. The band was accused of influencing the suicide of two young men with their lyrics and hidden, or subliminal, messages. No charges against the band were upheld by the trial, which was widely covered by the media. As you read, try to explore your attitudes about the issue of media influence.

(1) It was two days before Christmas when Jay Vance blew off the bottom of his face with a shotgun still slippery with his best friend’s blood. He went second. Ray Belknap went first. Ray died and Jay lived, and people said that when you looked at Jay’s face afterward it was hard to tell which of them got the worst of the deal. “He just had no luck,” Ray’s mother would later say of her son to a writer from *Rolling Stone*, which was a considerable understatement.

(2) Jay and Ray are both dead now. They might be only two of

an endless number of American teenagers in concert T-shirts who drop out of school and live from album to album and beer to beer, except for two things. The first was that they decided to kill themselves as 1985 drew to a close.

(3) The second is that their parents decided to blame it on rock 'n' roll.

(4) When it was first filed in Nevada, the lawsuit brought by the families of Jay Vance and Ray Belknap against the members of the English band Judas Priest and their record company was said to be heavy metal on trial. I would love to convict heavy metal of almost anything-I would rather be locked in a room with one hundred accordion players than listen to Metallica-but music has little to do with this litigation. It is a sad attempt by grieving grown-ups to say, in a public forum, what their boys had been saying privately for years: "Someone's to blame for my failures, but it can't be me."

(5) The product liability suit, which sought \$6.2 million in damages, contended that the boys were "mesmerized" by subliminal suicide messages on a Judas Priest album. The most famous subliminal before this case came to trial was the section of a Beatles song that fans believed hinted at the death of Paul McCartney. The enormous interest that surrounded this seems terribly silly now; when Paul McCartney, far from being dead, has become the oldest living cute boy in the world.

(6) There is nothing silly about the Judas Priest case-only something infinitely sad. Ray Belknap was eighteen. His parents split up before he was born. His mother has been married four times. Her last husband beat Ray with a belt, and, according to police, once threatened her with a gun while Ray watched. Like Jay Vance, Ray had a police record and had quit high school after two years. Like Jay, he liked guns and beer and used marijuana, hallucinogens, and cocaine.

(7) Jay Vance, who died three years after the suicide attempt, his face a reconstructed Halloween mask, had a comparable coming of age. His mother was seventeen when he was born. When he was a child, she beat him often. As he got older, he beat her back. Once, checking himself into a detox center, he was asked, "What is your favorite leisure-time activity?" He answered, "Doing drugs." Jay is said to have consumed two six-packs of beer a day. There's a suicide note if I ever heard one.

(8) It is difficult to understand how anyone could blame covert musical mumbling for what happened to these boys. On paper they had little to live for. But the truth is that their lives were not unlike the

lives of many kids who live for their stereos and their beer buzz, who open the door to the corridor of the next forty years and see a future as empty and truncated as a closet. "Get a life," they say to one another. In the responsibility department, no one is home.

(9) They are legion. Young men kill someone for a handful of coins, then are remorseless, even casual: Hey, man, things happen. And their parents nab the culprit: it was the city, the cops, the system, the crowd, the music. Anyone but him. Anyone but me. There's a new product on the market I call Parent in a Can. You can wipe a piece of paper on something in your kid's room and then spray the paper with this chemical. Cocaine traces, and the paper will turn turquoise. Marijuana, reddish brown. So easy to use--and no messy heart-to-heart talks, no constant parental presence. Only \$44.95 plus \$5 shipping and handling to do in a minute what you should have been doing for years.

(10) In the Judas Priest lawsuit, it's easy to see how kids get the idea that they are not responsible for their actions. They inherit it. Heavy metal music is filled with violence, but Jay and Ray got plenty of that even with the stereo unplugged. The trial judge ruled that the band was not responsible for the suicides, but the families are pressing ahead with an appeal looking for absolution for the horrible deaths of their sons. Heavy metal made them do it--not the revolving fathers, the beatings, the alcohol, the drugs, a failure of will or of nurturing. Someone's to blame. Someone else. Always someone else.

Analyze the writer's strategy

1. A. Quindlen begins her essay with the startling example of the suicide of two young men. How does this example and other examples used in the essay help the writer develop her argument? Do you think she is opposed, sympathetic, or objective in her handling of the subject?
2. Is Anna Quindlen writing only about Vance and Belknap in her essay or is the subject broader than this particular case? What makes you think so?
3. In paragraph (9) Quindlen metaphorically names a new product on the market "Parent in a Can". What does it suggest about her attitude to parents' responsibilities?
4. Is there a one-sentence thesis in the essay or is it implied? How is the essay organized? Make an outline of the essay so that you can see how the parts are related.
5. In paragraph (8) and (9) Quindlen writes: "In the responsibility department no one is home.", "Anyone but him. Anyone

- but me.” Is she sympathetic or negative towards the subject. Find other examples that she gives to support her statement.
6. How would you characterize Quindlen’s tone in this essay? Find words that tell you about the type of attitude.
 7. Choosing several examples, show how the writer moves from the specific to the general to make her argument. How does paragraph (10) function in the context of the essay?

Writing Topic

Do you think music lyrics influence listeners' attitudes or behavior? If so, is the influence positive or negative? Provide examples of lyrics you know to explain your answer. Write an essay to show what actions responsible parents should take to influence their children’s behaviour.

Read the following essay and analyze the writer’s strategy

The Plot against People

Russell Baker

A syndicated columnist, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, and humorist, Russell Baker had been writing professionally for about fifty years. This essay was published in The New York Times in 1968. Think about the impact of technology on your life as you read about the conflict between humans and inanimate objects.

Inanimate objects are classified scientifically into three major categories – those that break down, those that get lost, and those that don't work.

The goal of all inanimate objects is to resist man and ultimately to defeat him, and the three major classifications are based on the method each object uses to achieve its purpose. As a general rule, any object capable of breaking down at the moment when it is most needed will do so. The automobile is typical of the category.

With the cunning peculiar to its breed, the automobile never breaks down while entering a filling station which has a large staff of idle mechanics. It waits until it reaches a downtown intersection in the middle of the rush hour, or until it is fully loaded with family and luggage on the Ohio Turnpike. Thus it creates maximum inconvenience, frustration, and irritability, thereby reducing its owner's lifespan.

Washing machines, garbage disposals, lawn mowers, furnaces, TV sets, tape recorders, slide projectors-all are in league with the au-

tomobile to take their turn at breaking down whenever life threatens to flow smoothly for their enemies.

Many inanimate objects, of course, find it extremely difficult to break down. Pliers, for example, and gloves and keys are almost totally incapable of breaking down. Therefore, they have had to evolve a different technique for resisting man.

They get lost. Science has still not solved the mystery of how they do it, and no man has ever caught one of them in the act. The most plausible theory is that they have developed a secret method of locomotion which they are able to conceal from human eyes.

It is not uncommon for a pair of pliers to climb all the way from the cellar to the attic in its single-minded determination to raise its owner's blood pressure. Keys have been known to burrow three feet under mattresses. Women's purses, despite their great weight, frequently travel through six or seven rooms to find hiding space under a couch.

Scientists have been struck by the fact that things that break down virtually never get lost, while things that get lost hardly ever break down. A furnace, for example, will invariably break down at the depth of the first winter cold wave, but it will never get lost. A woman's purse hardly ever breaks down; it almost invariably chooses to get lost.

Some persons believe this constitutes evidence that inanimate objects are not entirely hostile to man. After all, they point out, a furnace could infuriate a man even more thoroughly by getting lost than by breaking down, just as a glove could upset him far more by breaking down than by getting lost.

Not everyone agrees, however, that this indicates a conciliatory attitude. Many say it merely proves that furnaces, gloves and pliers are incredibly stupid.

The third class of objects—those that don't work—is the most curious of all. These include such objects as barometers, car clocks, cigarette lighters, flashlights and toy-train locomotives. It is inaccurate, of course, to say that they *never* work. They work once, usually for the first few hours after being brought home, and then quit. Thereafter, they never work again.

In fact, it is widely assumed that they are built for the purpose of not working. Some people have reached advanced ages without ever seeing some of these objects—barometers, for example—in working order.

Science is utterly baffled by the entire category. There are many theories about it. The most interesting holds that the things that

don't work have attained the highest state possible for an inanimate object, the state to which things that break down and things that get lost can still only aspire.

They have truly defeated man by conditioning him never to expect anything of them. When his cigarette lighter won't light or his flashlight fails to illuminate, it does not raise his blood pressure. Objects that don't work have given man the only peace he receives from inanimate society.

Analyze the writer's strategy

1. Baker writes about objects as if they were alive with minds of their own. Find as many examples of this as you can. What is the effect of this technique?
2. What does the title, "The Plot against People" add to the essay? Are titles important in understanding the message of the essay or story?
3. Describe Baker's tone, or attitude. Is he being funny, sarcastic, serious, silly, angry, or a combination of these? Point out sentences that support your answer.
4. What sentences are transitions that help Baker to connect the parts of his essay?
5. Find examples of effective use of parallelism in the essay.
6. What is the thesis of the essay and what methods does Baker use to develop his argument?

Writing Topic

In an essay of your own try to explore who is in charge: technology or us? Do computers, e-mail, cell phones, and so on help us to work more efficiently or make us work more? Does technology ease or increase the stress in our lives? Does it deprive us of the possibility of being true humans or make us master of the universe?

ИСПОЛЬЗОВАННАЯ ЛИТЕРАТУРА

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