

WELCOME TO WRITING
WORKSHOP #3 FOR UVIC
NURSING 325 -
MARCH 23, 5-7 P.M. PST

According to Peter Elbow, trying to write a good first draft is like “trying to skip adolescence.”

Agenda

- Check in question: Can you share a writing tip?
- Paragraphing and topic sentences
- Four common grammar/spelling errors and how to fix them
- Fuzzy writing
- Group revision of an introductory paragraph
- Your questions

Writing strong paragraphs

- What is a paragraph?

Traditionally, paragraphs are viewed as “distinct units of thought” or “a set of sentences that all deal with a common topic.” The indent signals a shift to the reader.

- Fine - but how do you write paragraphs?

- Tip: Don't try to “paragraph” too much in your first draft.

- Shaping paragraphs comes at the re-writing stage (second or subsequent drafts).

Writing paragraphs, cont'd

- Begin with content: what do you want to say? Draft your content and then go back and discover form by putting your material into chunks or paragraphs.
- Working from an outline can also help.
- Each paragraph will *introduce an idea* or *expand an idea* set out in a previous paragraph.
- Remember- readers expect to know, at the beginning of a paragraph, what that paragraph will be about.
- “From the reader’s point of view, paragraphs make promises” (Lindemann, 2001, p. 150).

Writing paragraphs: the topic sentence

- A topic sentence is usually—but not always—the first sentence of the paragraph, signalling the topic.
- Let's look at a well constructed paragraph about plagiarism with a strong topic sentence.

A good paragraph

Despite its fairly straightforward dictionary definition, plagiarism is a complex concept. Words or ideas are plagiarized if they have been copied from one source and presented as original from another source. Martin (2004) identifies four distinct types of plagiarism: ideas, sources, authorship, and words. Plagiarism of ideas occurs when one fails to acknowledge the origin of a thought, idea or invention and claims the idea as one's own. Plagiarism of sources occurs when one does not attribute the correct sources for a piece of writing or an argument. Plagiarism of authorship occurs when one claims authorship of an entire work without actually fulfilling the criteria for authorship. Finally, verbatim or word-for-word plagiarism occurs when one copies or uses portions of text written by another without clearly demonstrating appropriate quotation and citation standards.

This is the opening paragraph of Charon A. Pierson's "Detecting and Preventing Plagiarism in Publishing" Volume 20, Issue 1, March 2010 *Nurse Author and Editor*.

Writing paragraphs, cont'd

- “Writers use paragraphs to bring ideas and evidence together” (Lindemann, 2001, p. 149).
- As you can see from the paragraph example, Pierson started with a broad idea about plagiarism—explaining that plagiarism is a complex concept in spite of the simple dictionary definition.
- Then, Pierson brings evidence to bear on this topic idea. She provides a citation from Martin to show that there are four different types of plagiarism (evidence for the complexity!). Pierson then paraphrases those four types of plagiarism, closing the paragraph with the fourth and final type.

Writing paragraphs, cont'd

- Let's compare a not-so-good paragraph (modified from <http://kimberlychapman.com/essay/badwriting.html>):
- Another of Smith's ideas was the method of differentiation. The university re-opened after the plague in 1667. Smith was elected to a minor fellowship, and awarded a major fellowship after he received his Master's Degree (Bogus, 1994). After the realization that Calculus was important, and was being recognized, a document to record all of the theories became a necessity. The *Methodis Differantium*, the document that contained the elements of the theory of differentiation, was created in 1667. Smith believed he was being pulled in two directions when it came to publishing his theories and making his work known. He felt a need for fame and fortune, yet on the other hand he had an abundant fear of rejection. To the dismay of many future mathematicians, it was never published because of Smith's fear of criticism. Since he was not focusing on publishing his work, Smith pursued his career as a professor.

Writing paragraphs, cont'd

- What sorts of things are wrong with this paragraph? Let's look at three problems.
- First – the writer bounces around from one topic to another. The topic sentence announces a topic (Smith's differentiation), but then switches to something else (the university, Smith's career).
- In fact, the material in this paragraph could be rewritten into three paragraphs.

Writing paragraphs, cont'd

- Second, the writer does not use a coherent timeline. Rather, he or she jumps around from one date to an unspecified time and back to the first date—creating confusion for the reader about what happened when.
- When writing a narrative, stick to a chronological timeline or signal when you are going to move around. Be sure you have a good reason for doing so.

Writing paragraphs, cont'd

- Third, many of the sentences are awkwardly constructed.
- Let's revise these awkward sentences into one smooth sentence:
- After the realization that Calculus was important, and was being recognized, a document to record all of the theories became a necessity. The *Methodis Differentium*, the document that contained the elements of the theory of differentiation, was created in 1667.

Writing paragraphs, cont'd

- Revised version:
- After Smith recognized the importance of Calculus and the need for a theory of differentiation, he created the *Methodis Differentium* in 1667 (citation here!).

Writing paragraphs, cont'd

- Another tip about writing paragraphs:
- If you can, create links between the end of one paragraph and the beginning of the next.
- Transitional words and phrases can help signal the move from one idea to the next.

Transitional words and phrases – for beginning a paragraph or for internal transition

□ Contrast:

- although, but, by contrast, nevertheless, regardless, on the other hand, however, even though, while

□ Cause and effect:

- accordingly, as a result, consequently, hence

□ Example:

- after all, for instance, as an illustration, consider, for example, specifically

□ Comparison:

- along the same lines, likewise, similarly

□ Addition:

- also, besides, furthermore, indeed, moreover, in addition

Questions about paragraphs?

- Do you have any questions or additions to this topic?

Four common errors and how to fix them

- One: The comma splice
- Two: its/ it's confusion
- Three: sentence fragment
- Four: verb agreement errors

Fixing the comma splice

- “Splice” means to join together. When you join two sentences with a comma, you are using a comma splice which is incorrect.
- If you want to join two closely related sentences, you can do so in two ways:
 - Use a semi colon;
 - Use a comma WITH a connecting word like “and.”

Fixing the comma splice

- Overtime hours are up 43% this month, we need to reduce this cost.
- How will you fix this comma splice?
- Use method one: Overtime hours are up 43% this month; we need to reduce this cost.
- Or, method two: Overtime hours are up 43% this month, and we need to reduce this cost.
- Or, rewrite for economy: We need to reduce the cost of overtime hours which have increased 43% this month.

Clarifying it's and its

- Writers often confuse these two spellings of it's/ its.
- The first spelling is the contraction:

□ **it's = it is**

- The second spelling (no apostrophe) is for the possessive:

□ **The company has its own daycare centre.**

Fixing the sentence fragment

- The fragment is *part* of a sentence and cannot stand alone. To spot a fragment, you need to know what comprises a sentence.
- The minimal parts of a sentence are subject and predicate, or noun phrase plus verb phrase:
 - “Mary bought a new car.”
- We rarely make fragment errors with this kind of straightforward sentence; who would write “Mary bought.” or “A new car” and think it was correct?

Fixing fragments

- A likely candidate for fragment-hood is the subordinate clause, easily mistaken for a full sentence.
- Thus: “I am going to the party. Even though I’ll be bored.” The second “sentence” is actually a fragment—the “even though” alerts the reader that this is actually the beginning of a subordinate clause. You may think it is a full sentence because it actually contains an independent clause, “I’ll be bored.” but the additional words “even though” turn it into a subordinate clause.

Fixing fragments

- Words such as “even though,” “although,” “whereas,” “when,” “just as,” and “while” signal the subordinate clause which has to be attached to an independent clause and cannot stand alone.
- Where is the fragment? How can you fix this?
- Williams (2003) documented nurses’ injuries over three years at a Florida hospital. The data was inconclusive. Whereas an earlier study showed an increase in injuries for night shift nurses.

Fixing verb agreement errors

- Subject-verb agreement can be an issue with sentences that have compound subjects.
- For example, sometimes writers are confused when the subject contains a phrase like “in addition,” “as well as,” or “along with.”:
- **“The sidewalk, in addition to the driveway, need to be repaired.”*
- This is incorrect, because the phrase “in addition to” is parenthetical and not part of the subject:
- Thus, *“The sidewalk, in addition to the driveway, needs to be repaired.”* OR *The sidewalk and the driveway need to be repaired.* (“And” creates a compound subject.)

Subject-verb agreement cont'd

- Another confusing area of compound subjects is when “or” and “nor” are used.
- In this case, the verb is determined by the closer member of the pair; both of these are correct:
- Neither the speaker nor the listeners were intimidated by the protestors.
- OR Neither the listeners nor the speaker was intimidated by the protestors.
- If the correct sentence sounds awkward, reverse the pairs.

Fuzzy writing

- From Blank's quirk list:
- Avoid wazzle (waffling/fuzzy) words: *actually, aspects, basically, certainly, essentially, generally, overall, quite, really, simply, situation, truly, ultimately, virtually, and very. Could, should, and would are also conspicuous wazzlers.*"
- Link to pdf:
- <http://web.uvic.ca/~gkblank/Blank%27s%20Writing%20Quirk%20List.pdf>

Fuzzy writing, cont'd

- Fuzzy writing is often the result of fuzzy thinking.
- Do you know what you are trying to say? Maybe you are not quite there yet. Three tips for working through fuzziness to clarity:
 - 1. Read more: maybe you don't know enough about your subject yet.
 - 2. Freewrite, brainstorm, or draw a cluster map about your subject for ten minutes.
 - 3. Talk to a friend about the topic – explain to your friend what you are trying to say.

Group revision

- Let's go to a word document and revise an opening to an essay.
- Our goal: to make the opening clear and understandable, with a strong thesis statement.

Questions

- Do you have any writing or APA questions?
- How did you do on your last assignment?
- Can you isolate your writing challenges by looking over feedback? Can you set one goal for improvement?
- You can reach me at sonwrite@uvic.ca
- Good night and thank you for attending!

