

Forms and Structures for Clearer Writing

EAP 2013

Introductions

- Typically, introductions should move from
 - a general statement (but not too general!!) to
 - more detail statement(s) in support of general statement to
 - a more detailed statement (i.e. thesis), and then
 - back out to a broader statement (typically, your contribution to the field)

Practice

- Read Introduction to Example #1
 - With a partner discuss what is good about it and what is bad about it.

Practice

- Read Introduction to Example #2
 - Discuss with your partner why is this introduction better than Example 1?

Run-Ons and Fragments

- Run-On Sentence:
 - Two independent clauses are joined with a comma and no conjunction.
 - How can you tell? Count the number of subjects and verbs in the sentence and check the punctuation.
 - Run-on sentences can be corrected by adding a conjunction, changing a comma to a semi-colon, or adding a period after the first sentence.

Practice

Culture shock is not unusual, it happens to almost everyone who moves to a new place.

Practice

Which is correct?

Culture shock is not unusual. It happens to almost everyone who moves to a new place.

Culture shock is not unusual, for happens to almost everyone who moves to a new place.

Culture shock is not unusual; it happens to almost everyone who moves to a new place.

Run-Ons Cont.

- Sentence connectors are sometimes mistaken for conjunctions, which also results in a run-on sentence. Sentence connectors link ideas between sentences, but they cannot connect clauses in an unequal relationship. You can use a semi-colon with a sentence connector, forming a compound sentence with equal clauses.

Practice

The first stage of culture shock is a positive experience, however, it gives way to an unpleasant feeling of disorientation.

Correct this in 3 ways with a partner

Practice

The first stage of culture shock is a positive experience; **however**, it gives way to an unpleasant feeling of disorientation.

The first stage of culture shock is a positive experience. **However**, it gives way to an unpleasant feeling of disorientation.

The first stage of culture shock is a positive experience, **but** it gives way to an unpleasant feeling of disorientation.

Fragments

- Sentences without a complete finite clause
- To correct, make sure there is a subject and a verb in the sentence.

Practice

Incorrect: Because the new culture may seem familiar.

Practice

Incorrect: Because the new culture may seem familiar.

Correct: Because the new culture may seem familiar, it is easy to miss important differences.

“It” is the subject

“is” is the verb

Information Flow (Within a Paragraph)

- Read Version #1 and #2
 - Which is better?
 - Why?

- Sentences that start with new ideas are difficult to understand because readers only realize how those ideas fit the text at the end of the sentence
- Most sentences should begin with old, familiar, “given” information—something readers can “recover” from context—and move toward unfamiliar or unexpected information

- **Note:** Not all sentences have to start with old information.
 - The first sentence of a paper, for example.
 - Writers can also start a sentence with new information for special effect. But use this technique carefully and sparingly since it can be confusing!!!

So how do we get from “old” to
“new”?

- Sentence connectors (however, therefore, etc.) can be used at the beginning of a sentence to infer that the “old” information, the information you just finished telling will be altered, added to, etc. in the new sentence

- You can also use a phrase like “at that time” or a dependent clause that picks up an idea from the preceding sentence
 - E.g. The locations of golf courses have changed since the sport’s introduction to the United States in **the late 19th century. At that time**, golf was primarily a sport for the wealthy...
 - E.g. Similarly, Piaget tried to show that young children’s conceptions of dreams are related to **egocentrism. As long as children are egocentric**, they fail to realize the extent to which...

- You can also use pronouns (he, she, it, etc.), “the” + (specific noun), or demonstrative pronouns (“this”, “these”, etc.) to refer back to known information
- **HOWEVER...**
Avoid sentences with missing referents!

Be Specific!

Pronouns

- Be sure pronouns agree in person and number
- Make sure it is clear which “she” “she” refers to:
 - *She said she saw her at the coffee bar at 8:00, and she greeted her as she strolled toward the classroom.*
 - *Mai said she saw Ms. Kloss at the coffee bar at 8:00; Mai greeted her as Ms. Kloss strolled to class.*

Be Specific!

Clarifying demonstrative pronouns

– Ask your self:

- “This” what?
- Is it completely clear what “this” is referring to?

Be Specific!

Also be careful with relative clauses that begin with “which”

- What does “which” refer to?
- “Which” should immediately follow the word or noun phrase it refers to
- “Which” cannot refer to a whole clause

Information Flow (Between Paragraphs)

- Each paragraph has several sentences that express one main idea or provide one step in the argument

- First sentence of each paragraph transitions from previous paragraph and introduces the stuff that will be in the current paragraph.

- While “however,” “therefore,” can also be used at the beginning of a paragraph, it should not be the only way you transition from one paragraph to another.

- You can also use a similar transition from “old” to “new” that you do in individual sentences by using the topic sentence of a new paragraph to refer back to old ideas already discussed in the essay and then move on to how the new ideas in the current paragraph that add or modify the old ones.

Conclusions

- **A Conclusion Should**
 - stress the importance of the thesis statement,
 - give the essay a sense of completeness
 - leave a final impression on the reader.

Synthesize, don't summarize

- Don't simply repeat things that were in your paper. Your audiences have just read your paper. Show them how the points you made and the support and examples you used were not random, but fit together.

Suggestions on how to Synthesize

- **Answer the question "So What?"**
 - Show your readers why this paper was important. Show them that your paper was meaningful and useful.
- **Redirect your readers**
 - Give your reader something to think about, perhaps a way to use your paper in the "real" world. If your introduction went from general to specific, make your conclusion go from specific to general. Think globally.
- **Create a new meaning**
 - You don't have to give new information to create a new meaning. By demonstrating how your ideas work together, you can create a new picture. Often the sum of the paper is worth more than its parts.

Practice

- Read Conclusion to Example #1
 - With a partner discuss what is good about it and what is bad about it.

Practice

- Read Conclusion to Example #2
 - Discuss with your partner why is this introduction better than Example # 1?

Upcoming EAP Workshops

Thursday, February 28, 6:30 p.m.

US Classroom Culture: Dealing with Difficult Situations as a TA

Co-sponsored with the

[*Kaneb Center for Teaching & Learning*](#)

Thursday, March 7, 6:30 p.m.

EAP Game Night

Bibliography

- Nigel A. Caplan, *Grammar Choices for Graduate and Professional Writers*
- John Swales and Christine Feak, *Academic Writing for Graduate Students*
- Literacy Education Online (LEO):
<http://leo.stcloudstate.edu/>