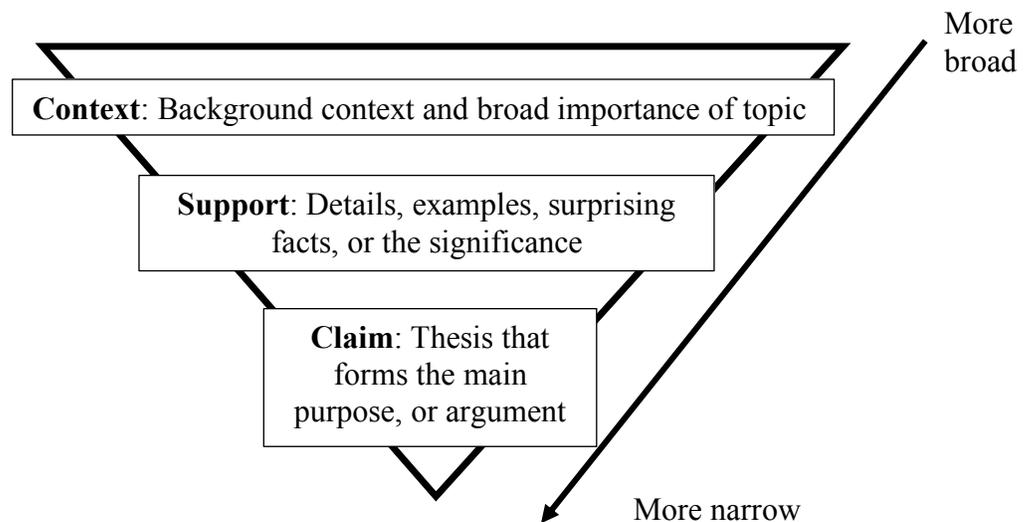


Editing: Creating Reader-Friendly Paragraphs

Easy-to-read coherent paragraphs are built in a way that allow the reader to follow the writer’s line of thought transparently and easily. In the US college context, this is especially important because **it is completely the job of the writer to layout their argument and make the connections for the reader to follow.** To help accomplish this, writers should use structure, organize familiar information before new, introduce simple information before complex, use signal words, and link sentences together.

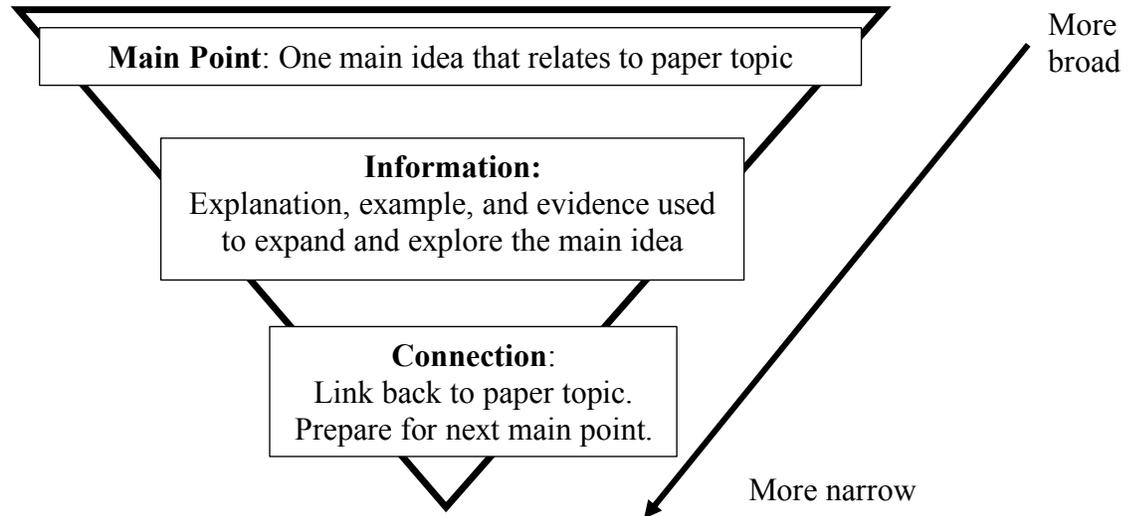
Concept 1: Use Paragraph Structure to Guide the Reader Through a Topic.

Introduction Paragraph Structure Example



[Context] Heart disease is a leading cause of death for women in America, causing about 1 in 4 deaths. **[Support]** However, often heart disease is thought of as a “man’s disease.” **[Support]** Consequently, many women are not educated on the symptoms. **[Claim]** Many needless female deaths may be prevented through outreach. To address this problem, this study proposes two solutions: using viral marketing and engaging Instagram influencers.

Body Paragraph Structure Example



[**Main Point**] Instagram influencers are an increasingly important source of marketing power to reach the average American user. [**Information**] Influencers marketing on Instagram alone generated over \$1.6 billion in 2018 (Asano, 2019). [**Information**] Moreover, influencers usually have access to roughly 32,000 followers or more (McMill, 2017). [**Information**] These connection networks can be utilized to educate the public about health topics beyond just trends in fashion and food. [**Information**] Choosing the right influencers will be critical as the message about health needs to be seen as authentic. [**Connection**] Heart disease education needs to be expanded the most to women in their 30s, so choosing influencers who resonates well with this demographic is the first challenge.

Concept 2: Present Familiar (Old) Information Before New Information.

The following pair of sentences is **hard-to-read** because the reader is not prepared for the topic of “Carbon-dioxide levels in the atmosphere” to follow the first sentence. The reader is likely to feel lost and think that the writer is off topic or confusing.

Not this: “The professor spoke about environmental challenges yesterday, and she listed five big environmental problems the United States will face in the upcoming decade. Carbon-dioxide concentration levels in the atmosphere are increasing rapidly, and it is the first problem she described” (Bizup and Williams, 146).

The next pair of sentences is **easy-to-read**, because the reader learns from the first sentence that the professor talked about five problems. The reader is prepared then to learn about those five problems, so they will feel on track and ready to hear about the first problem at the start of the next sentence.

But this: “The professor spoke about environmental challenges yesterday, and she listed five big environmental problems the United States will face in the upcoming decade. The first problem she described is ...” (Bizup and Williams, 146).

Concept 3: Present Simple Information Before Complex Information.

The following pair of sentences is **hard-to-read** because both the first and second sentence start with long and specific technical subjects (underlined). If these sentences were included at the start of a paper, the reader would likely feel uncomfortable and lost.

Not this: “A determination of involvement of lipid-linked chains in the assembly of oligosaccharide *in vivo* was the principal aim of this study. In vitro and in vivo studies utilizing oviduct membrane preparations and oviduct slices and the antibiotic tunicamycin were undertaken to accomplish the study’s principle aim” (Bizup and Williams, 91).

The next pair of sentences is **easy-to-read** because both the first and second sentences start with short and familiar subjects (underlined). When readers start a paper, they expect a paper to have a purpose, so when they read the subject of the first sentence, they are prepared as the writer has signaled them. They are then ready to accept the longer, new, and more complex information in the second half of each sentence.

But this: “The principal aim of this study was to determine how lipid-linked chains are involved in the assembly of oligosaccharide *in vivo*. To accomplish the study’s principal aim, studies were undertaken in vitro and in vivo, utilizing the antibiotics tunicamycin on preparations of oviduct membrane and on oviduct slices” (Bizup and Williams, 91).

Concept 4: Use Signal Words to Guide the Reader.

Signal words show the transitions between parts of the paper. They allow the writer to directly tell the reader what to expect, so the reader will be able to follow the writer’s line of thought. Review the sample categories below in bold followed by a few examples:

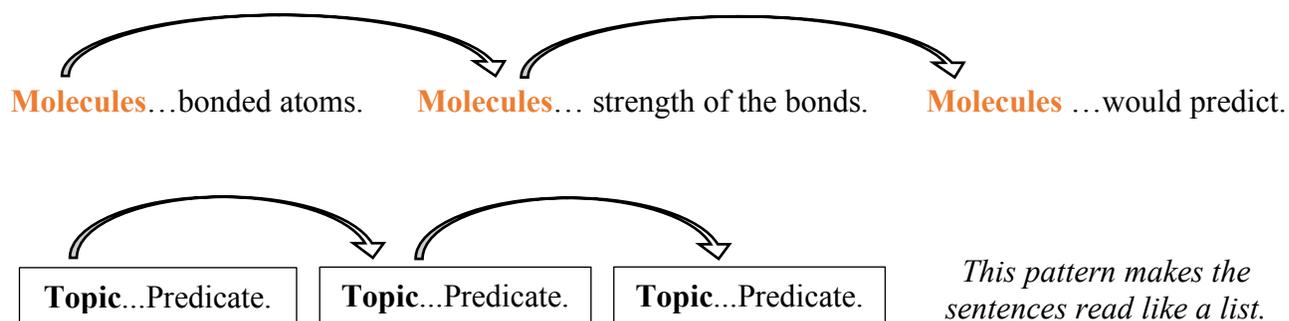
- **Addition:** Also, in addition, furthermore
- **Comparison:** Equally, similarly
- **Contrast:** Instead, in contrast, conversely
- **Example:** For example, for instance, such as
- **Highlight:** In particular, especially
- **Qualify:** However, but, although, except
- **Restate:** In other words, put more simply
- **Result:** Because, so, therefore, as a result
- **Sequence:** First, second, next, after

Heart disease is a leading cause of death for women in America, causing about 1 in 4 deaths. However, often heart disease is thought of as a “man’s disease.” Consequently, many women are not educated on the symptoms. Many needless female deaths may be prevented through outreach. To address this problem, this study proposes two solutions: using viral marketing and engaging Instagram influencers.

Concept 5: Link Sentences in a Paragraph Deliberately.

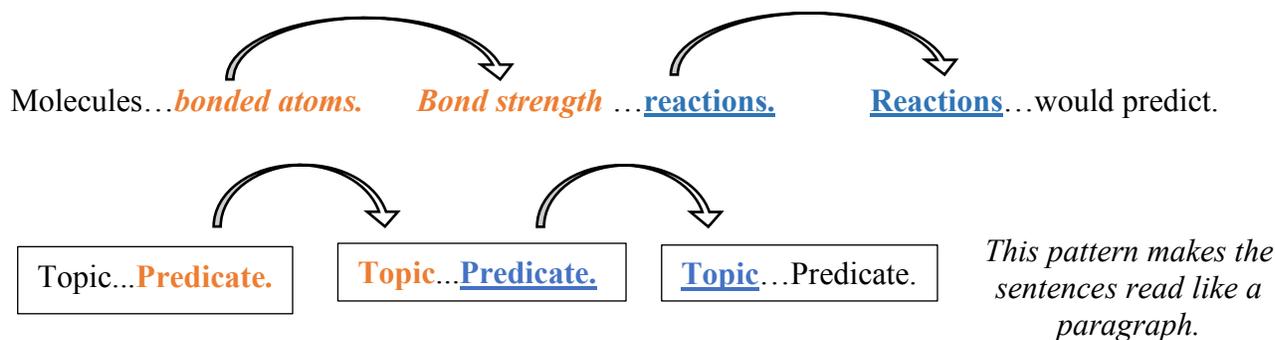
The paragraph below is hard to read and feels choppy. All sentences begin with the same topic of “molecules.” It reads like a list of items and is not a well-connected paragraph. Readers have to do more work to figure out what the writer is saying.

Not this: “Molecules consist of covalently bonded atoms. Molecules’ reactions are controlled by the strength of the bonds. Molecules, however, sometimes react slower than their bond strength would predict” (Schimel, 125).



The paragraph below is easy-to-read, and the sentences flow into one another. Each sentence begins with a topic that was in the predicate of the following sentence as seen in the model. The overall paragraph feels like a well-connected whole.

But this: “Molecules consist of covalently bonded atoms. Bond strength controls molecules’ reactions. Sometimes, however, reactions are slower than bond strength would predict” (Schimel, 126).



(Figures from Schimel, 125-126. Color emphasis added.)

Activity: Think Like a Reader

Read samples A and B. Decide which is easier to read and write down four reasons to support your answer. Sample answers can be found on the next page.

Sample A:

“Great strides in the early and accurate diagnosis of Alzheimer’s disease have been made in recent years. Not too long ago, senility in an older patient who seemed to be losing touch with reality was often confused with Alzheimer’s. Genetic clues have become the basis of new and more reliable tests in the last few years, however. The risk of human tragedy of another kind, though, has resulted from the increasing accuracy of these tests: prediction about susceptibility to Alzheimer’s have become possible long before the appearance of any overt symptoms. At that point, an apparently healthy person could be devastated by such an early diagnosis” (Bizup and Williams, 87).

Is Sample A an easy-to-read, coherent paragraph? Why or why not? List four reasons.

Sample B:

“In the past few years, researchers have made great strides in the early and accurate diagnosis of Alzheimer’s disease, but those diagnoses have raised a new problem about informing those most at risk who show no symptoms of it. Not too long ago, when a physician examined an older patient who seemed out of touch with reality, she had to guess whether that person had Alzheimer’s or was only senile. However, physicians now have been able to use new and more reliable tests focusing on genetic clues. The accuracy of these new tests conceals the risk of another kind of human tragedy. Today, physicians may be able to predict Alzheimer’s long before its overt appearance, but such an early diagnosis could psychologically devastate an apparently healthy person when there is currently little treatment and no cure” (Bizup and Williams, 89).

Is Sample B an easy-to read, coherent paragraph? Why or why not? List four reasons.

Activity: Sample Answers

Readers likely will not find Sample A easy to read or coherent. The sentences often start with newer and more complex information for which the reader is not prepared, e.g., examples [1] and [2]. The sentences seem disconnected because they do not clearly relate to one another in topic, e.g., examples [1], [2], [3], and [4]. The paragraph overall does not consistently build from a broad to narrow context. Readers will likely feel confused while reading this paragraph and unable to follow the writer's line of thought.

Sample A: Great strides in the early and accurate diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease have been made [1] in recent years. Not too long ago, senility in an older patient who seemed to be losing touch with reality was often [2] confused with Alzheimer's. Genetic clues [3] have become the basis of new and more reliable tests in the last few years, however. The risk of human tragedy of another kind, though, has resulted [4] from the increasing accuracy of these tests: prediction about susceptibility to Alzheimer's have become possible long before the appearance of any overt symptoms. At that point, an apparently healthy person could be devastated by such an early diagnosis.

Readers likely will find Sample B easy to read and coherent. The sentences often start with familiar information (the underlined parts) for which the reader is ready. They also present the new and complex information in the second half. The paragraph uses strong, well-placed signal words (in bold) to communicate with the reader. The paragraph overall moves from broad to narrow. Readers will likely be engaged because they can easily follow the writer's point and be prepared for what comes next.

Sample B: In the past few years, researchers have made great strides in the early and accurate diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease, **but** those diagnoses have raised a new problem about informing those most at risk who show no symptoms of it. **Not too long ago,** when a physician examined an older patient who seemed out of touch with reality, she had to guess whether that person had Alzheimer's or was only senile. **However,** physicians have been able to use new and more reliable tests focusing on genetic clues. The accuracy of these new tests, **however,** conceals the risk of another kind of human tragedy. **Today** physicians may be able to predict Alzheimer's long before its appearance, but an early diagnosis could psychologically devastate an apparently healthy person when there is currently little treatment and no cure.

References

Examples and adapted content from Joseph Bizup and Joseph Williams. *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace, 12th Edition*. Pearson, 2017.

Examples and adapted content from Joshua Schimel. *Writing Science: How to Write Papers that get Cited and Proposal that Get Funded*. Oxford University Press, 2012, pp. 124-127.