Shutterstock

Chapter 2

Paragraphs: Mastering Unity, Coherence, and Development

Chapter Outline

Chapter 1 explained how to focus your writing through a central idea. Deciding on the kinds of information to include in a piece of writing and organizing that information in a logical way are governed by the principles of *unity* and *coherence*. Deciding how much information to include has to do with *development*.

2.1 Creating Unity

A piece of writing has **unity** if it contains only those details that help support or explain—develop—the central idea. The central idea contains a subject and the main point the writer wants to make about that subject. The following paragraph, summarized from Ben Mackworth-Praed's *The Book of Kells*, expresses its central idea in the first sentence, the topic sentence. Its subject is "*The Book of Kells*." Its main point is that the book "is both a treasure and a mystery." Note that all the details in the paragraph relate directly to this idea.

> *The Book of Kells* is both a treasure and a mystery. An illuminated manuscript of the four Gospels of the New Testament, it dates from about 800 A.D., historians believe. It is called an "illuminated" manuscript because its Latin words, written in ancient Celtic [Irish] letters are accompanied by rich, colorful decorations, ink drawings, and geometric designs. Pictures of people, animals, both real and mythical, adorn its pages, as do many Celtic symbols, such as the Celtic knot. We are not sure who wrote *The Book of Kells*, but legend has it that St. Columba, the founder of the abbey in Kells in Ireland, was its author.

It is not hard to lose focus on the main point and include irrelevant information—information that doesn't explain or support a central idea. Including such information will sidetrack your readers by drawing their attention to ideas that don't serve your purpose. It may even make your writing difficult to follow. Make sure to check for unity when you revise your rough drafts.

The following paragraph is based on one by Geoffrey Ward, who wrote an article for *National Geographic* magazine about the fiftieth anniversary of India's independence. However, Ward's original paragraph has been rewritten and now contains information irrelevant to its central idea. This information was added to show that such information can destroy paragraph unity.

> [1] Indian civilization has an astonishingly long history, and Delhi has witnessed a good deal of it. [2] There have been at least eight cities here in the past 3,000 years, beginning with Indraprastha, the capital mentioned in the Hindu epic [heroic poem], the *Mahabharata*. [3] Some scholars believe that if all the smaller settlements and fortifications and military outposts whose remnants are scattered across the landscape were taken into account, the actual number would be closer to 15. [4] Today, remnants of several old civilizations can also be found in Rome, Italy. [5] Monuments, ruins, and relics of the rich past are everywhere. [6] The high-rise office buildings that have gone up near Connaught Place in recent years cast their reflections into the green waters of a 14th-century steppe well. [7] In fact, as one of the world's fastest growing countries, India is experiencing a great deal of urban construction. [8] Traffic on one of New Delhi's busiest thoroughfares has to swerve around the masonry slab that marks a Muslim saint's grave. [9] Under the Independence Act of 1947 the Muslim state of Pakistan emerged as a separate country. [10] Even on the fairways on the New Delhi Golf Club …, royal tombs offer unique hazards.

unity
The principle that writers observe in making certain that all the information in an essay or paragraph relates directly to the central idea, which is often expressed in a thesis statement or topic sentence.

Ward establishes his focus in the first sentence: His subject is "Delhi"; his main point is that Delhi "has witnessed a good deal" of Indian civilization's "long history." Each detail that follows this sentence should relate directly to the main point. However, this is not the case with the irrelevant information added, as the following explanation shows.

Sentence 1, the topic sentence, expresses the central idea.

Sentence 2 tells us about cities that existed on this site as far back as 3,000 years ago, so it helps explain the "long history" mentioned in the topic sentence.

Sentence 3 continues the idea begun in sentence 2; it too is relevant to the topic sentence.

Sentence 4 makes an interesting comparison between Rome and Delhi. However, it does not help convince the reader that Delhi has witnessed a great deal of Indian history. It should be removed.

Sentence 5 mentions the city's "rich past." Therefore, it belongs in the paragraph.

Sentence 6 tells us about a 600-year-old well, another sign of Delhi's "long history." It too belongs.

Sentence 7 makes no reference to the past; it is entirely about the present. It is irrelevant and should be removed.

Sentence 8 is relevant; it explains that a modern highway has been designed in such a way as to preserve a historical site—in this case, the grave of a Muslim saint.

Sentence 9 is irrelevant. It has nothing to do with Delhi, the paragraph's subject, or about the long history the city has witnessed. It doesn't belong.

Sentence 10 is relevant to the topic sentence. The royal tombs are more evidence that Delhi has seen much of the country's history.

2.2 Maintaining Coherence

A paragraph has **coherence** if the sentences it contains are connected clearly and logically in an order that is easy to follow. An essay is coherent if there are logical connections between paragraphs. The thought in one sentence or paragraph should lead directly—without a break—to the thought in the next sentence or paragraph.

You can create these logical connections in two ways: (1) using transitional devices or (2) referring to what you have mentioned earlier.

2.2a Use Transitional Devices

Transitional devices, also called **transitions** or **connectives**, are words, phrases, or even whole sentences that create clear relationships in and between sentences and paragraphs. They can be used for different purposes.

To Indicate Time

You would be indicating the passing of time if you wrote: "Arturo left before dawn. *In a while*, sunlight burst over the green hills." Other transitions indicating time include these:

After a while	In the meantime
Afterward	Meanwhile
At the time	Now
Back then	Soon
Before long	Suddenly
Before that time	Then
In a few minutes (hours, days, etc.)	While

coherence
The principle that writers observe in making certain that there are logical connections between the ideas and details in one sentence or paragraph and those in the next.

transition (connective)
Word or phrase used to make clear and direct connections between sentences and paragraphs, thereby maintaining coherence.

To Indicate Similarities or Differences

You can use transitions to show that things are similar or different: "Philip is following in his sister's footsteps. *Like her*, he is majoring in engineering. *Unlike her*, however, he hates math." Here are other examples:

Similarities	**Differences**	
In addition	Although	On the other hand
In the same way	However	Still
Likewise	In contrast	Though
Similarly	Nevertheless	Yet

To Introduce Examples, Repeat Information, or Emphasize a Point

You would be introducing an example if you wrote: "Mozart displayed his genius early. *For example*, he wrote his first symphony when only a boy." You would be repeating information if you wrote: "At age 21, he was appointed court composer in Vienna. This was *another* early indication of his genius." You would be emphasizing a point if you wrote: "The end of Mozart's career was hardly spectacular. *In fact*, he died in poverty at age 35." Here are some more examples:

Introducing Examples	**Repeating Information**	**Emphasizing a Point**
As an example	Again	As a matter of fact
For instance	Once again	Indeed
Specifically	Once more	More important
Such as		To be sure

To Add Information

If you wanted to add information by using a transition, you might write: "When Grant and Lee met at Appomattox Courthouse in 1865, they brought the Civil War to an end. *What's more*, they opened a new chapter in U.S. history." Here are other such transitions:

Also	Furthermore
And	In addition
As well	Likewise
Besides	Moreover
Further	Too

To Show Cause and Effect

If you wanted to explain that one action caused another, you might write: "During the early days of the Revolution, General Washington was unable to defend New York City. *Consequently*, he retreated to Pennsylvania." Other cause/effect transitions include these:

As a result	So that
Because	Then
Hence	Therefore
Since	Thus

To Show Condition

If you needed to explain that one action or fact depends on another, you might create a relationship based on condition by using words like *if*, as in this sentence: "Jones should arrive soon; *if* she doesn't, we will have to go on alone." Here are other transitions that show condition:

As long as	In case	Unless
As soon as	In order to	When
Even if	Provided that	Whenever

2.2b Refer to Material You Mentioned Earlier

You can refer to material mentioned earlier by (1) using pronouns that link details and ideas or (2) restating important words or ideas.

Using Linking Pronouns

Linking pronouns point directly to specific names or words you have mentioned earlier. Such pronouns direct the reader to nouns in earlier sentences or paragraphs; these nouns are called *antecedents*. Relying on pronouns to maintain coherence also helps you avoid repeating the same nouns over and over.

In this paragraph by Mother Teresa, the Roman Catholic nun who dedicated herself to the poor, linking pronouns appear in italics.

> Here in Calcutta, we have a number of non-Christians and Christians *who* work together in the house of the dying and other places. There are also *some who* offer *their* care to the lepers. One day an Australian man came and made a substantial donation. But as *he* did *this he* said, "*This* is something external. Now I want to give something of *myself*." *He* now comes regularly to the house of the dying to shave the sick men and to converse with *them. This* man gives not only *his* money but also *his* time. *He* could have spent it on *himself*, but what *he* wants is to give *himself*.

Here are other pronouns you might want to use to create coherence:

Personal pronouns refer to people and things:

I (me, my, mine)	We (us, our, ours)
You (your, yours)	They (them, their, theirs)
He, she, it (him, his; her, hers; its)	

Relative pronouns help describe nouns by connecting them with clauses, or groups of words with subjects and verbs:

That	Which
What	Whichever
Whatever	Who (whose, whom)

Demonstrative pronouns precede and stand for the nouns to which they refer: "*This* is my book" or "*These* are the best seats in the house." The most common demonstrative pronouns are *this*, *that*, *these*, and *those*.

Indefinite pronouns make general rather than specific reference. You can use them as long as you are sure the reader can identify their antecedents easily. For example:

linking pronoun
A pronoun that references a noun that has come before (antecedent), one of the ways to maintain coherence in and between paragraphs.

"*Both* Sylvia and Andy were in an accident. *Neither* was seriously injured." Here are other indefinite pronouns:

All	Either	None	Some
Another	Everybody	No one	Somebody
Anyone	Neither	Others	Someone
Each	Nobody	Several	

Restating Important Details and Ideas

The second way to refer to material that has come before is by repeating words and phrases or by using *synonyms*, or terms that have the same or nearly the same meanings. Read this paragraph by Shen C. Y. Fu, a curator of Chinese art for the Smithsonian Institute. Fu uses the word *calligraphy* four times, but he also uses synonyms for it.

> *Calligraphy* is generally defined as beautiful *writing*. In the West the *term* applies to *decorative writing* or may simply mean *good penmanship*. In China, however, *calligraphy* is regarded as the ultimate artistic expression, requiring years of training, discipline, and dedication before mastery can be achieved. Like music and dance, *calligraphy* is an art of performance. But unlike music and dance, each performance of *calligraphy* results in a tangible [material] creation that both captures the artist's technical skills at the time and provides concrete evidence of his or her immediate mood and innate [inborn] personality.

2.3 Developing Effective Paragraphs

A paragraph or essay is well developed if it contains all the details it needs to prove, support, or illustrate its central idea. You should include enough detail to make your point clearly and convincingly. You should also arrange details in a way that fits your purpose.

2.3a Determining How Much Information Is Enough

In some paragraphs, you will have to supply many concrete details, examples, and other information important to your topic sentence. In others, you might be able to make your point with only one or two supportive details. And in a few, one sentence is all you might need to achieve your purpose. (However, remember that using too many one-sentence paragraphs can make your writing choppy.)

Rely on your central idea to guide you. After all, it contains the main point you want to make, and it can help you determine the kind and amount of detail to include. Let's say you begin with this topic sentence: "Majoring in biology is a good foundation for several careers." You might discuss careers in medicine or dentistry. But since your thesis mentions several (three or more) reasons, you would also have to mention other careers, like those in teaching, environmental management, or forestry.

In short, think of a central idea as a promise you make to your reader to discuss your main point in as much detail as appropriate. If you start by saying that "There are three ways to reduce the risk of heart attack," then discuss all three, not just two, as fully as you can. If you want to prove that your brother is a slob, don't just describe the mess in his closet. Talk about the jumble of old food containers in his car; the torn, dirty jeans he wears; the pile of papers and books he often leaves on the kitchen table.

Deciding how much information to include isn't always easy. For now, remember that it is always better to provide too much information than not enough. Too much information might bore readers, but too little might leave them confused or unconvinced.

Just how much to include was what the writer of the following email had to decide as she wrote to her children about her trip to Australia. Her topic sentence is in italics:

> Dear Tess and Mike,
>
> Hope things are well with you. *I'm having a great time*. Yesterday we went "canyoning." And, believe it or not, your mother rappelled off the face of a sixty-foot cliff (I have pictures to prove it!) into the dark tunnel entrance of a beautiful canyon filled with what looked like prehistoric plants. All that was missing was the T Rex stalking around the corner! It scared the heck out me the first time, but after the third and last descent it was great and about the best time I've had! We had to climb out of the canyon along the ice cold stream bed and actually had to swim for about 50 ft. in frigid water. (Remember the water in the Oregon caves? It was almost as cold.) The stream had bright red lobster-like creatures (yabbies) and big snakes. (I learned that little bit of news after we were half way through and past the point of no return!) However, I've met a lot of nice people—including some from Eugene [the author's hometown]. I hope you enjoy your vacation. I miss you guys and wish you were here—maybe next year!
>
> See you soon, Mom (Dr. Marie Sorrentino)

Obviously the author could have used even more examples, but the ones included here convince us that she is surely "having a great time."

2.3b Choosing the Best Method of Development

You can develop an idea in many ways. The one you choose depends on your purpose—the effect you want your writing to have on your readers—and your main point. Your purpose might be to narrate, describe, explain, or persuade—or any combination of these.

Description and Narration

If your purpose is to introduce your readers to a person, place, or thing, you might describe it in concrete detail. The easiest way to gather such detail is by using the five senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. Chapter 6 covers description in detail. If you want to tell a story (that is, to explain what happened), you can narrate events as they occurred in time, discussing each event as it happened. Chapter 7 covers narration in detail.

Explanation and Argument

If your purpose is to explain an idea (exposition) or to argue an opinion (argumentation), you can use several methods. Among these are, of course, narration and description. But there are others:

- Conclusion/support: Use concrete details and facts to support or clarify an idea.
- Illustration: Develop an idea with examples.
- Definition: Explain a new, complicated, or sophisticated term or concept.
- Classification: Distinguish between types or classes.
- Comparison/contrast: Point out similarities or differences.
- Analogy: Compare an abstract idea to something that is concrete and familiar. The subjects being compared may seem unrelated at first.
- Cause/effect: Explain why something happens.
- Process analysis: Explain how something happens or how to do something.

Deciding which method of development to use depends upon your purpose. Let's say you want to persuade readers that the best way to clean up the rivers in your town is to fine polluters. The cause/effect method might work well. If you want to explain how a recent high school graduate should prepare for college, you might use process analysis. In some cases, you might want to use a variety of methods. For example, if your purpose is to convince people that hybrid vehicles are one answer to the energy crisis, you might first have to define *hybrid* (definition), contrast such cars to traditional models (comparison/contrast), and explain the effects on oil consumption that these cars might help us achieve (cause/effect). Chapters on process analysis, comparison/contrast, illustration, definition, argumentation, and persuasion appear later in this book.

2.3c Deciding How to Arrange the Ideas and Details in a Paragraph

Narration and Description

Often, the best way to organize narration or description is to recall details just as you saw or experienced them. In *narration*, you can arrange details just as they happened, in chronological (time) order. In the following narrative paragraph, John Steinbeck writes of a young man being chased by the police. Words that relate to narration are in italics.

> Pepé *stumbled* down the hill. His throat was almost closed with thirst. *At first* he *tried to run*, but immediately he *fell* and *rolled*. *After that* he *went* more carefully. The moon *was just disappearing* behind the mountains *when* he *came* to the bottom. He *crawled* into the heavy brush *feeling* with his fingers for water. There was no water in the bed of the stream, only damp earth. Pepé *laid* his gun *down* and *scooped up* a handful of mud and put it in his mouth, and *then* he *spluttered* and *scraped* the earth from his tongue with his finger, for the mud *drew* at his mouth like a poultice [plaster dressing]. He *dug* a hole in the stream bed with his fingers, *dug* a little basin to catch water; but *before* it was very deep his head *fell forward* on the damp ground and he *slept*. ("Flight")

When *describing*, you can put details into a spatial pattern, in any arrangement you think best. You might describe a place from east to west or left to right, an object from top to bottom, a person from head to toe. In the following paragraph, South African novelist Alan Paton uses sight and hearing to show us a view from a hilltop near the town of Ixopo. Note the italicized words, which direct us to various parts of the scene as the author describes them. Also note the place names that he includes; they are in bold.

> There is a lovely road that runs from **Ixopo** into the hills. These hills are grass-covered and rolling, and they are lovely beyond any singing of it. The road climbs seven miles into them, to **Carisbrooke**, and *from there*, if there is no mist, you look *down* on one of the fairest valleys of **Africa**. *About you* there is grass and bracken [large fern] and you may hear the forlorn [sad] crying of the titihoya, one of the birds of the veld [grassland]. *Below you* is the valley of the **Umzimkuhu** [river], on its journey from **Drakensberg** to the sea; and *beyond* and *behind* the river, great hill after great hill. (*Cry, the Beloved Country*)

Expository and Argumentative Writing

Again, several choices are available when trying your hand at exposition— writing that explains—and at argument—writing that proves a point or defends an opinion. Here are a few patterns of arrangement you can use.

From General to Specific

Starting with a general statement and supporting it with specific details or ideas is a common way to organize a paragraph. Each of the following paragraphs has a different purpose and uses a different method of development. However, all begin with a general statement (the topic sentence) that is followed and developed by specific information.

Comparison and Contrast:
Point Out Similarities and Differences

Grant and Lee were in complete contrast, representing two diametrically opposed elements in American life. Grant was the modern man emerging: behind him, ready to come on the stage, was the great age of steel and machinery, of crowded cities and a restless, burgeoning [blossoming] vitality. Lee might have ridden down from the old age of chivalry, lance in hand, silken banner fluttering over his head. Each man was the perfect champion of his cause, drawing both his strengths and his weaknesses from the people he led. (Bruce Catton, "Grant and Lee: A Study in Contrasts")

Classification: Distinguish between Types or Classes

Many religions have definite beliefs regarding hell. Some Christians see it as a fiery pit—much like what Dante described in the *Inferno*—where sinners suffer eternal damnation. Islamic texts describe it as a lake of fire spanned by a bridge over which souls must travel to get to heaven. Evil doers, who fall off the bridge, are cast into the lake, there to spend eternity. Buddhism and Hinduism describe many hells through which a soul must pass in order to be cleansed of any evil so as to be reincarnated and eventually to reach a state of perfection. For the ancient Greeks and Romans, Hades, or the underworld, was populated by the shades or shadows of people who had once walked the earth. Few ever escaped this miserable place. In Judaic theology, hell was once a real place, but for most modern Jews, hell is merely an idea discussed in the scriptures so as to help people understand evil. (Karen Staples, "Deep Down Under")

Analogy: Compare an Abstract Idea to Something That Is Concrete and That the Reader Knows

The American political system is like a gigantic Mexican Christmas fiesta. Each political party is a huge piñata—a papier-maché donkey, for example. The donkey is filled with full employment, low interest rates, affordable housing, comprehensive medical benefits, a balanced budget and other goodies. The American voter is blindfolded and given a stick. The voter then swings the stick wildly in every direction, trying to hit a political candidate on the head and knock some sense into the silly bastard. (P. J. O'Rourke, *Parliament of Whores*)

From Specific to General

Beginning with specific details and moving toward a general conclusion (the topic sentence) that relates to these details is another way to arrange information. Although the following paragraphs use different methods of development, all move from specific to general.

Illustration: Develop Ideas with Examples

The ancient Chinese thought they were celestial brooms wielded [operated] by the gods to sweep the heavens free of evil. In the West they were believed to presage [foretell] the fall of Jerusalem, the death of monarchs and such anomalies as

two-headed calves. The Norman Conquest of England was attributed to the 1066 flyby of Halley's, history's most famous comet, which has been linked to everything from Julius Caesar's assassination to the defeat of Attila the Hun. Told that Earth would pass through Halley's tail during its 1910 visit, many Americans panicked and bought gas masks and "comet pills." Alan Hale calls these waves of fear and mysticism "comet madness," and as co-discoverer of Comet Hale-Bopp, he's seen more than his share. (Leon Jaroff, "Crazy about Comets")

Comparison and Contrast: Point Out Similarities and Differences

In *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, Darwin made a systematic study of how animals look when they are afraid. In both humans and animals, he found, some or all of the following may occur: the eyes and mouth open, the eyes roll, the heart beats rapidly, hairs stand on end, muscles tremble, teeth chatter, and the sphincter loosens. The frightened creature may freeze in its place or cower. These rules hold true across a remarkable array of species. Somehow it is surprising to learn that when dolphins are terrified, their teeth chatter and the whites of their eyes show, or that a frightened gorilla's legs shake. Such familiar behavior in a wild animal is a reminder of our ultimate kinship. Melvin Konner has written, "We are—not metaphorically, but precisely, biologically—like the doe nibbling moist grass in the predawn misty light; chewing, nuzzling a dewy fawn, breathing the foggy air, feeling so much at peace; and suddenly, for no reason, looking about wildly." (Jeffrey M. Masson and Susan McCarthy, *When Elephants Weep*)

You learned earlier that various methods of development can be used together. The paragraph above uses both comparison and description.

From Question to Answer

A good way to begin a paragraph is with an interesting question. You can then devote the rest of your paragraph to details that develop an effective answer to that question.

Definition: Explain a Term or Concept

What does it mean to be poor in America? We can offer no single description of American poverty. But for many, perhaps most, it means homes with peeling paint, inadequate heating, uncertain plumbing. It means that only the very lucky among the children receive a decent education. It often means a home where some go to bed hungry and malnutrition is a frequent visitor. It means that the most elementary components of the good life in America—a vacation with kids, an evening out, a comfortable home—are but distant and unreachable dreams, more likely to be seen on the television screen than in the neighborhood. And for almost all the poor it means that life is a constant struggle to obtain the merest necessities of existence, those things most of us take for granted. We can do better. (Late U.S. Senator Paul Wellstone, "If Poverty Is the Question …")

From Problem to Solution

Organizing a paragraph by stating a problem and explaining how to solve it in the sentences that follow is much like asking a question and answering it. It is especially effective when you are explaining a process or analyzing causes and effects, but it can also be used with other methods of development, as in this student's paragraph.

Process Analysis: Explain How to Do Something

For most people, being overweight is not simply a matter of vanity. Excess weight is

a threat to health and longevity. You should start losing weight by getting a thorough physical examination, then begin following a regular exercise program prescribed by your doctor. Next, start counting calories; read labels or look up the caloric content of your favorite foods in diet guides available at most super markets and drugstores. Finally, stay away from high-fat animal products and rich desserts. Fill up on fruits, vegetables, natural grains and other high-fiber foods. (Diana Dempsey, "Tightening Our Belts")

By Order of Importance

Writers of fiction often place the most important bit of information last. If arranged in this pattern, an expository or argumentative paragraph can help you create emphasis by guiding your readers to the details and ideas you believe are most important.

Cause and Effect: Explain Why Something Happens

Despite high-profile death sentences like Scott Peterson's in California, public support for the death penalty is falling. The reasons lie partly in mounting evidence that innocent people have been condemned and—in some cases—put to death. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor said that "the system may well be allowing some innocent defendants to be executed." And a recent report by the nonprofit Death Penalty Information Center, *Innocence and the Crisis in the American Death Penalty*, describes how a shift in public perceptions of capital punishment has indeed been taking place. The report notes, for example, that death sentences have dropped by 50 percent over the past five years and that the numbers on death row have also fallen. ("Innocence and the Death Penalty," an editorial in *America: The National Catholic Weekly*)

Analogy: Compare an Abstract Idea to Something Concrete or Something the Reader Knows

"Call waiting" is … like an electronic 8-year-old who is simply incapable of shutting up while you are conversing with somebody else. The differences are that 1) an 8-year-old does not have the gall to charge you a monthly fee for this service; and 2) an 8-year-old can interrupt you only if he's in the same room, whereas with the incredible capabilities of "call waiting," your conversations can be interrupted by everybody in the entire world who has access to a telephone. It doesn't even have to be a person. A computer can interrupt you. In fact, through a combination of "call waiting" and "auto-dialing," it is now technically possible for your telephone conversations to be interrupted by a trained chicken. (Dave Barry, "We Interrupt This Column …")

Around a Pivot

The pivoting pattern begins with one idea and then changes direction—pivots—by presenting a different or contrasting idea. The topic sentence normally appears in the middle of the paragraph and announces the shift. Often, but not always, the topic sentence is introduced by a transition such as *but*, *however*, or *nonetheless*.

Illustration: Develop an Idea with Examples

I sometimes hear people who should know better saying that we would be healthier if we depended solely on herbal remedies and refused to take the synthetic drugs purveyed [supplied] by modern scientific medicine. Browse through a pharmacopoeia [list of medicines] and see how many of the medicines prescribed by doctors and sold by druggists are prepared from plants. Quinine for malaria, ephedrine for

asthma, cascara for constipation, digitalis for heart conditions, atropine for eye examinations and a great host of other valuable medicines in constant use came directly from folk herbal medicines, and are still prepared from wild plants or those recently brought under cultivation. (Euell Gibbons, *Stalking the Wild Asparagus*)

2.4 Visualizing Unity, Coherence, and Development

The following paragraphs are from Rudolph Chelminski's "The Curse of Count Dracula," an essay published in *Smithsonian* magazine. Notes in the margins and highlighting in the text explain how the author developed his ideas and maintained unity and coherence.

Unity/Coherence | Development

Establishes context/setting.

Over the past year and a half, a furious controversy surrounding a proposal [to build a Dracula theme park] has focused attention on **an area** so obscure that many people today still assume it's fictitious: Transylvania. **But** located high within the curling grip of the rugged Carpathian Mountains in central Romania, **Transylvania** is as real as real can be—rich in mineral resources, blessed with fertile soil and filled with picturesque scenery. **Although its** name means "land beyond the forest," **this historical province** of more than seven million souls was not known as a **particularly spooky place** until 1897, when the Irish writer and critic Bram Stoker published his sensational gothic novel *Dracula*. Casting about for a suitable **backdrop** for his **eerie yarn** about a nobleman who happened to be a **bloodsucking vampire**, Stoker hit upon **Transylvania**, which he described as "one of the wildest and least known **portions of Europe**."

Paragraph moves from general to specific.

Uses Transition.

States central idea.

Repeats "Transylvania."

Contrasts.

Uses transition/ linking pronoun.

Uses synonyms for "area."

Adds information to show place is "as real as real can be."

"Backdrop" connects to topic sentence.

Another mention of Transylvania's environment.

Refers to Dracula.

Defines by telling us about "eerie yarn."

Uses "yarn" as synonym for "novel."

Uses repetition to connect with previous paragraph.

Describes.

Dracula proved to be one of those rare tales that tap a vein [touch something] deep within the human psyche. The **book** has never been out of print, and **Transylvania**, through no fault of its own, is doomed to be forever associated with the

Cause/effect paragraph; moves from specific to general.

"Outrage" refers to idea in first paragraph.

sanguinary [bloody] count. **This** explains … the **outrage** that [the proposed theme park has] provoked.

"This" refers to earlier idea.

"Region" is synonym for "Transylvania."

It was Romania's own minister of tourism who came up with the idea of building a Dracula theme park in the heart of Transylvania. **For the region as a whole** … **it's** only the latest chapter in a long history of unwelcome intrusions from the outside.

Cause/effect paragraph arranged around a pivot.

"It's" refers to "idea" earlier in paragraph.

"It" refers to "long history" in previous paragraph.

It all began with the Romans, who arrived late in the first century to impose their harsh discipline and Latin tongue on the ancient Dacian people native to the **area. Next** came the Magyars from what is now Hungary, followed by various barbarians and Mongols, **then** the Turks of the Ottoman Empire. Back and forth **they** all went in true Balkan style, and the dust never settled.

"Area" refers to "Transylvania."

"Next" and "then" are transitions.

"They" refers to intruders alluded to above.

Conclusion/support paragraph arranged from specific to general.

2.5 Revising to Improve Unity, Coherence, and Development

Read the following sets of paragraphs, which are taken from the rough draft and the final draft of "Oma," an essay written by student Maria Scamacca. The final draft appears in its entirety in the reading selections for this chapter. Pay particular attention to the notes in the margins, as they explain how the essay was revised to improve unity, coherence, and development.

Maria Scamacca—Rough Draft

Paragraphs 1–3

Use transition to explain when this occurred.

Oma looked old. She wore a flowered house dress a starched white apron, and old, scuffed leather loafers. Oma was deaf in one ear from

Add detail about how old she looked.

Combine sentences for smoothness.

a neglected childhood ear infection. Symptoms of Bell's palsy were present. She shuffled her feet and held on to the furniture with swollen, scarred hands as she walked. She lived

Add detail about symptoms.

Add transitions and combine sentences for smoothness.

alone the house looked neat. There were small crumbs and stains on the tables, and particles of food were stuck to some of the dishes.

She led me to a back door to a garden that she boasted of planning and maintaining alone. It was like no garden I had ever seen, an acre of food and beauty. I sensed immediately that this paradise was the creation of a unique energy, courage, and beauty I came to see in Oma. She had married a widower with a young daughter; the couple eventually had three other children. They lived on a farm near the Rumanian border on which they grew and raised all their food, even the grapes from which they made their own wine.

Add details to prove this.

Paragraph not unified. This information does not relate to the garden. Put it elsewhere.

Ready to be picked in the garden were neat and orderly rows of potatoes, carrots, asparagus, onion, peppers, lettuce, lima beans, and string beans as well as many other vegetables I had never heard of. There were fruits and flowers everywhere.

Combine with material about garden in preceding paragraph.

Add transition.

Add examples of "fruits and flowers."

Paragraphs 7–10

Farm life was hard. Oma took it well. She cooked and kept house. The horses and other farm animals had to be looked after. She baked bread, made sausage, and salted the meats the family would eat year round.

Add transitions and combine sentences for smoothness.

Oma is fond of telling me how she force-fed geese by stuffing balls of bread down their long necks with her fingers. Her geese got so fat they couldn't fly, but they brought the best prices at the market, she often reminds me.

Combine with preceding paragraph.

Her family raised their own pigs. It came time to kill them. Her husband, Opa, asked his neighbor to slaughter the animals. Opa slaughtered the neighbor's pigs. "He felt bad, you know, killing his own pig," Oma said. Oma and Opa hired outside help, whom they paid with bread and salted meat. They did most of the work themselves, and they prospered.

Add transitions and combine sentences for smoothness.

Seems contradictory; use transition to make clearer.

Add transitions to bridge sentences and paragraphs.

The war came. The horses were stolen by Russian soldiers. The family was removed from their farm, and Oma found herself in a Russian concentration camp. The stories are confusing. I have heard bits and pieces repeatedly over the past six years and I have had to reconstruct them myself. Once in a while I ask Oma to clarify the order of events, but she doesn't get very far until she starts an entirely new story.

Provide a general statement as a topic sentence.

Strengthen coherence between sentences.

Explain what these stories relate to.

Maria Scamacca—Final Draft

Paragraphs 1–2

Adds transitions to explain when this meeting occurred.

When I first met Oma six years ago, she looked about eighty-years old, was a few pounds overweight for her medium frame, and was slightly hunched over. She wore a flowered house dress a starched white apron, and old, scuffed leather loafers. She was deaf in one ear from a neglected childhood ear infection, and half of her face drooped from Bell's palsy. She shuffled her feet and held on to the furniture with swollen, scarred hands as she walked. Despite Oma's disability and the fact that she lived alone, her house looked neat, but there were small crumbs and stains on the tables, and particles of food were stuck to some of the dishes, unnoticed by eyes weakened with age.

Includes details about how old she looked.

Combines sentences for smoothness.

Adds detail about symptom of Bell's palsy.

Adds transitions and combines sentences for smoothness

That's why I was shocked when she led me to a back door to a garden that she boasted of planting and maintaining alone. It was like no garden I had ever seen, an acre of food and beauty. Ready to be picked in the garden were neat and orderly rows of potatoes, carrots, asparagus, onion, peppers, lettuce, lima beans, and string beans. Her garden also boasted strawberries, blueberries, gooseberries, currant, peaches, watermelons, and many other fruits.

Adds transition to bridge paragraphs.

Rewrites entire paragraph to create unity.

Names fruits and flowers to prove that garden is an "acre of food and beauty."

And there were flowers everywhere: zinnias, day lilies, marigolds, irises, and petunias. I sensed immediately that this paradise was the creation of a unique energy, courage, and beauty I came to see in Oma.

Note that paragraph is arranged from specific to general. Topic sentence is last.

Paragraphs 7–9

Adds transitions and combines sentences for smoothness.

Farm life was hard. However, Oma took it well. In addition to cooking and housekeeping, she had to tend the horses and other farm animals, bake bread, make sausage, and salt the meats the family would eat year round. Oma is fond of telling me how she force-fed geese by stuffing balls of bread down their long necks with her fingers. Her geese got so fat they couldn't fly, but they brought the best prices at the market, she often reminds me.

Combines two paragraphs into one.

Adds transitions and combines sentences for smoothness.

Her family also raised their own pigs. But when it came time to slaughter the animals, her husband, Opa, asked his neighbor to slaughter the animals. In return Opa slaughtered the neighbor's pigs. "He felt bad, you know, killing his own pig," Oma said. At times, Oma and Opa hired outside help, whom they paid with bread and salted meat. However, they did most of the work themselves, and they prospered.

Adds transitions to clarify idea.

Adds transitions to bridge paragraphs and improve coherence between sentences.

Then the war came, and Oma's family suffered. First the horses were stolen by Russian soldiers. Then the family was removed from their farm, and Oma found herself in a Russian concentration camp. The stories from this period of her life are confusing. I have heard bits and pieces repeatedly over the past six years, and I have had to reconstruct them myself. Once in a while, I ask Oma to clarify the order of events, but she doesn't get very far until she starts an entirely new story.

Provides a general statement as a topic sentence.

Adds detail to explain when events in these stories took place.

2.6 Practicing Unity and Coherence

Read this paragraph—written by student Stacy Zolnowski for a first-year writing class—to learn more about paragraph unity. Then, using complete sentences, answer the questions that follow:

> [1] Throughout history, left-handedness has been deemed a nasty habit, a social infraction, a symptom of neurosis, or even a sign of mental retardation. [2] More recently, however, its social, educational, and psychological implications have acquired a more enlightened appreciation. [3] Nonetheless, left-handers continue to be discriminated against in an environment that conforms to the needs and prejudices of a right-handed society. ("The Left-Handed Minority")

1. Assume that the paragraph's topic sentence is sentence 3. What, in your own words, is the paragraph's central idea?

2. How do sentences 1 and 2 relate to the central idea?

3. What transitional devices does the writer use to maintain coherence?

4. In what other ways does the writer maintain coherence?

2.7 Practicing Methods of Development

Complete the paragraphs begun below. Include information based on your own observations and experiences. Use whatever method of development you think the topic sentence, which begins each paragraph, calls for.

1. My family provides me with a great deal of emotional support. For example,

2. There are three types of students at my college. The first

3. If you want to flunk a test, do the following:

4. Most people gain weight because

5. My sister (brother, best friend) is a ___[fill in the blank]___ type of person. I, on the other hand, am

2.8 Reading Selections

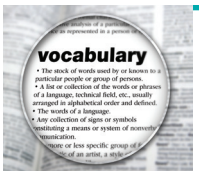
2.8a Oma: Portrait of a Heroine

Author Biography

Maria Scamacca graduated from college with a degree in nursing and is now a critical-care registered nurse at a large hospital. "Oma: Portrait of a Heroine" was written in a freshman composition class in response to an assignment that asked students to describe people they found inspiring. After reading Scamacca's essay, you may find it easy to understand why she chose to write about Oma.

Preparing to Read

1. Look for various kinds of connectives—transitions, linking pronouns, repeated words, and synonyms—that form bridges between this essay's paragraphs.
2. Look for various methods of developing paragraphs in this essay. In particular, try to identify one that uses narration, another that uses conclusion/support, and one that uses cause/effect.
3. Look for at least one paragraph that is arranged from specific to general, one that is arranged by order of importance, and one that is arranged around a pivot.
4. In German, *Oma* means "grandmother," and *Opa* means "grandfather."



Vocabulary

black market (noun) Underground commercial system in which banned or stolen goods are sold or traded.

compensation (noun) Payment.

displaced (verb) Forced to move.

equivalent (noun) The equal of.

humane (adjective) Kind, charitable, benevolent.

implores (verb) Begs.

palsy (noun) Paralysis.

provisions (noun) Necessities, supplies.

Oma: Portrait of a Heroine

Maria Scamacca

When I first met Oma six years ago, she looked about eighty years old, was a few pounds over-weight for her medium frame, and was slightly hunched over. She wore a flowered house dress, a starched white apron, and old, scuffed leather loafers. Oma was deaf in one ear from a neglected childhood ear infection, and half of her face drooped from Bell's palsy. She shuffled her feet and held on to the furniture with swollen, scarred hands as she walked. Despite Oma's disability and the fact that she lived alone, her house looked neat, but there were small crumbs and stains on the tables, and particles of food were stuck to some of the dishes, unnoticed by eyes weakened with age. 1

That's why I was shocked when she led me through the back door to a garden that she boasted of planting and maintaining alone. It was like no garden I had ever seen, an acre of food and beauty. Ready to be picked and eaten were neat and orderly rows of potatoes, carrots, asparagus, onions, peppers, lettuce, lima beans, and string beans. Her garden also boasted strawberries, blueberries, gooseberries, currants, peaches, watermelons, and many other fruits. And there were flowers everywhere: zinnias, day lilies, marigolds, irises, and petunias. I sensed immediately that this paradise was the creation of a unique energy, courage, and beauty I came to see in Oma. 2

Each year the impossible garden yields bushels of fruits and berries for the jams and jellies that Oma cooks and jars herself. She also cans fruit and vegetables, and she uses the fruit in the fillings of luscious pastries that, as I was to learn, have made her famous among friends, family, and neighbors. She still does all of her own cooking and had been known, until only recently, to throw holiday dinners for more than twenty people. 3

From the day I met Oma, I grew to admire her and have looked forward to visiting. Almost every Sunday after church, my husband's family and I gather around her dining room table for fresh coffee, homemade Prinz Regent Torte (a seven-layer cake), Schwarzwälder Kirschtorte (Black Forest cherry cake), warm cookies, and good talk. 4

Oma dominates the conversation, filling us with stories of her childhood and of World War II; she hardly stops to take a breath unless one of us asks a question or implores her to translate the frequent German or Hungarian phrases that pop out of her mouth. At such times, we play guessing games as Oma tries to explain in broken English a word or expression for which she knows no English equivalent. 5

Oma was born in Hungary. She was an only child—rare in the early days of this century—the only surviving baby of four pregnancies. Her mother died when Oma was in her teens, and she was left alone to keep house for her father. At eighteen, she married a widower with a young daughter; the couple eventually had three other children. They lived on a farm near the Romanian border on which they grew and raised all their food, even the grapes from which they made their own wine. 6

Farm life was hard. However, Oma took to it well. In addition to cooking and housekeeping, she had to tend to the horses and other farm animals, bake bread, make sausage, and salt the meats the family would eat year round. Oma is fond of telling me how she force-fed geese by stuffing balls of bread down their long necks with her fingers. Her geese got so fat they couldn't fly, but they brought the best prices at the market, she often reminds me. 6

Her family also raised their own pigs. But when it came time to slaughter the animals, her husband, Opa, asked his neighbor to do it. In return, Opa slaughtered the neighbor's pigs. "He felt bad, you know, killing his own pig," Oma said. At times, Oma and Opa hired outside help, whom they paid with bread and salted meat. However, they did most of the work themselves, and they prospered. 7

Then the war came. First her horses were stolen by Russian soldiers. Then the family was removed from their farm, and Oma found herself in a Russian concentration camp. The stories from this period of her life are confusing. I have heard bits and pieces of them repeatedly over the past six years, and I have had to reconstruct them myself. Once in a while I ask Oma to clarify the order of events, but she doesn't get very far until she starts an entirely new story. 8

After the war, the borders of countries were redrawn, and Oma's family was displaced with only a few hours' notice. Allowed to take only the clothes on their backs and whatever they could carry, they were put into a cattle car on a long freight train. The new government provided no compensation for their land and told them to leave all of their possessions behind. The only explanation was that their family had originally come from Germany and that they were required to leave Hungary and return to the land of their ancestors. This was not punishment, the authorities explained; it was "humane displacement." 9

Before they boarded the train, the family had to collect enough grain and other provisions to feed themselves during the long trip. But they saw little of their food; Oma thinks it was stolen and sold on the black market. "There were no bathrooms on the train," Oma explained. "If someone had to defecate or urinate, they were held by others out of the open doors over the side of the moving train. And they call that humane!" 10

When they arrived in Germany, Oma and her family were placed in a room in a run-down building that had holes in the walls and was full of rats. Her husband developed pneumonia. Sick for months, he almost lost the will to live and just lay in bed. When he finally recovered, they moved to America, but they had to leave their daughter behind because she had tuberculosis. Oma still weeps openly whenever she recalls being forced to abandon her child. Luckily, however, things turned out well for "Tante Vicki," who still lives in Germany and now has a family of her own. 11

In time, the family settled in Millstone, New Jersey, and began to build a new life in what was then a small rural community. In the early 1950s, however, Oma and Opa lost their oldest son in the Korean War, so when the other two boys married and moved out of the house, the two old people were on their own. 12

Several years ago, Opa died of lung cancer contracted from many years of working in an asbestos factory. Oma continues to receive a good pension and health benefits from his employer. They come in handy, for over the past few years she has been hospitalized several times. Last summer she got so sick she couldn't even plant her garden, so all of her grandchildren got together to plant it for her. That is the only request she has ever made of them. 13

It is hard to see a woman who was once so strong grow old and weak. At times, Oma feels quite useless, but she can still tell wonderful stories, and we listen avidly. I wonder if there will be a garden this year. 14

Read More on the Web

Look for more information about events related to this story in the following websites:

- Holocaust Museum and Learning Center: hmlc.org
- Library of Congress, Hungary: A Country Study: www.loc.gov/item/90006426

Questions for Discussion

1. What is Scamacca's thesis?
2. Where does the topic sentence in paragraph 2 appear? Identify the topic sentence in at least one other paragraph.
3. The central idea in paragraph 6 is implied. State it in your own words.
4. Pick out elements that the author uses to maintain coherence between paragraphs throughout this essay.
5. Reread paragraphs 9–12, and circle words and phrases the author uses to maintain coherence in them.
6. Identify a paragraph that uses the conclusion/support method, another that uses cause/effect, and still another that uses narration.
7. Identify one paragraph that is arranged by order of importance, one that moves from specific to general, and one that is organized around a pivot.

Thinking Critically

1. If you were able to meet Oma, what would you ask her about her life? As you reread this essay, write questions to Oma in the margins of the text when they occur to you. Then do some creative guessing. On the basis of what you know about Oma, answer your questions in a paragraph or two.
2. Reread Maria Cirilli's "Echoes" in chapter 1. In what ways is Cirilli's essay similar to Scamacca's? In what ways are these essays different?
3. Pretend that the government has decided to take almost everything you own and send you to another country. Would you resist? If so, how? If not, how would you prepare for this drastic change? Put your answer in two or three paragraphs that are unified and coherent. Make sure to include transitions between paragraphs as well.

Suggestions for Journal Entries

1. Do you have an older relative, friend, or neighbor whose attitude toward life you consider heroic? Choose your own definition of the word *heroic*. Freewrite for about five minutes about an event from this person's life that might show his or her heroism.
2. Interview the person mentioned above. Try to find out more about his or her attitude toward life. A good way to do this is to ask your subject to tell you about a difficult or depressing time and to explain how he or she dealt with it.
3. Brainstorm with one or two others who know the person mentioned above. Try to gather facts, direct quotations, and opinions that you could use in a paper that describes your subject as heroic.

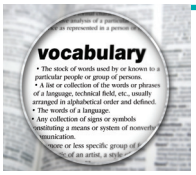
2.8b Study Calculus!

Author Biography

Secretary of education and chair of the National Endowment for the Humanities in the Ronald Reagan administration, ***William J. Bennett*** holds a doctorate in political philosophy from the University of Texas and a law degree from Harvard University. Under the first President George Bush, Bennett directed the war on drugs as head of the Office of National Drug Control Policy. The following essay, which reveals much about Bennett's thinking when he was secretary of education, is taken from *The De-Valuing of America: The Fight for Our Children*. Other popular books by Bennet include *Tried by Fire: The Story of Christianity's First Thousand Years; The Book of Virtues: A Treasury of Great Moral Stories; A Century Turns: New Hopes, New Fears; The True Saint Nicholas; and America: The Last Best Hope* (in two volumes).

Preparing to Read

1. The title provides a clue to the essay's thesis. Why didn't Bennett use "Math" instead of "Calculus"?
2. Look for the linking pronouns and other connective devices Bennett uses to create coherence in and between paragraphs.
3. This essay ends with several one-sentence paragraphs. Although not common in college writing, such paragraphs are useful here because they convey dialogue (conversation between people).
4. Some teachers in the high school in which this essay takes place claimed that teaching calculus to inner-city students was a "quixotic fantasy." Don Quixote, the title character of a seventeenth-century Spanish novel, was a dreamer who often found himself in trouble by attempting the impossible. Therefore, *quixotic* has come to mean "foolish" or "impractical."
5. Bennett uses a variety of methods to develop and arrange his paragraphs. Find at least one paragraph using narration, one using cause/effect, and one using illustration. Also find at least one paragraph that is arranged according to order of importance.



Vocabulary

calculus (noun) A branch of mathematics important to science, engineering, and other disciplines.

canard (noun) False belief, principle, rule, or story.

ethic (noun) Principle, belief in.

pedagogy (noun) Education, schooling, teaching.

skepticism (noun) Doubt, distrust, disbelief.

Study Calculus!

William J. Bennett

Principal Henry Gradillas at Garfield High School in East Los Angeles let Jaime Escalante teach. And did the students ever learn. Escalante, a Bolivian immigrant, arrived at the school in 1974 to teach math. Now perhaps America's most famous teacher, he wanted to return something to the country that had taken him in and given him opportunity. 1

His plan to teach calculus to disadvantaged Hispanic youngsters was greeted with skepticism and laughter by his colleagues, and he encountered resistance from his students. But he told me that the greatest resistance came not from the students but from others in the profession, other teachers and counselors who urged him not to push so hard. They told him that his plan to teach calculus was a quixotic fantasy. "If you try," some told him, "the students will fail. They can't do it. They will be embarrassed, and their self-esteem will suffer. What you want to do—teach calculus—will be dangerous." 2

Escalante told me what he told his critics: "If you are fifteen or sixteen years old, in the barrio of East Los Angeles, there are a lot of things that are dangerous. But calculus isn't one of them." His principal, Henry Gradillas, encouraged him to proceed. 3

Escalante persisted, and in 1982 eighteen of his students took the Advanced Placement (AP) calculus test. By 1991, 160 students from Garfield took the test. According to Jay Mathews, author of *Escalante: The Best Teacher in America*, Escalante has given Garfield the most successful inner-city mathematics program in the United States. In recent years only four or five secondary schools in the country have prepared more students for the AP calculus examination (tests so difficult that fewer than 2 percent of American students even attempt them). Because of Escalante's efforts, about a fourth of all the Mexican-American students in the country who pass AP calculus come from Garfield. 4

Escalante's methods and approach (celebrated in the movie *Stand and Deliver*) are in marked contrast to the theory and practice of pedagogy as taught in most American schools of education. He consistently violates the canard that a teacher shouldn't "impose his values on students." Indeed, he seeks every opportunity to impose his ethic of achievement, success, and hard work on them. His reason, as expressed to me, is simple: "My values are better than theirs." His way of doing this is direct, manly, no nonsense. In the early days of his career at Garfield, he asked a student whether he wanted to study calculus. "No," said the student, "I want to see my girlfriend." 5

"Well, then," responded Escalante, "go over to woodworking class on your way out." 6

"Why," the student asked. 7

"So you can learn how to make shoeshine boxes so you can have a career shining the shoes for Anglos as they pass through Los Angeles International Airport on their business trips." 8

"I don't want to shine Anglos' shoes," protested the student. 9

"Then study calculus," was Escalante's reply. 10

Read More on the Web

Visit the following websites to find more information related to Escalante and calculus:

- Bolivia Web Hall of Fame (contains information on Escalante): www.boliviaweb.com/hallfame
- The Math Forum at Drexel University: http://bvtlab.com/76hA7
- Calculus.org: Resources for the Calculus Student: calculus.org
- Eric Schechter, "Why Study Calculus: A Brief History of Math": math.vanderbilt.edu/schectex/courses/whystudy.html

Questions for Discussion

1. What is the essay's thesis?
2. Explain how Bennett uses linking pronouns to maintain coherence in paragraph 2.
3. Find two transitional words or phrases in paragraph 1. Then, find three more in the rest of the essay.
4. What use does Bennett make of repetition to maintain coherence between paragraphs?
5. Which paragraph uses narration? Which uses illustration? Which uses the cause/effect method?
6. Which paragraph is arranged by order of importance?
7. Why didn't Bennett combine paragraphs 6–10 into one paragraph?

Thinking Critically

1. Do you agree with the way in which Escalante challenged his students? Think of another way that you might motivate students to study a difficult subject if you were a teacher. Explain this in a paragraph or two.
2. What kinds of values is Escalante talking about in paragraph 5? Should teachers be allowed to impose other values—social, political, or moral, for example—on students? List the advantages and disadvantages of allowing them to do so.
3. Why do you think some teachers had a low opinion of the abilities of students whom Escalante helped? What connection, if any, is there between a teacher's attitude and student success?

Suggestions for Journal Entries

1. Use clustering or listing to come up with several characteristics or qualities of a good teacher. You might begin by thinking about the best teacher or teachers you have had. Consider those qualities that caused you to admire them or that made them effective instructors. For example you might write:

   - Ms. Jones challenged students.
   - Mr. Mendoza graded homework and tests carefully.
   - Dr. Patel inspired confidence in students.
   - Ms. Fernandez made geometry interesting and easy to understand.

   You don't need to limit yourself to teachers you have had in school. Family members, employers, neighbors, coaches, and members of the clergy often teach us a lot as well.
2. Freewrite for about ten minutes to gather information about the teacher who has influenced you most. Again, don't limit yourself to teachers you have had in school.

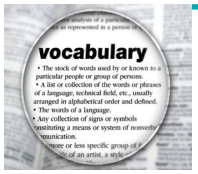
2.8c Burger Queen

Author Biography

Erin Sharp was a sophomore at Cornell University when she wrote this essay. It first appeared in *The American Enterprise* magazine.

Preparing to Read

1. The information in this essay comes from Sharp's employment at a McDonald's restaurant. Before you begin reading, think about the variety of people who work and eat at a fast-food restaurant.
2. What is Sharp hinting at in the title?
3. If you were writing about your place of employment, what subjects and details would you discuss to help your readers understand what it means to work there?
4. You might find unfamiliar words in this essay that are not listed in the vocabulary. Try to get at their meanings by using context clues. For example, the author says that some customers "bickered" with her "over a measly ten-cent increase in the price of an Egg McMuffin." What might *bickered* and *measly* mean in this sentence?



Vocabulary

coveted (adjective) Desired.

forfeited (verb) Gave up.

freelance (adjective) Self-employed, temporary, hired for a one-time job.

hoard (verb) Save, hide away.

quipped (verb) Answered in a joking or sarcastic way.

pathologist (noun) Doctor who diagnoses physical changes caused by disease.

perspective (noun) Point of view

reimbursement (noun) Refund.

scam (verb) To cheat.

stereotypes (noun) Labels, types.

tackiness (noun) Bad taste.

tempered (verb) Moderated, lessened, toned down.

Burger Queen

Erin Sharp

When I announced the change of my major from biology with pre-med aspirations to English, my advisor simply raised an eyebrow and asked if I planned to work at McDonald's for the rest of my life. "Actually," I quipped, "I've been working at McDonald's for two and a half years, and it's sort of fun." His surprise was evident, a typical reaction to my shocking side occupation. I spoke the truth, though; I have held a dozen jobs ranging from camp counselor to pathologist's assistant (now including, I suppose, freelance journalism), yet none have been as entertaining as my stints at the Golden Arches. 1

My double life as Erin Sharp, Ivy League McDonald's Worker, has revealed twin stereotypes to me. People told I go to Cornell view me as bright and ambitious. Put me behind the counter at McDonald's, however, and I am usually assumed to be a high school dropout with fifteen unseen piercings. 2

When I was six years old, McDonald's was my favorite place to eat, and kids have not changed much in the last dozen years. I am often asked whether I have actually met "The Ronald" McDonald, and have been given letters to pass along to him, like one of Santa Claus's elves. Among kids, McDonald's workers rank right up there with policemen and firefighters. 3

Yet this perspective rarely survives adolescence. Respect for the workers of the fast food industry is lost among most adults, with absurd results. Many adults seem to assume that McWorkers are stupid, attempting to scam us out of free food and coupons. The depths of tackiness to which some human beings will stoop in order to save a few pennies at a drive-thru window are worthy of "Candid Camera." Grown men driving Lincoln Town Cars have bickered with me for five minutes over a measly ten-cent increase in the price of an Egg McMuffin. Perhaps they imagine that I overcharge each patron and hoard misbegotten dimes in a piggy bank behind the shake machine? 4

Once, my store even received a phone call at noon from a furious woman demanding reimbursement for the breakfast she had bought that morning via drive-thru; apparently, it was cold when she arrived at work over an hour later. Our most famous TIC (Truculent, Irate Customer) lost her temper when we could not (in her eyes, would not) provide the grilled chicken sandwich she craved in the middle of breakfast rush hour. An entirely new traffic pattern was created in drive-thru for the 25 minutes spent in fruitless argument and accommodation attempts by our managers as the grill team thawed frozen meat, heated a grill to cook on and produced the coveted sandwich for her. When at last presented with it, she lofted the bag triumphantly and accused us of withholding it from her for the entire time, then zoomed off with the last words: "I'm never coming back here again!" The effectiveness of this condemnation was tempered by her license plate, which proclaimed her to be from Delaware—over an hour away. 5

A small portion of our patrons are so confused that there is really nothing to do but wait for them to leave. My most prominent example of this sort of "guest" is the infamous Snack Attack Lady, who ordered hotcakes and sausage during our 90-second-guaranteed-service hour and then ate her breakfast right outside the drive-thru window. Heedless of the frenzied honking behind her, she carefully opened the platter, poured a puddle of syrup, rolled the sausage in a hotcake and dipped both daintily into the syrup. My co-workers and I watched in speechless amazement. When asked what she was doing, she rolled her eyes and snapped, "What does it look like I'm doing? I'm eating my breakfast!" That woman has permanently forfeited all rights to complain about slow drive-thru service. 6

And yet, there are some great customers out there, like the Morning Crew: the seven retired men and one active police officer who wait for our doors to open every day so that they can enjoy their dawn coffee and conversation. If I missed a day of work, I would return to inquiries about my health and concern that all was well. The greatest customers ever to grace our store were two deliverymen who drove up to the window one spring afternoon two years ago with armfuls of roses for my co-worker and me. They were moving their business out of state, they explained, and wanted to thank us for making their afternoons brighter. 7

Well, boys, if you are reading this article, thank you again for that fabulous surprise. I still have the ribbon which bound them. 8

Read More on the Web

To learn more about the trials and tribulations of fast-food workers, go to the following:

- HRZone.com article on fast-food restaurant workers: www.hrzone.com/lead/change/hrd-insight-mcdonalds-head-of-people-on-staff-engagement
- US Department of Labor Occupational Outlook Handbook: www.bls.gov/ooh/
- Forbes' site 7 Steps for Dealing with Angry Customers: http://bvtlab.com/uc6Pp

Questions for Discussion

1. What is Sharp's central idea?
2. Why does Sharp tell us that her college advisor was surprised when she told him she worked at McDonald's? How does doing so help introduce her central idea?
3. What is the topic sentence in paragraph 4? How does that sentence also serve as the topic sentence in paragraph 5?
4. Explain the ways in which Sharp maintains coherence between paragraphs 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8.
5. In which paragraphs does Sharp use illustration?
6. What method of development is seen in paragraph 1?
7. Identify the patterns of organization in paragraphs 1 through 7.

Thinking Critically

1. In Preparing to Read, you were asked to use context clues to determine the meaning of some of Sharp's vocabulary. What does she mean by "pre-med," "aspirations," and "stints" in paragraph 1; "truculent," "irate", "fruitless," and "lofted" in paragraph 5; and "heedless" and "frenzied" in paragraph 6?
2. What are the Ivy League, "Candid Camera," and McWorkers? You might find more about the first two terms on the Internet or in your college library, but you might have to figure out the third term on your own.
3. What is the pun (play on words) Sharp uses in the title?

Suggestions for Journal Entries

1. Use focused freewriting, listing, or clustering to gather information that describes customers or employees or both at a place at which you work or have worked. Focus on people with the most interesting or distinctive personalities.
2. Sharp's essay is more than a listing of complaints about annoying customers. It is a statement—and a positive one at that—about her role and image as a worker in a fast-food restaurant. Use clustering or any other prewriting method to explain your feelings—be they positive, negative, or mixed—about a job you hold or once held.

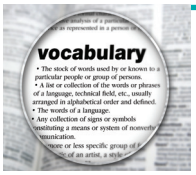
2.8d Zip Out

Introduction

To end the war with Japan, the United States dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. Few people, other than nuclear scientists, knew much about atomic energy at the time, for the information about this subject was a military secret. However, in its December 9, 1946, issue, a little over a year since the war's end, *Time* magazine published this article, which details the first nuclear chain reaction.

Preparing to Read

1. This essay explains a process, the creation of a chain reaction. Look for passage-of-time transitions used to mark various stages in the process.
2. Process analysis through narration is the chief method used in this essay. However, look for places in which description and cause/effect are used.
3. Enrico Fermi, an Italian-born physicist, was in charge of this experiment. Use the Internet to learn more about Fermi and the other physicists mentioned in the essay. Then, look up more information about the nature of a nuclear chain reaction.



Vocabulary

chronology (noun) Arrangement of events in time.

douse (verb) Put out, extinguish.

mutinous (adjective) Rebellious, defiant.

self-sustaining (adjective) Continuing on its own.

shrouded (verb) Covered.

spontaneously (adverb) Naturally, by itself.

tethered (verb) Tied , connected to.

Zip Out

From Time *Magazine*

By U.S. Army chronology, the Atomic Age was born on December 2, 1942, a good thirty-two months before Hiroshima. Now the Army, beaming proudly, has released a detailed description of its birth. 1

In a squash court under the stands of the University of Chicago's football stadium, a curious structure had grown, watched by the hopeful, nervous eyes of some of the world's best physicists. It was built of dead-black graphite bricks with small cubes of uranium or uranium oxide imbedded in some of their corners.

This was the world's first uranium pile. Within it, if all went well, would rage the first nuclear chain reaction. Physicist Enrico Fermi, Italian-born Nobel Prize-winner, was sure that all would go well. He had figured every smallest detail, advancing through theory and mathematics far into the unknown. 2

On December 2, a small group of physicists gathered in the squash court for the final test. Partly shrouded in balloon cloth, the pile squatted black and menacing. Within it, all knew or hoped, a monstrous giant sat chained. Control rods plated with cadmium (which readily absorbs neutrons) had been thrust into holes in the graphite. When the control rods were removed, Fermi had calculated, the chain reaction would start spontaneously, and the giant would be free. 3

One of the rods was automatic, controlled by a motor which could shoot it back into the pile when instruments warned that neutrons were getting too thick. Another (called "Zip") was attached to a heavy weight by a rope running over a pulley. When in the "withdrawn" position, it was tethered by another rope; a man with an ax stood ready to cut it free, to send it zipping into the pile if anything went wrong. The last rod, marked in feet and inches, was to be worked by hand. 4

But all the physicists knew that they were in dangerous, unknown territory. So above the pile was stationed a "liquid-control squad" to douse mutinous neutrons with a cadmium-salt solution. 5

Fermi ran the test. At 9:45 he gave the order. A whining motor withdrew the automatic control rod. The Geiger counters on the instrument panel clicked a little faster; a pen drew a slightly higher curve on a slip of paper. 6

"Zip out!" ordered Fermi a few minutes later. Physicist Walter H. Zinn pulled out the Zip rod and tied it carefully. The counters clicked still faster. The graph pen moved up again. 7

"Pull it thirteen feet, George," commanded Fermi. Physicist George Weil drew the final control rod partway out of the pile. Faster clicked the counters. He drew it out another foot; then another six inches. 8

At 11:35 the counters were clicking furiously. The physicists watched fascinated as the curve climbed steadily upward. Then, Wham! With a clang, the automatic control rod (which had been set for too low a neutron count) slammed back into the pile. "I'm hungry," said Fermi calmly. "Let's go to lunch." The other rods were inserted; the pile quieted down. 9

At two o'clock the physicists gathered again in the squash court. One by one, on Fermi's orders, the control rods were withdrawn; the counters clicked faster. The pile was alive with neutrons now; the giant was straining his bonds. But it was not quite a chain reaction. The neutron curve moved up, leveled off. 10

At 3:45 Fermi ordered the control rod out another foot. "This is going to do it," he said. "The curve … will not level off." Now the counters were roaring not clicking; the graph curve was climbing upward. Fermi studied the instruments, grinned broadly: "The reaction is self-sustaining." 11

For twenty-eight minutes, the physicists watched as the curve climbed sharply upward. The giant was flexing its muscles. 12

"O.K." said Fermi. "Zip in." The Zip rod shot into the pile. The counters slowed their clicking. The graph curve sagged. But the world outside the squash court would not be the same again. 13

Read More on the Web

Search the following websites for more information related to this article:

- Enrico Fermi at *Biography.com*: http://bvtlab.com/5bE6N
- Kennedy Hickman, "World War II: The Manhattan Project": http://bvtlab.com/a8U7Y
- Nuclear fission at *Atomicarchive.com*: www.atomicarchive.com/Fission/Fission1.shtml

Questions for Discussion

1. Write a formal thesis statement for this essay in your own words.
2. Choose three or four paragraphs from the article, and explain how the author maintains coherence in those paragraphs.
3. Is paragraph 5 unified? Write what might serve as a topic sentence for that paragraph.
4. Explain the way in which coherence is maintained between paragraphs 2 and 13.
5. Find a place where description is used here.
6. Find a place where the cause/effect method is used.
7. What does the author mean in the last paragraph by saying, "the world outside the squash court would not be the same again"?

Thinking Critically

1. Pretend you are interviewing Fermi or another physicist who worked on this project. Make a list of questions you might ask this individual. You might ask, for example, whether that person knew that having produced a nuclear chain reaction would lead to the creation of an atomic bomb. You might also ask about peaceful uses of nuclear energy.
2. Think of another major scientific breakthrough in the recent past—for example, the personal computer, the GPS mapping system, the cell phone, or even the microwave. How has this invention made your life different from what it might have been had this device not been invented?

Suggestions for Journal Entries

1. Read "Zip Out" again. Then make an outline of the major steps that Fermi and the other scientists took to create a self-sustaining nuclear reaction.
2. Think of a process you once had to go through to reach a desired goal. Perhaps you wanted to raise your grades in math, become a better basketball player, lose weight, or learn how to garden or to fish. Perhaps you had to master a certain skill or learn a new computer program at work. Whatever the process might be, use listing to record major steps in the process. You may be able to use this list as an outline for a longer writing process.

2.9 Suggestions for Sustained Writing

1. Review the journal entry(ies) you made after reading Maria Scamacca's "Oma: Portrait of a Heroine." Use this information in a short essay that explains why a certain person you know is heroic. Provide at least three reasons to support that idea.

   Paragraph 1: Captures the readers' interest and states the thesis. Your thesis statement might resemble this: "My neighbor Mrs. Rozowski faces life with a smile even though she has experienced suffering and heartache." In the rest of this paragraph you might explain that Mrs. Rozowski suffers from arthritis, lives on a very small pension, and has just lost her husband of fifty years.

   Paragraph 2: Mentions Mrs. Rozowski's arthritis and its painful symptoms. But it also discusses the many things she does to keep active despite that pain. This paragraph might use illustration—giving examples—as its major method of development. It might be arranged from general to specific, by order of importance, or through questions/answer.

   Paragraph 3: Explains that, living on a small pension, Mrs. Rozowski has learned many ways to save money such as growing much of her own food, making her own clothes, and even doing simple house repairs. This paragraph might employ the cause/effect method as well as examples. It might be arranged from problem to solution or around a pivot.

   Paragraph 4: Discusses her devotion to her husband and her willingness to care for him during his battle with Alzheimer's disease. This paragraph might use process analysis, narration, description,

or a combination of all three. It might be arranged by order of importance or from specific to general.

Paragraph 5: Restates your admiration for your subject and explains what you have learned about facing life's problems from this woman. It also expresses your hope that you will have the same courage when you are elderly.

As you revise the first draft of your essay, make sure that you have included enough detail to make every paragraph convincing. If you haven't, do some more information gathering as explained in Getting Started. Also, check to see that your paragraphs are both unified and coherent and that you have maintained coherence between paragraphs.

2. Review the notes you made for the first journal entry following Bennett's "Study Calculus!" If you have not responded to that journal prompt yet, do so now. Use this information to write the thesis statement for an essay that might be entitled "The Ideal Teacher." In your thesis, mention at least three qualities that make for excellent teaching. Here's how such a thesis might read:

> The best teachers challenge their students, inspire confidence in them, and work harder than anyone else in class.

Place this thesis statement in your first paragraph, your introduction. Now use each of the three or four characteristics of good teaching in your thesis as the basis for the topic sentences of your essay's body paragraphs. Here's how each of the topic sentences for paragraphs 2, 3, and 4 of your essay might read:

Paragraph 2: The best teachers challenge their students.

Paragraph 3: Inspiring confidence in students is another sign of good teaching.

Paragraph 4: Good teachers work harder than their students.

Develop each of these body paragraphs with examples relating to a teacher or teachers you have known. You need not discuss the same teacher in each paragraph. If you completed the second journal suggestion after Bennett's essay, you might have already gathered some information you can use.

After writing several drafts of your paper, check that you have maintained coherence in and between paragraphs by using techniques explained in this chapter. Finally, remember that the best essays are those that are reviewed and edited carefully.

3. Read the journal notes you made after reading Sharp's "Burger Queen." Use this material in an essay that explains your general impression or opinion of a place in which you have worked or are now working. Your opinion might be positive, negative, or mixed, but make sure to state it clearly in a thesis statement, which should appear in your first paragraph.

To practice the writing of several different paragraph types, try to include one of each of the following:

- A paragraph defining the type of business conducted or work performed
- A paragraph providing examples of your usual duties or tasks

- A paragraph describing the physical environment of the workplace—the store, factory, office building, or other setting (If it's an outdoor job, describe the kinds of locations in which you have worked.)
- A paragraph that contrasts this job with another you have held
- A paragraph that narrates incidents with customers, employees, and/or bosses to explain the social atmosphere of your workplace.

You might want to begin by making an outline of your paper based on the model provided above. After writing a first draft, make sure that each paragraph supports and relates directly to your thesis. Remember that your thesis states your opinion, so provide enough detail to support it, and make sure you are not including extraneous information. As you revise again, check to see that you have maintained coherence in and between paragraphs.

4. After reading "Zip Out," you might have responded to the Suggestion for Journal Entry that asked you to list various steps in a process by which you achieved a desired goal. The goal might be to lose weight, master an important athletic or academic skill, or learn a new procedure at work. Read that list now and add to it if you think you left out any important step or detail.

   Next, do some freewriting to gather details that will explain what actions each of those steps required. Then, write a short introductory paragraph with a thesis that explains why reaching that desired goal was so important to you. Next, write a concluding paragraph that explains what you learned after completing the process.

   That will be your first draft. Now, revise your paper several times. Add detail, remove unimportant or irrelevant information, and reorganize your steps if necessary. Like the author of "Zip Out," don't be afraid to include details that show how difficult or stressful the process was.

   You will also want to make sure that your essay is unified and that the detail in each paragraph relates directly to that paragraph's topic sentence. Then, check for coherence. Have you provided enough transitions and other connective elements within paragraphs to link ideas in an unbroken chain? Have you included transitions between paragraphs? Finally, have you included enough detail to make each step in the process clear?

   Now, edit and proofread. Eliminate wordiness and repetition and correct grammar, sentence structure, word usage, and punctuation. Finally, proofread your final version to remove spelling and typographical errors.

5. Are you a creature of habit? If so, write an essay in which you explain why you do three or four things routinely. You might begin by explaining why you are always or seldom on time for work, for a date, or for class. You might go on to discuss why you study in the same place every night; why you wear the same color of clothes every day; why you use the same route to school or work; or why you frequent the same club, bar, or restaurant.

   Of course, this assignment lends itself to the cause/effect method. But you might also have a chance to use narration, description, and process analysis, among other methods of development.

   You can begin this essay by using a startling remark such as: "I have never taken a shower!" Or you might say that you spend five full hours a day on the telephone. These kinds of statements will surely draw your readers into your essay. Of course, later in the paragraph, you can explain that you take a bath every day or that you work as a receptionist in a busy medical practice. After

discussing each of your habits fully in the body paragraphs, you can conclude the essay by explaining which of the habits you discussed will continue and which might be broken.

As you revise drafts of your paper, add or remove detail as necessary, and insert details that will make your writing easier to follow. In addition, use what you have learned in this chapter to improve coherence in and between paragraphs.

Acknowledgments

Barry, Dave. "We Interrupt This Column." *Miami Herald*, 7 May 1989. Copyright © Tribune Media Services.

Bennett, William J. *Devaluing of America: The Fight of Our Culture and Our Children.* Simon & Schuster, 1992. Copyright © 1992 William J. Bennett. Reprinted with the permission of Simon & Schuster Inc. All rights reserved.

Catton, Bruce. "Grant and Lee: A Study in Contrasts." *The American Story.* U.S. Capitol Historical Society, 1958.

Chelminski, Rudolph. "The Curse of Count Dracula." *Smithsonian Magazine*, Apr. 2003. Reprinted with permission from the author.

Fu, Shen C. Y. "A Closer Look at Chinese Calligraphy." Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution.

Gibbons, Euell. *Stalking the Wild Asparagus*. Alan C. Hood & Company, 1962.

"Innocence and the Death Penalty" [Editorial]. America: *The National Catholic Weekly* 92 (7 Feb. 2005). Copyright © 2005, America Magazine.

Jaroff, Leon. "Crazy about Comets." *Time*, 17 Mar. 1997.

Mackworth-Praed, Ben. *The Book of Kells*. Ebury Press, 2008.

Masson, Jeffery M., and Susan McCarthy. *When Elephants Weep*. Delta, 1996.

Neff, Lavonne, compiler. "A Life for God: The Mother Teresa Treasury." HarperCollins International Division, 1996.

O'Rourke, P. J. *Parliament of Whores*. Atlantic Monthly Press, 1991.

Paton, Alan. *Cry*, The Beloved Country. Simon and Schuster, 2003. Copyright © Alan Paton, 1986; Copyright © Simon and Schuster, 2003.

"Science: Zip Out " from *TIME*, 9 Dec. 1946 © 1946. Time Inc. Used under license. *TIME* and Time Inc. are not affiliated with, and do not endorse products or services of, Licensee.

Sharp, Erin. "Burger Queen." *The American Enterprise*, 1 May 1999. Copyright © 1999 The American Enterprise Institute. Reprinted with permission of The American Enterprise Institute.

Steinbeck, John. "The Long Valley." Penguin Classics, 1995.

Wellstone, Paul. "If Poverty Is the Question …" *The Nation*, 1 Apr. 1999.