

Technical English for Engineers
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Lecture – 27
Paragraph Writing

So, paragraph writing and what are the significant components of writing a paragraph. To begin with, what is a paragraph, we are going to do all that in today's class.

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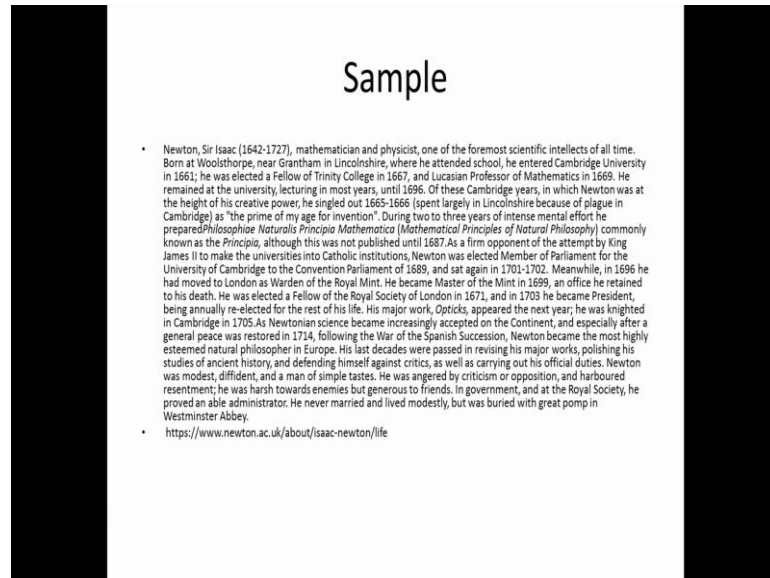


So, welcome back friends. We will be talking about Paragraph Writing; how to spot key words, topic sentences, sign posting, linking words, main ideas, all this in one paragraph. As you already know, a paragraph is the basic unit of any lengthy piece of writing. Generally, we do not write just one paragraph, but at our level we need to write several paragraphs. But, let us begin like we had started this course with various parts of speech, categorizing them. We have also learned how to make sentences, elements of sentences. We have also seen, how sentences combine together to make more complex varieties of sentences. So, we have been through all these.

And, now as we move on to discuss more complex way of writing; for example, reports,

journal articles, SOPs and your CVs. We will begin with the basic unit of writing a longer piece of work. So, this is paragraph for us.

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Sample

- Newton, Sir Isaac (1642-1727), mathematician and physicist, one of the foremost scientific intellects of all time. Born at Woolsthorpe, near Grantham in Lincolnshire, where he attended school, he entered Cambridge University in 1661; he was elected a Fellow of Trinity College in 1667, and Lucasian Professor of Mathematics in 1669. He remained at the university, lecturing in most years, until 1696. Of these Cambridge years, in which Newton was at the height of his creative power, he singled out 1665-1666 (spent largely in Lincolnshire because of plague in Cambridge) as "the prime of my age for invention". During two to three years of intense mental effort he prepared *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica* (*Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*) commonly known as the *Principia*, although this was not published until 1687. As a firm opponent of the attempt by King James II to make the universities into Catholic institutions, Newton was elected Member of Parliament for the University of Cambridge to the Convention Parliament of 1689, and sat again in 1701-1702. Meanwhile, in 1696 he had moved to London as Warden of the Royal Mint. He became Master of the Mint in 1699, an office he retained to his death. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of London in 1671, and in 1703 he became President, being annually re-elected for the rest of his life. His major work, *Opticks*, appeared the next year; he was knighted in Cambridge in 1705. As Newtonian science became increasingly accepted on the Continent, and especially after a general peace was restored in 1714, following the War of the Spanish Succession, Newton became the most highly esteemed natural philosopher in Europe. His last decades were passed in revising his major works, polishing his studies of ancient history, and defending himself against critics, as well as carrying out his official duties. Newton was modest, diffident, and a man of simple tastes. He was angered by criticism or opposition, and harboured resentment; he was harsh towards enemies but generous to friends. In government, and at the Royal Society, he proved an able administrator. He never married and lived modestly, but was buried with great pomp in Westminster Abbey.
- <https://www.newton.ac.uk/about/isaac-newton/life>

Let me show you this example. Please, look at the slide here. And this, I am showing you as a good example of a paragraph. Please, read the paragraph. It is about Sir Isaac Newton, mathematician and physicist, one of the foremost scientific intellects of all time. Born at Woolsthorpe near Grantham in Lincolnshire, where he attended school, he entered Cambridge University in 1661; he was elected a fellow of Trinity College in 1667 and Lucasian professor of Mathematics in 1669. He remained at the university, lecturing in most years, until 1698. Of these Cambridge years, in which Newton was at the height of his creative power, he singled out 1665 to 1666, spent largely in Lincolnshire because of plague in Cambridge as “the prime of my age for invention”. During 2 to 3 years of these mental efforts, he prepared *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica*, commonly known as the *Principia*, although this was not published until 1687. As a firm opponent of the attempt by King James the second, to make the universities into catholic institutions, Newton was elected Member of Parliament for the university of Cambridge to the Convention Parliament of 1689, and sat again in 1701 to 1702. Meanwhile, in 1696 he had moved to London as Warden of the Royal Mint. He became master of the Mint in 1699, an office he retained to his death. He was elected a

fellow of the Royal Society of London in 1671. And, in 1703 he became president, being annually re-elected for the rest of his life. His major work, *opticks*, appeared the next year; he was knighted in Cambridge in 1705 as Newtonian science became increasingly accepted on the Continent, and especially after a general peace was restored in 1714. Following the war of the Spanish succession, Newton became the most highly esteemed natural philosopher in Europe. His last decades were passed in revising his major works, polishing his studies of ancient history and defending himself against critics as well as carrying out his official duties. Newton was modest, diffident and a man of simple tastes. He was angered by criticism of opposition and harbored resentment. He was harsh towards enemies, but generous to friends. In government, and at the Royal Society, he proved able administrator. He never married and lived modestly, but was buried with great pomp in Westminster Abbey.

Now, what is the wrong with this paragraph? Can anyone tell me? Before we respond to this question, you have to again ask the question; what is the main idea? Well, main idea is here they tell you about or give you an overview about the life of this great scientist.

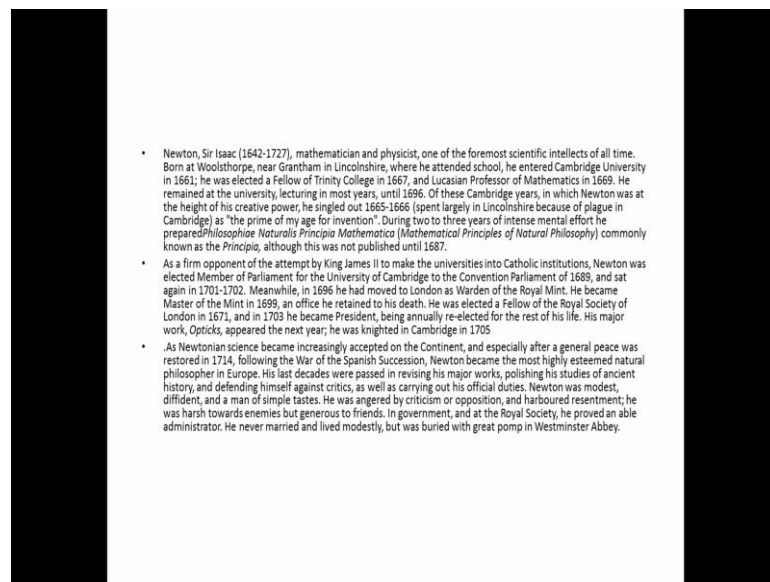
Topic sentences; now, what do you understand by topic sentence? Topic sentence is something that defines a paragraph. And, it is the main idea that should be developed in the remaining sentences. That is a very simple definition or explanation of what is the topic sentence.

Key words; how many key words? There are several keywords here, not just one. If you start making a list of key words, words which are extremely important here, it would go on and on. And, every good paragraph should have, let us say 5 or 4 to 5 keywords. What is happening here? What is so wrong with it? Well, the answer is simple. This is not a single paragraph. But this piece of writing, this particular piece of writing, it requires several paragraphs. Is something; its lot of information, very well written, grammatically correct, it will still not pass as a very effective piece of writing because of the simple reason, the writer has not used paragraphing at all. He does not know where to end. By, he does not know, I mean, let me just make it clear. I have taken it from a particular source. And, I have done the work here. And, very soon you will be seeing with the original writer of this particular passage has written and broken this writing into several

paragraphs. So, this was just to give you an example.

A sense of what can go wrong when paragraph does not work, and when paragraphing is not up to the mark. Here, of course there is no sense of paragraphing. And, this is something that we often find in the written works of several students. Every paragraph should have a single main idea, a topic sentence. And then, remaining sentences should be an elaboration.

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Now, let us look at this paragraph. And, this is the way it was intended to be. **This is the way it appears.** And, see the first paragraph. It ends at a particular place, there is some space; and moving on to the second paragraph and the third paragraph. What is the first paragraph all about? His early life, and his education. Second paragraph, he was a firm opponent of the attempt by King James to make **our** universities Catholic, and then his good work at the university. Third, it basically talks about his later years, and then up to his death.

So, every paragraph has a main topic, has a single idea, which is developed. His early life, and his education; by early life, I mean his education. Second paragraph, his good work at university of Cambridge. Third paragraph, his peak of achievements and then

eventually his death; so, every paragraph should have a single main idea, which should be developed.

So, coming back to our first or my first question; what is a paragraph? A paragraph is several sentences, ideally 3 to 4 or 5 to 6, depending on the overall length of your writing. So, if you have written a reasonably long essay, then each paragraph should have 4 to 5 sentences. And, remember we do not support too much of simple sentences. There should be a blend of simple, compound and complex.

So, what is a paragraph? A paragraph is several sentences grouped together. And, each paragraph should relate to one main topic. A paragraph is a group of related sentences, in other words, that develop an idea. It is rarely that a paragraph contains a single sentence, although that also happens. But for that, you have to first master writing lengthy paragraphs. And then, move on to do something more experimental like writing paragraphs in single sentences.

Otherwise, ideally speaking and for exam purposes, the best way to write is to write a paragraph in several sentences. The most important principle to observe in a paragraph is its unity. By this, we mean that each paragraph should consist of a single idea. That is what I told you. A main idea; generally, the topic is expressed in the first sentence of a paragraph. But, there are times when the central idea is seen in the last sentence of a paragraph. So, pay attention. If you particularly if you are reading, the first and the last sentence of a paragraph. If you are writing, you can come straight to the point or bring the punch line in the last sentence of a paragraph. A paragraph should have logical sequence of thoughts and ideas, which is very key element. A paragraph should have one single topic. Now, look at this paragraph again. This is the same paragraph taken from the writing that we have just seen on Newton.

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A para has one central topic

- Born on January 4, 1643, in Woolsthorpe, England, Isaac Newton was an established physicist and mathematician. With discoveries in optics, motion and mathematics, Newton developed the principles of modern physics. His most acclaimed work, *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica* been called the single most influential book on physics. Newton died in London in 1727.

Please, look at the slide. This is Newton's life; highlighted. So, what we have done here is; who was Newton? This is one basic idea; it will give you one central idea. Who was Newton, what did he do, major work and his important work and born in this year, died in this year.

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Identify the main idea, supporting details

- For Cardinal Newman, the ideal university is a community of thinkers, engaging in intellectual pursuits not for any external purpose, but as an end in itself. Envisaging a broad, liberal education, which teaches students "to think and to reason and to compare and to discriminate and to analyse", Newman held that narrow minds were born of narrow specialisation and stipulated that students should be given a solid grounding in all areas of study. A restricted, vocational education was out of the question for him. Somewhat surprisingly, he also espoused the view that universities should be entirely free of religious interference, putting forward a secular, pluralist and inclusive ideal.
- <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/oct/20/john-henry-newman-idea-university-soul>

Look at now, this second paragraph. Please, read it. Here, I want you to identify the main idea and the supporting details. For cardinal Newman, the ideal university is a community of thinkers engaging in intellectual pursuits not for any external purpose, but as an end in itself. Envisaging a broad, liberal education, which teaches students “to think and to reason and to compare and to discriminate and to analyze”, look, this is a compound sentence, but very well written. Overuse of ‘and’ does not really hamper the progression of idea here. It is an example of good writing.

Newman held that narrow minds are born of narrow specialization and stipulated that students should be given a solid grounding in all areas of study. A restricted vocational education was out of the question for him. Somewhat surprisingly, he also espoused the view that universities should be entirely free of religious interference, putting forward a secular, pluralist and inclusive ideal.

So, what is the main idea? Cardinal Newman’s concept of ideal university, and then the remaining paragraph supports that what was an ideal university education for or through the perception of Cardinal Newman; what was his perception up of a great university and good education. So, main idea is Cardinal Newman’s concept of good education and ideal university. All the remaining sentences support that idea.

We have to also understand that in a good paragraph, words within a sentence should appear in the best possible order, so that the sentences within a paragraph read properly. You should also be able to connect sentences between themselves. So, there should be a good connection between sentences itself. A good writer always remember, arranges his sentences in a most of effective way. The basis for this should be logical as well as chronological, when there is a series of events. Sentences should be arranged logically when the sentences build up a theme or an argument. So, remember chronology, when we are talking about a series of events and we talk about developing or connecting sentences logically, when sentences build up a theme of an argument. And link between, as you know, the sentences are achieved by an effective use of linking words. We have already seen in some of our earlier classes, what are those linking words. Please, revise that.

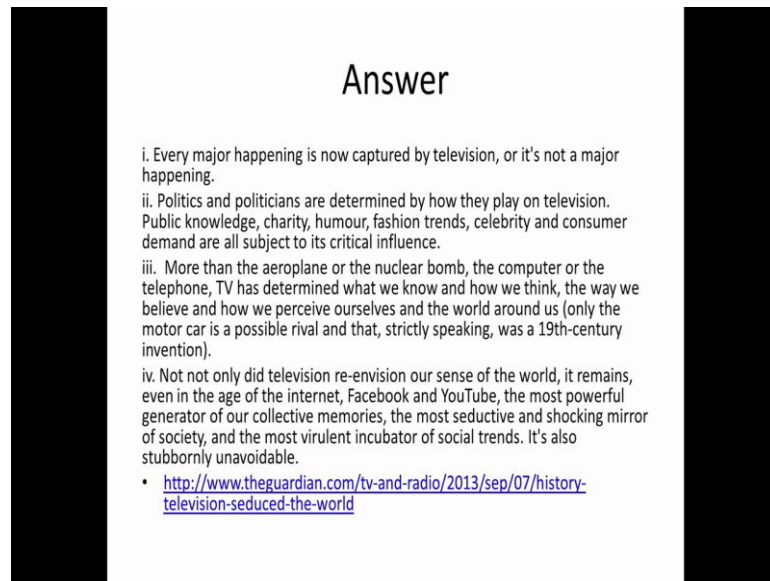
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Exercise: Rearrange the jumbled para

- i. Not not only did television re-envision our sense of the world, it remains, even in the age of the internet, Facebook and YouTube, the most powerful generator of our collective memories, the most seductive and shocking mirror of society, and the most virulent incubator of social trends. It's also stubbornly unavoidable.
- ii. Every major happening is now captured by television, or it's not a major happening.
- iii. More than the aeroplane or the nuclear bomb, the computer or the telephone, TV has determined what we know and how we think, the way we believe and how we perceive ourselves and the world around us (only the motor car is a possible rival and that, strictly speaking, was a 19th-century invention).
- iv. Politics and politicians are determined by how they play on television. Public knowledge, charity, humour, fashion trends, celebrity and consumer demand are all subject to its critical influence.

Now, here is an exercise for you. Rearrange the jumbled paragraph or rather the jumbled sentences in a paragraph. This is a paragraph I would like you to rearrange the sentences. Please, look at the paragraphs. Read the slide. Take a moment. Look at the way it begins; not only did television re-envision our sense of the world. Second one, begins with every major happening is now captured by television. Third one, more than the aeroplane or the nuclear bomb, the computer or the TV has determined what we know and how we think. Politics and politicians are determined by how they play on television. What should be the correct order?

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Answer

- i. Every major happening is now captured by television, or it's not a major happening.
- ii. Politics and politicians are determined by how they play on television. Public knowledge, charity, humour, fashion trends, celebrity and consumer demand are all subject to its critical influence.
- iii. More than the aeroplane or the nuclear bomb, the computer or the telephone, TV has determined what we know and how we think, the way we believe and how we perceive ourselves and the world around us (only the motor car is a possible rival and that, strictly speaking, was a 19th-century invention).
- iv. Not only did television re-envision our sense of the world, it remains, even in the age of the internet, Facebook and YouTube, the most powerful generator of our collective memories, the most seductive and shocking mirror of society, and the most virulent incubator of social trends. It's also stubbornly unavoidable.

- <http://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2013/sep/07/history-television-seduced-the-world>

Now, look at the answer. The first sentence and this is the topic sentence. Please note this. The first sentence of this paragraph is its topic sentence. The remaining sentences are all **but** supporting details. The first sentence; every major happening is now captured by television or it is not a major happening. And then, supporting; politics and politicians are determined by how they play on television. Public knowledge etcetera are all subject to its critical influence.

Then, we move on to talk about; more than the aeroplane or the nuclear bomb, the computer or the telephone, TV has determined what we know and how we think, the way we believe and how we perceive ourselves.

And, the last line not only did television re-envision our sense of the world, it remains, even in the age of the internet, Facebook and You Tube, the most powerful generator. So, this is the summing up of what television is all about and how important it is to our modern society.

Look at the effective use of connectors and linking words within the sentences also. If it is not happening on television, it is not a major happening. That is the idea. So, therefore in the very first sentence, you have the use of 'or'. And then, in second sentence, second

part, you have that you have a very effective use of the connector and then read on. In the last part, that is the conclusion of paragraph, not only did, it is also stubbornly unavoidable. It is not only, but also. So, those are the linking words here.

Remember, for bringing about cohesion, connection, always pay attention to sign posting or linking words. These are the words that guide the reader along the path of the writers intended meaning. So you want to convey a meaning, use or make an effective use of linking words. However, by this I do not mean that overuse linking words. In the same paragraph, use all the linking words that you know. Use them judiciously, but use them with variety. Again, go back to the previous paragraph and see how linking words are used. I am going to show you another paragraph. If you try to replace the linking words, the meaning would not come out that strongly and it will weaken the overall structure.

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Sample

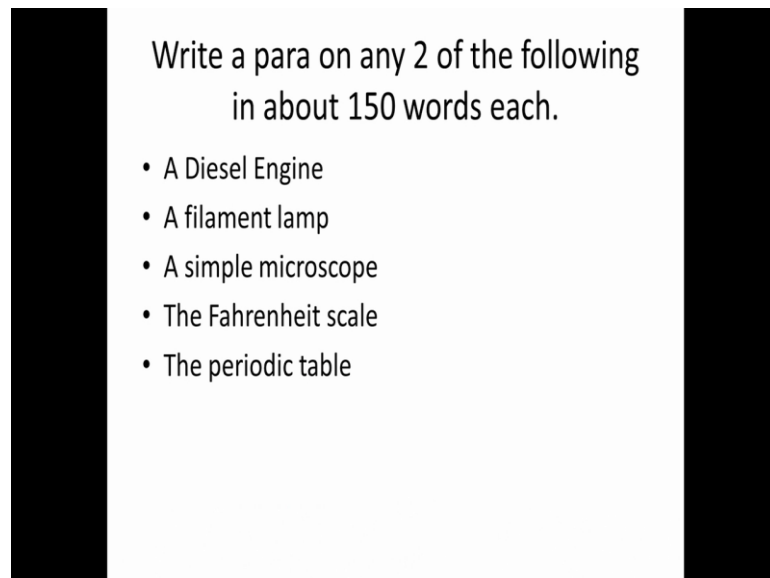
- Science fiction, **however**, has a long prehistory. The epics of early Greek civilization, **for example**, feature superhuman beings such as the residents of Mount Olympus **and** include a marvelous voyage to far distant worlds (way out in the Mediterranean) inhabited by one-eyed giants, a six-headed monster, a creature that swallows passing ships, **and** a woman who chemically transforms people into animals.
- The first fictions about travel beyond the Earth were satires of **such** epic voyages by the Syrian writer Lucian of Samosata in the 2nd century A.D. The hero of his *Icaro-Menippus* sprouts wings **and** flies to the Moon; in *The True History*, the author **and** a shipload of companions are wafted to the Moon, where men have artificial phalluses (ivory for the rich, wood for the poor), **and** the travelers observe an interplanetary battle fought to determine **whether** the empire of the Moon or of the Sun gets to colonize Venus.
- **But** Lucian's works are not science fiction. They are intended to be read as fantasy-imaginings of the impossible—**just like** similar works for the following fourteen hundred years. **As late as** 1532, Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* projected a trip to the Moon merely as a preposterous fantasy (to find and bottle his hero's lost wits).
- **Meanwhile, however**, other events were taking place, events that would profoundly transform the world and the European concept of space.
- <http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~hbf/sfhist.html>

Let us look at the paragraph. Here is a sample for you. I have highlighted all the linking words. Read it and see. By replacing these linking words, what happens to the sentence, to the overall reading quality and coherence of these sentences? Remember, now this is not just one single paragraph, but several paragraphs coming together. However, for example, and, and, such, and, whether, but, just like, as late as, meanwhile, however. Look at the variety; look at the good use of the linking words and the sign posting words.

They tell you where to make a turn in your thoughts and ideas.

So, in a nutshell what should you do in order to start writing a good paragraph? Brain storm ideas, either singly or in pair or in groups, organize your ideas in a planned and then write a draft. If you want to write practice writing, always write. You can read as many books about writing. You can listen to as many lectures about writing. Unless, you write your thoughts on a piece of paper or on your PC, you are not learning enough. So, practice writing. Here is a list of some practice; paragraph topics for you please look at the slide.

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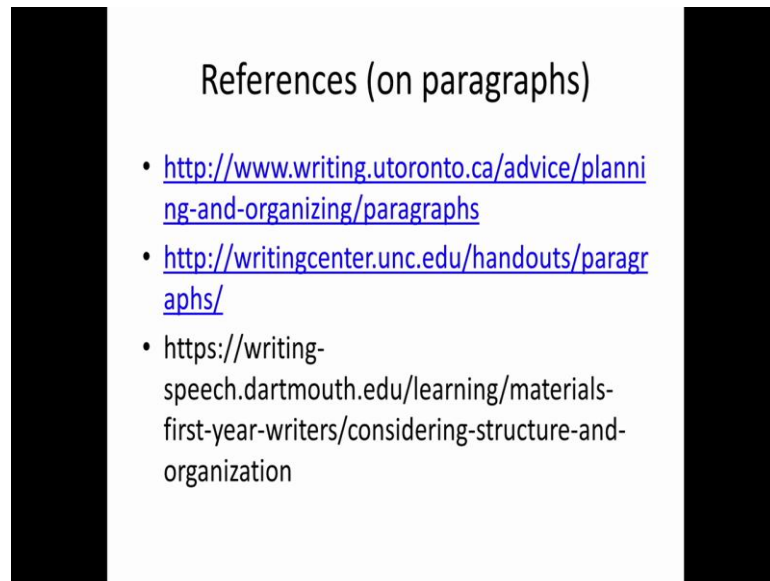


Write a para on any 2 of the following
in about 150 words each.

- A Diesel Engine
- A filament lamp
- A simple microscope
- The Fahrenheit scale
- The periodic table

I would want you to write a paragraph on any 2 of the following in about hundred 150 words each: a diesel engine, a filament lamp, a simple microscope, the Fahrenheit scale, the periodic table. This is your work to practice writing.

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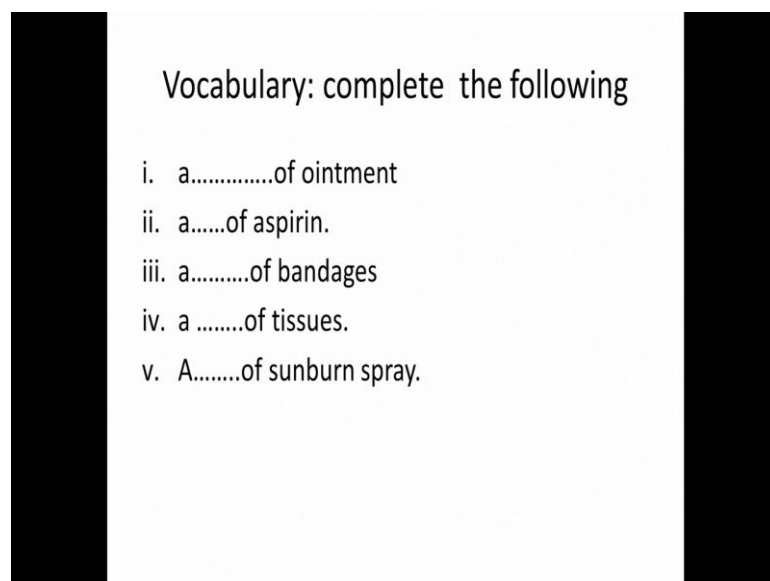


References (on paragraphs)

- <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/planning-and-organizing/paragraphs>
- <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/paragraphs/>
- <https://writing-speech.dartmouth.edu/learning/materials-first-year-writers/considering-structure-and-organization>

Here is another slide for you to consult and refer to on paragraphs. Please, look at the slide. All right, before we windup I want to do this vocabulary exercise. A very simple, but you will find it interesting; something that you may use in your day-to-day life.

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Vocabulary: complete the following

- i. a.....of ointment
- ii. a.....of aspirin.
- iii. a.....of bandages
- iv. aof tissues.
- v. A.....of sunburn spray.

Please, look at the slide. It is vocabulary. Complete the following. How do you put in

these words? A dash of ointment, a dash of aspirin, a dash of bandages, a dash of tissues, a dash of sunburn spray; so the idea is that I want to test your vocabulary in day-to-day matters.

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Answers

- i. Tube
- ii. Bottle of aspirin
- iii. Package of bandages
- iv. Box of tissues
- v. Can of suntan spray

And, here are your answers: A tube of an ointment, a bottle of aspirin, a package of bandages, box of tissues, a can of suntan spray. Sometimes instead of bottle of aspirin, you may use something else. It is just the cultural thing. In most western societies, aspirin comes in a bottle. But, I am aware that we get those strips in from which we can get our aspirins. But, these are some of the general ways of containing things. Now, before we windup and before I end the class, I want you to practice this speaking. And, this is the last exercise for the day.

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Speaking: Use of prepositions

Pair work: Describe your daily routine using :

- At, around, early, late, until, before/after, on, in

Please look at the slide. I want you to use these prepositions. Do a pair work, where I want you to describe your daily routine using the prepositions at, around, early, late, until, before, and, after, on, in. Now, remember that you should practice this with your friend, with your teacher, with your mentor, and develop. Perhaps write it out, write out your thoughts and then practice speaking. Here is a link for you, a good video.

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Speaking to one or thousand

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pki7Jx9EVrg>

Please, look at the slide. Then, the title of the video is called speaking to one or thousand. Here is a link that I am giving you. The entire video is perhaps not available. But, you can always [\(Refer Time: 25: 52\) source](#) it through your library or through your college. This is a reasonably good video, where you can learn how to indulge in or how to practice public speaking.

Thank you very much. We will meet again for our next class.

Tags

Reading English, English for Engineers, English words, English Exercise, Exercises in English, Grammar usage, English Grammar, vocabulary, words and phrases, spoken communication, written communication, English writing, English speaking, scientific English, report writing, CV, formal letter, Speech-Preposition, Noun Phrases, Countable and uncountable nouns, singular, plural, Modals and Voice, Tenses, Effective Speaking

Essay writing, word categories, word formation, formal tone, paragraph writing, tone in writing, speaking tone, signal words, Letter writing, understanding essays, Mechanics of Essays, publishable essays, nouns, pronouns, verbs, adverbs, adjectives, propositions, determiners, linking words, 'be' form, linking words, reading, listening, sentence, Subject, Verb, Object, Articles, comparatives, passive voice, Dictionary skills, Presentation, Punctuation, collocation