



MODULE 5 DRAFTING YOUR REPORT

Duration: 3 - 5 hours

How can you best put your structured ideas into words and write a clear, concise, and logical document?



Introduction

With the introduction to your report, you have begun to express your ideas at the paragraph and sentence level, and you have moved beyond the organizational stage of the writing process. If you have developed your pyramid outline far enough, you might even be able to see all your main ideas expressed all the way down to the paragraph level. At the very least, the structure of your report should be clear. Your job at this stage is to compose your paragraphs so that your reader will be able to understand all the information used to support your main message. You know how your ideas are arranged in your report; you just have to get down to the business of writing them in paragraphs and sentences.

This module, therefore, focuses on writing at the paragraph and sentence level and treats both topics in detail. You will learn to recognize features of well-written paragraphs and sentences, and you will gain experience with specific techniques that can help make your writing more coherent, unified, and logically organized.

QUOTE



*"The ideas can be rich,
but the style should be straightforward."
—Sector Manager*



Learning Objectives

By the end of this module, you should be able to

- Identify the key features of a well-written paragraph.
- Compose topic sentences that are relevant and predictive.
- Organize sentences into different types of paragraphs.
- Identify and apply connecting techniques that help guide the reader.

- Identify the function of coordinating and subordinating words in compound and complex sentences.



Good Paragraphs and Sentences

Paragraphs are the main organizational unit in writing. Their purpose is to organize a group of sentences around a single main idea. According to the [survey](#) that you looked at in the first module, sector managers and country program coordinators identified paragraph structure as the top priority for staff for improving their writing skills, so this is an aspect of your writing you will want to consider closely.

After developing your pyramid outline, you may be able to identify the main ideas of your paragraphs. You may also be able to see how these paragraphs fit together to support your overall purpose and main message.

Good paragraphs have the following characteristics:

- The sentences in the paragraph work together to support a single idea. The topic sentence, usually the first sentence, states the main message of the paragraph.
- Effective topic sentences guide the reader from paragraph to paragraph, providing a “story line” for the document.
- An effective paragraph follows a pattern of organization that is easily recognizable and reveals the logical arrangement of the sentences.
- A paragraph connects its ideas clearly, indicating the relationship between the sentences in a paragraph and between one paragraph and the next.



Identify Good and Bad Paragraphs

Compare the following two paragraphs. One of them exemplifies all the elements of a well-written paragraph. The other does not. See if you can tell which is which.

Begin by thinking about the clarity of the topic sentences—the first sentence of each paragraph. Does the topic sentence make the main message of the paragraph clear? Also consider the coherence of the two examples. Watch for sentences that do not seem to support the paragraph’s main message, and sentences that do not seem to be relevant to the rest of the paragraph. After you have thought about these points, click Continue.

Paragraph 1	Paragraph 2
<p>Establishing rural financial systems involves identifying which financial systems are appropriate for the region in question. Low population density and difficult-to-reach remote areas in many countries translate into high transaction costs for financial institutions contemplating an entry into these areas. Limited economic opportunities in many rural areas result in small transactions, further increasing overall transaction costs. Rural financial systems offer particular challenges that do not seem to affect countrywide systems.</p>	<p>In addition to the challenges inherent in developing countrywide financial systems, establishing rural financial systems encompasses many specific challenges. For example, with low population density and difficult-to-reach remote areas in many countries, transaction costs are high. Also, limited economic opportunities in many rural areas result in small transactions, further increasing overall transaction costs.</p>

Continue



Using Topic Sentences to Control Your Paragraphs

QUOTE



“I like the easy-reading method so that I can skim the first sentence of each paragraph.”
—Sector Manager

A topic sentence contains the main message of the paragraph. If you had time to read only one sentence in a paragraph, the topic sentence would give you the essence or main thrust of that paragraph. Readers look for topic sentences to grasp general meaning quickly. A clear and well-placed topic sentence in each paragraph helps to make your work more accessible.

Topic sentences generally include the topic of the paragraph along with a **limiting statement**. The limiting statement provides some added detail to the topic, giving it a context, a scope, or both. The added detail distinguishes a topic sentence from a mere heading.

For example, a typical heading might say:

"Problems in the textile industry"

A topic sentence would be more specific. For example:

"The textile industry in Southeast Asia has faced a number of problems in the past decade."

Or, if you wanted to guide the reader even more explicitly, you could add detail to your limiting statement:

"The textile industry has faced a number of problems that have influenced the economic progress of Southeast Asia in the past decade."



How and Where to Use a Topic Sentence

Topic sentences serve two main functions. Specifically, they

- Establish the **relevance** of the paragraph to what has come before in the text. When topic sentences are relevant, they carry the **story line** of your document. If a reader were to skim only the topic sentences, they should be able to follow that story line.
- **Predict** the paragraph content. In this sense, the topic sentence is your main message for the paragraph. A good topic sentence is usually analytical, not technical. The sentences in the rest of the paragraph should reinforce the point established by the topic sentence, offering technical information as needed.

In every case, topic sentences only succeed when the rest of the paragraph supports the idea they express.

For the type of writing that you do for the World Bank Group, the best position for a topic sentence is usually right at the beginning of the paragraph. This position helps your reader the most and enables those who are too busy to read the whole document to skim through it and capture the main ideas.

Have a look at the following two examples. The topic sentences are in **bold**. Click on the **Relevance** and **Prediction** buttons for a description of how each topic sentence serves these functions.

Example 1

Uganda's economic fortunes have varied considerably over the past 40 years according to its political situation. After independence in 1962 and throughout the 1960s, Uganda showed great potential as one of the strongest economies in Sub-Saharan Africa. However, its performance was set back considerably during the subsequent periods of military rule (1971-79) and civil war (1980-85). Then, in 1987 the new National Resistance Movement (NRM) government under the leadership of President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni launched a recovery program to restore financial stability, create conditions for rapid and sustained growth, and develop human capital. It also embarked on policy and institutional reform to deregulate the economy, eliminate direct state involvement in all but essential public services, and improve institutional efficiency. These efforts put Uganda on a path of recovery, but progress was slow through the early 1990s.

Relevance

Prediction

Example 2

Factors related to language and culture also affect access and interactions with social service providers. Roma children may have difficulty starting school because of limited proficiency in the majority language. Similarly, parents may have trouble communicating with teachers, understanding health personnel, and maneuvering through local government offices to access social assistance. Poor communication and negative stereotypes of both Roma and non-Roma breed mistrust and reinforce preconceptions on both sides. Related to this is the overall absence of Roma personnel involved in policy design and working in public services, which means that there are few individuals who can bridge between cultures.

Relevance

Prediction



Predict the Content With Topic Sentences

As a reader, you are constantly engaged in prediction. Each time you read a topic sentence, you form an idea of what the paragraph contains. When the topic sentence is carelessly constructed, you will likely be confused—the same as if you took a sip of coffee and discovered it was actually tea! In this next activity, you will have a chance to evaluate how well topic sentences predict the content of the paragraph.

Step 1: Based on the topic sentence, predict the content or themes you would expect to find in the paragraph. Enter notes into the box, and then click on **Check Answer**.

Step 2: Click on **Show Paragraph** to read the paragraph. Is the content as you expected? If not, identify the problem with the topic sentence. (Since you don't have access to preceding paragraphs, you will not be able to comment on relevance to what has gone before.)

Step 3: In the box, answer the question, "Is the topic sentence predictive?" Make notes on what made the topic sentence effective or ineffective, and then click on **Check Answer**.

Example 1

Topic sentence	According to good corporate governance practice, shareholders have a number of basic rights and obligations.
Expected Content/Themes	<input type="text"/> <input type="button" value="Check Answer"/>
Paragraph	<input type="button" value="Show Paragraph"/>
Topic Sentence Predictive?	<input type="text"/> <input type="button" value="Check Answer"/>

Example 2

Topic sentence	In the transition from a fully planned economy to a market economy, poverty seems to be transient—households tend to cycle in and out of poverty.
Expected Content/Themes	<input type="text"/> <input type="button" value="Check Answer"/>
Paragraph	<input type="button" value="Show Paragraph"/>

Topic Sentence
Predictive?

Check Answer



Read for Relevance

Well-written topic sentences guide the reader through the document, supporting the guidance given by headings. Read the sample below, which shows only the topic sentences of a document. Read through these topic sentences, and consider whether they seem logically connected. That is, do they make sense together and provide a story line? Then click on the link below to view the exercise.

Faith and Environment in the Africa Region

In 2004, the Africa Region, together with the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC), commenced a major program to involve faith communities on issues related to environment and development. ...

The main objective of the program is to develop systematic approaches and structures to enable faith communities in Africa—both Christian and Muslim—to develop conservation activities relevant to sustainable development and thereby to enter into partnership with secular bodies. ...

Major activities in the early stages of the program included African leaders from Christian and Muslim traditions. ...

The progress made by these initial engagements with the Christian and Muslim leaders of Africa will be reinforced through the Worlds of Difference process. ...

The Worlds of Difference process is needed because—although governments and faiths have already worked together on development issues—the potential has never been fully developed and the faiths have been largely excluded from decision-making processes. ...

The Region has also worked to open up dialogues with national governments of countries that have Community Driven Development (CDD) programs in order to showcase partnerships and enable them to develop further, and to help financing to flow to faith-based organizations from World Bank Group-financed CDD programs. ...

[Exercise:
Topic Sentences](#)



Organizing Paragraphs

In addition to having good topic sentences, paragraphs must have a clear and logical organization. There are many ways to organize paragraphs. The most common patterns are the following: classification, chronological sequence, evidence and illustration, contrast and comparison, and cause and effect.

As the writer, you should ensure that the structure or organization of the paragraph is clear to the reader and appropriate for the type of document you are working on. Sometimes, knowing how a paragraph is organized can serve this purpose. Have a look at the following paragraphs. Note how connecting words and phrases, which are highlighted, reinforce the paragraph's organizing principle.

This is not an exhaustive list, but it does give an indication of the variety of paragraphs that you can compose.

1. Classification

Break down your main message into smaller categories.

Show: the topic sentence only the complete paragraph

There are two problems in applying this approach.

2. Chronological

After the topic sentence, begin with what happened first and take it from there. The topic sentence can be used to limit the chronological scope of the paragraph.

Show: the topic sentence only the complete paragraph

Uganda's economic fortunes have varied considerably over the past 40 years according to its political situation.

3. Evidence and Illustration

Support your topic sentence with examples.

Show: the topic sentence only the complete paragraph

Evidence gathered in the field presents an uneven picture of collaboration and cooperation.

4. Contrast and Comparison

Demonstrate similarities or differences between two or more people or things.

Show: the topic sentence only the complete paragraph

Previously, program beneficiaries were chosen by funders; now the process is improved because beneficiaries are chosen in consultation with the community.

5. Cause and Effect

Make a statement and then show what the effects of that statement would be. The reader can expect to see the results or predictions related to the initial statement.

Show: the topic sentence only the complete paragraph

Because of the recent escalation of energy costs—now the highest in the last ten years—concern has emerged about whether developing countries can sustain high rates of growth.



Techniques to Connect Ideas

One way to guide your reader is to use various techniques to connect ideas. These techniques help you achieve coherence in your writing, demonstrating how your ideas are related and how they reinforce your main points.

In the paragraphs on the previous screen, you can see that certain words and phrases are used to illustrate a particular pattern of organization. Such a technique is crucial to providing a kind of guided tour through the paragraph. By including specific connector words, the writer is telling the reader what information to expect in the paragraph. Sometimes the reader can expect to see contrast, continuity, or additional information. Other times, the reader can identify an ordering of information such as a chronology, a list, or a set of related examples.

Before you learn more about these techniques, find out how many you can already identify. Read the sample text—a section extracted from a longer report. Pay special attention to the overview, the headings, and the first sentence after each heading. When you are finished, click the button at the end of the sample to reveal the techniques.

**Food-for-Work and Cash-for Work Programs in Africa:
Lessons Learned**

Features of Good Program Design

For a cash-for-work or food-for-work program to be successful, careful program design is one of the key elements. As lessons learned from existing programs have shown, good design pays attention to five equally important components: selecting the geographical location; identifying areas with high rates of poverty and unemployment; involving the community in choosing beneficiaries; targeting particular groups; and setting wages at a suitable level.

Geographic Areas

Carefully selecting the geographical areas for program location will help the program reach the most vulnerable areas of the country. Since cash-for-work and food-for-work programs aim to reduce vulnerability to poverty and hunger, the selection of location should begin by assessing the specific country context to evaluate the characteristics of the population. This assessment can help answer the question who is poor and vulnerable and which parts of the country are most affected. When selecting the location, longer-term development opportunities should be considered in the country context.

High Rates of Poverty or Unemployment

Selecting areas with high rates of poverty or unemployment will help maximize the benefits from these programs. Existing programs have demonstrated that benefits are highest when public works are placed in the poorest areas and when they are operational during difficult times, such as off-seasons and economic crises. The poorest areas often lack basic infrastructure that would provide physical access to markets or employment opportunities, among other things; thus, selecting areas without adequate infrastructure can yield benefits in two ways. First, public works can provide the much-needed infrastructure construction or rehabilitation in these poor areas. Infrastructure improvement will benefit not only those who participate in the program but also the community at-large. Second, the infrastructure being built can also generate employment opportunities in terms of maintenance work and contribute to creating longer-term development opportunities.

Community Involvement

In selecting the program beneficiaries, criteria should be decided jointly with the community in the selected area. Involvement should start at the design phase. For a program to be sustainable, the affected or concerned community should be involved in the project from the design phase onwards. The goals and needs of that particular community should be addressed through the program. The community should be the decision-maker in terms of who can participate in the program. This enhanced ownership can lead to three beneficial results: 1) ensuring fair distribution of benefits, 2) minimizing intra-community conflict over who should participate, and 3) rendering programs more sustainable.

Targeting Particular Groups

Sometimes targeting particular beneficiary groups, such as women for instance, may have additional benefits. Targeting women can improve food security at the household level because women play such a key role in this sector, especially in Africa. In a variety of African countries, research has shown that improvements in household food security and nutrition levels are closely linked to women's access to income and other resources. In addition to improving food security, cash-for-work and food-for-work programs can also provide women with new skills that they may use in the future for income-generating activities.

Setting Wage Levels

Experience suggests that programs tend to succeed better if wages are set low. Low wage levels can help to encourage only the poor to self-select to participate in the programs. Research from successful programs clearly shows that when wages in cash-for-work programs are set slightly below market level, it is likely that only the poor will want to participate in the programs. This is because only the poor members of the community find these low wages to be an incentive for participation. If the wages are too high in relation to market rates, the programs will attract those already employed and the non-poor, which will distort the purpose of the program.

Show techniques:

Repeating Words

Classifying Items

Using Parallel Structure

Numbering/Listing



Connecting Techniques for Paragraphs

Following are a few techniques you can use, along with an explanation of why they are effective. For more on developing coherent paragraphs, see "Chapter 3: Drafting" in your [Background Readings](#).

Numbering or Listing

The technique of numbering your points or providing a sequence of steps or topics is telling your readers in advance how many there will be. By telling your readers how many points you wish to make or how many steps there are in a procedure, you can then lead them from point to point with confidence that there is little room for misunderstanding.

Show Example

Classifying Items (factors, variables, approaches)

Classifying items tells your readers in advance the types of items you are presenting.

Show Example

Repeating Key Terms

Repeating key terms provides a visual cue to your readers to recall something that has been written earlier in the text.

Show Example

Parallel Structure

Parallel structure refers to the alignment of ideas to show how they fit together. It is based on the principle that elements that are similar in function should be similar in form. At the sentence level, parallel structure can take several different forms: single words, phrases, or clauses. It particularly shows up—or should show up—in two kinds of situations: lists and comparisons. Parallel structure is evident in a sentence's grammatical structure and in its visual presentation.

Show Example



Putting Ideas Together in Sentences

Just as with paragraphs, the reader's reception of your ideas depends upon logically organized sentences. Good sentences depend upon coherence, clarity, and quality of flow. Achieving these goals in your writing is possible, but it takes a keen awareness of how your ideas relate to each other at the sentence level.

Sentences are made up of ideas. At its most basic level, a sentence can have just one idea, for example:

We cannot grant your request.

With such a sentence, the reader probably expects to know why the request cannot be granted. This is a related idea that is best placed in the same sentence.

We cannot grant your request because we have no funds left in this year's budget for this kind of expenditure.

If you wrote two sentences ...

We cannot grant your request. We have no funds left in this year's budget for this kind of expenditure.

... you would be leaving out the relationship between the two ideas and forcing readers to work it out for themselves. A good sentence shows the relationship between the parts clearly and with the correct joining words.



Compound Sentences and Coordinating Conjunctions

If a sentence has two ideas of equal importance that are closely enough related to be in the same sentence, you need a joining or coordinating word (also known as a coordinating conjunction) that will keep them equal. Below is a list of coordinating conjunctions.

and	but	or	nor	for	so	yet
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Examples

- Everyone pays taxes, **and** everyone is insured.
- These efforts put Uganda on a path of recovery, **but** progress was slow through the early 1990s.
- The ballots contained several lengthy initiatives, **so** the lines outside polling places remained long all day.

- All of the preliminary objectives must be met by the end of March, **or** the next tranche of funding will not be disbursed.
- These views do not represent the position of World Bank Group management, **nor** do they constitute official Bank Group policy.
- September is a busy time at the Bank Group, **for** the annual meetings require extra effort from many staff members.
- Everyone agrees that the reforms held considerable promise for recovery, **yet** the economy has remained stagnant for the past five years.



Complex Sentences and Subordinating Conjunctions

Like compound sentences, complex sentences contain two ideas or actions. In complex sentences, one idea is more important than the other. Therefore, you must make one idea the main idea of the sentence and join it to a related but subordinate idea. In order to do this, you need to use different joining or subordinating conjunctions. Below is a list of some of these subordinating conjunctions arranged according to different categories.

Time	Conditional	Cause and effect	Contrast
when	if	because	although
after	as long as	so that	whereas
before	unless		despite

- **WHEN** we know more about the situation, we will let you know.
- **AFTER** independence in 1962 and throughout the 1960s, Uganda showed great potential as one of the strongest economies in Sub-Saharan Africa.
- **BEFORE** countries can be granted market economy status, they will be required to reform their labor standards.
- **IF** growth is sustained and inequality remains at more or less the same level, it should be possible for Mozambique to reach the Millennium Development Goal for poverty reduction by the year 2015.
- The situation will improve **AS LONG AS** the government continues to implement the reforms at the same pace.
- When HIV-related conditions occur, workers become increasingly unable to work **UNLESS** they have access to treatment.
- **BECAUSE** I have a keen eye for detail, I tend to find many mistakes when I proofread.
- The policy group implemented the reforms immediately **SO THAT** they could take effect before the year's end.
- **ALTHOUGH** the projects are small in scope, they have a great impact on the local populations.
- At the outset of a reform program, some of the reform initiatives will be well-defined **WHEREAS** others are not foreseen.
- These cross-border movements have occurred **DESPITE** a tightening of immigration controls.

These examples show how to create sentences that are more complex. But it is important to remember that you can create good sentences by working out how the various ideas relate to each other, by determining your main idea, and by choosing an appropriate way of putting the ideas together to reflect their relationship. Remember that your sentences need to flow well together, and they need to connect ideas to help the reader understand your writing.

QUOTE



*"Being clear and concise is critical for a
Minister of Finance or Agriculture or Energy.
They're even busier than we are."
—Country Program Coordinator*

Click below to see a list of connecting words and phrases.

[Common connector words and phrases](#)



Identify Connecting Techniques

You have seen many examples of techniques for connecting ideas. Now analyze a short, complete report. Click on the icon to open a short document called *Water in Bucharest*. This document effectively uses connecting techniques to guide the reader.

After you read the document, write down your observations for each of the four techniques listed in the table below. Note at least one place where you see the technique used. You may want to read the document more than once. When you have recorded your observations, click on the **Show Answer** button to compare your observations with our own. Use the **Next** and **Previous** buttons to navigate between techniques.

[Water in Bucharest](#)



Technique 1 of 4: Repeat key words.

Record your observations here:

Show answer



Assignment 5: Short Report Section

This assignment builds on what you have already developed for your report: your pyramid outline, the introduction, and the headings and subheadings. Choose a section of your report and write the text for it.

The section should be between one and three pages long. You should write the section in the same file you used for Assignment 4, which includes the introduction, headings, and subheadings you have already submitted. This way, your tutor will see where the section fits in the report.

Before you [submit your assignment in Moodle](#) for tutor feedback, use the reflection file to evaluate your paragraphs and sentences.



[Reflection 9:
Evaluate Your Writing](#)



Resources and Documents

Reflections File

- [Evaluate Your Writing](#)

Sample texts

- [Water in Bucharest](#)
- [Faith and Environment in the Africa Region](#)

Other resources

- [Background Readings: Report Writing](#)
- [Common Connector Words and Phrases](#)
- [Module 5 Printable \(PDF format\)](#)



Summary

Well-written paragraphs and sentences help your readers understand your main message, and they guide readers effectively through your supporting points. To write good paragraphs and sentences, remember these important principles:

- Every paragraph should have one idea, and all the sentences should support that idea.
- The topic sentence should come first and express the main idea; it is the main message of the paragraph.
- The topic sentence should relate the paragraph to what came before it, and it should predict the content of the paragraph.
- Each paragraph should follow a logical pattern of development.
- Connecting techniques should guide your reader through the paragraph, and from one paragraph to another.
- Sentences should be constructed to use coordinating and subordinating words appropriately to state the meaning precisely.

By following these principles to write effective paragraphs and sentences, you will be making it easier for your reader to follow your logic and take appropriate action based on your report.

