Paragraph Revision

✓	Content	❑ Does the paragraph say anything? Does it have substance?
✓	Unity	❑ Do all the sentences of which it is composed speak to one, common idea?
✓	Focus	❑ Does the paragraph have a topic sentence? If so, is it in the best place? If the paragraph doesn't have a topic sentence, might one improve the paragraph? Or does it have a clear topic idea?
✓	Sequence	❑ Does the paragraph contain some principle of development, for instance, from cause to effect, or from general to particular? Are phrases and sentences carefully sequenced?
✓	Coherence	❑ Does each sentence follow from the preceding sentence? Have you provided transitional words or cues to guide your reader? Would it be useful to repeat certain key words, for clarity?
✓	Purpose	❑ What is the purpose of the paragraph? Do you want to summarize, or give an illustration, or concede a point, or what? Is your purpose clear to you, and does the paragraph fulfill your purpose?
✓	Detail	❑ Is the language as precise as possible? Have concrete examples or well-chosen quotations been usefully incorporated?
✓	Purpose (II)	❑ If the paragraph is an opening paragraph, is it interesting enough to attract and to hold a reader's attention? If it is a later paragraph, does it easily evolve out of the previous paragraph, and lead into the next paragraph? If a closing paragraph, is it effective and not an unnecessary restatement of the obvious?

Closely adapted from the following source, an extremely useful book for undergraduate humanities majors: Barnet, Sylvan and William Cain. A Short Guide to Writing About Literature. 9th ed. NY: Longman, 2003. 270.

Sample Body Paragraph

The new media interest Marshall McLuhan. In the past, George Washington had to write letters to his ambassadors! New communications lead to new social relationships, and "profoundly involv[e us] with one another." McLuhan emphasizes the benefits. There is no longer time for anything but reaction. It provides the chance to escape from the strictness of older habits.

Revision Checks

[**PurposeII**/evolving and leading]The new media [**FOCUS/Topic Sentence:** interest Marshall McLuhan]. [**UNITY**: In the past, George Washington had to write letters to his ambassadors!] [**DETAIL**: New communications] lead to [DETAIL]new social relationships, [**SEQUENCE**] and "profoundly involv[e us] with one another." [**COHERENCE/transitions**] McLuhan emphasizes the benefits. There is no longer time for anything but reaction. [COHERENCE: It] provides the chance to escape from [**DETAIL**]the strictness of older habits.

Revised and Improved

Besides bridging once unthinkable distances, the new media that so interest McLuhan act with revolutionary speed. "We have," in his words, "had to shift our stress of attention from action to reaction" (63). Rather than seeing this speed-up as a crisis, however, McLuhan emphasizes the benefits. "Allatonceness" provides the chance to escape from the strictness of older "block-by-block" habits, like "data classification." The instantaneity of communication "profoundly involves [us] with one another" and leads to deeper social relationships, which McLuhan welcomes.

OWL: The Paragraph

Brought to you by the Purdue University Online Writing Lab at http://owl.english.purdue.edu/ The purpose of this handout is to give some basic instruction and advice regarding the creation of understandable and coherent paragraphs.

What is a paragraph?

A paragraph is a collection of related sentences dealing with a single topic. To be as effective as possible, a paragraph should contain each of the following: **Unity, Coherence, A Topic Sentence,** and **Adequate Development.** As you will see, all of these traits overlap. Using and adapting them to your individual purposes will help you construct effective paragraphs.

1. Unity:

The entire paragraph should concern itself with a single focus. If it begins with a one focus or major point of discussion, it should not end with another or wander within different ideas.

2. Coherence:

Coherence is the trait that makes the paragraph easily understandable to a reader. You can help create coherence in your paragraphs by creating logical bridges and verbal bridges.

logical bridges:

- The same idea of a topic is carried over from sentence to sentence
- Successive sentences can be constructed in parallel form

verbal bridges:

- Key words can be repeated in several sentences
- Synonymous words can be repeated in several sentences
- Pronouns can refer to nouns in previous sentences
- Transition words can be used to link ideas from different sentences

3. A topic sentence:

A topic sentence is a sentence that indicates in a general way what idea or thesis the paragraph is going to deal with. Although not all paragraphs have clear-cut topic sentences, and despite the fact that topic sentences can occur anywhere in the paragraph (as the first sentence, the last sentence, or somewhere in the middle), an easy way to make sure your reader understands the topic of the paragraph is to put your topic sentence near the beginning of the paragraph. (This is a good general rule for less experienced writers, although it is not the only way to do it).

4. Adequate development

The topic (which is introduced by the topic sentence) should be discussed fully and adequately. Again, this varies from paragraph to paragraph, depending on the author's purpose, but writers should beware of paragraphs that only have two or three sentences. It's a pretty good bet that the paragraph is not fully developed if it is that short.

Some methods to make sure your paragraph is well-developed:

- Use examples and illustrations
- Cite data (facts, statistics, evidence, details, and others)
- Examine testimony (what other people say such as quotes and paraphrases)

- Use an anecdote or story
- Define terms in the paragraph
- Compare and contrast
- Evaluate causes and reasons
- Examine effects and consequences
- Analyze the topic
- Describe the topic
- Offer a chronology of an event (time segments)

OWL: Writing a Thesis Statement

A thesis statement is a sentence (or sentences) that expresses the main ideas of your paper and answers the question or questions posed by your paper. It offers your readers a quick and easy to follow summary of what the paper will be discussing and what you as a writer are setting out to tell them. The kind of thesis that your paper will have will depend on the purpose of your writing. This handout will cover general thesis statement tips, explain some of the different types of thesis statements, and provide some links to other resources about writing thesis statements.

General Thesis Statement Tips

- A thesis statement generally consists of two parts: your topic, and then the analysis, explanation(s), or assertion(s) that you're making about the topic. The kind of thesis statement you write will depend on what kind of paper you're writing.
- In some kinds of writing, such as narratives or descriptions, a thesis statement is less important, but you may still want to provide some kind of statement in your first paragraph that helps to guide your reader through your paper.
- A thesis statement is a very **specific** statement -- it should cover only what you want to discuss in your paper, and be supported with specific evidence. The scope of your paper will be determined by the length of your paper and any other requirements that might be in place.
- Generally, a thesis statement appears at the end of the first paragraph of an essay, so that readers will have a clear idea of what to expect as they read.
- You can think of your thesis as a map or a guide both for yourself and your audience, so it might be helpful to draw a chart or picture of your ideas and how they're connected to help you get started.
- As you write and revise your paper, it's okay to change your thesis statement -- sometimes you don't discover what you really want to say about a topic until you've started (or finished) writing! Just make sure that your "final" thesis statement accurately shows what will happen in your paper.

[. . . . .]

Expository (Explanatory) Thesis Statements

In an expository paper, you are explaining something to your audience. An expository thesis statement will tell your audience:

- what you are going to explain to them
- the categories you are using to organize your explanation
- the order in which you will be presenting your categories

Example: The lifestyles of barn owls include hunting for insects and animals, building nests, and raising their young.
A reader who encountered that thesis would expect the paper to explain how barn owls hunt for insects, build nests, and raise young.
Questions to ask yourself when writing an expository thesis statement:

- What am I trying to explain?
- How can I categorize my explanation into different parts?
- In what order should I present the different parts of my explanation?

Argumentative Thesis Statements

In an argumentative paper, you are making a claim about a topic and justifying this claim with reasons and evidence. This claim could be an opinion, a policy proposal, an evaluation, a cause-and-effect statement, or an interpretation. However, this claim must be a statement that people could possibly disagree with, because the goal of your paper is to convince your audience that your claim is true based on your presentation of your reasons and evidence. An argumentative thesis statement will tell your audience:

- your claim or assertion
- the reasons/evidence that support this claim
- the order in which you will be presenting your reasons and evidence

Example: Barn owls' nests should not be eliminated from barns because barn owls help farmers by eliminating insect and rodent pests.
A reader who encountered this thesis would expect to be presented with an argument and evidence that farmers should not get rid of barn owls when they find them nesting in their barns.
Questions to ask yourself when writing an argumentative thesis statement:

- What is my claim or assertion?
- What are the reasons I have to support my claim or assertion?
- In what order should I present my reasons?

[. . . . .]
This handout written by Erin Karper, August 2001