

ORGANISING YOUR WORK

It's important when you're writing longer pieces of writing to make sure that you organise your writing to make it easy for your reader to understand. One of the ways to make your writing easy to read is to make sure you have a clear structure. This means choosing carefully where you put each part of your writing.

Each paragraph should cover different aspects of your topic. To do that, you need to ensure that sentences about the same part of your subject should be linked together.

Look at these paragraphs in this letter. The paragraphs are well written, but they are a bit jumbled. Try to re-arrange the letter so that it reads more easily. You can do this by putting paragraphs about similar things next to each other.

Dear Sir/Madam,

I'm sure you'll be very sorry to hear of these mistakes, and will want to offer me some compensation. I would be grateful if you would send the vouchers to my address.

I am writing to you to complain about the terrible service I have received in your store on my most recent visits.

On another occasion I bought a packet of 6 yoghurts from your store. These were also a disappointment because we had expected to get a mixture of flavours, but every one in the packet was black cherry flavour. We don't even like that flavour.

I bought some frozen peas from your store on Wednesday 3rd March. When I got home I found that rather than peas, as it said on the packet, I'd actually been given a bag full of sweetcorn!

After looking forward to them all day, we couldn't eat them for our dessert as we'd planned. I'd got them out of the fridge ready to serve, but it was useless - and very upsetting.

When I began to prepare my family's evening meal we were all looking forward to some delicious peas with our gravy. You can imagine our horror when we found we had sweetcorn.

Yours sincerely,

Mr O Job

What clues are there to tell you which paragraphs go together?

CHANGE THAT WORD!

There are some words that we use a lot. Sometimes that's because they're such useful words that there's nothing better to use. For example, in the first two sentences of this sheet there are already four mentions of 'there'.

But sometimes we use words that could be replaced with something much more exciting, or words that could tell us much more about our topic.

Look at these three culprits:

said

went

got

They're all useful words, but we use them too often – and they don't give us very much information. Read these two short paragraphs and think about how you picture what is happening.

Amy went to the kitchen and got her keys from the kitchen table. "I'm late" she said to her husband, John.

Amy raced to the kitchen and grabbed her keys from the kitchen table. "I'm late" she yelled at her husband, John.

Can you see it improves the writing to include more interesting verbs?

There are plenty of alternatives to these words - you can probably think of lots of your own, but here are some examples to help get you started:

cried

sauntered

reached for

hollered

wandered

ran

whispered

grasped

Use some of these examples, or some examples of your own to improve this piece of writing by replacing some of these common verbs.

I wasn't happy on Monday. As I left my house I got my keys and I went to school. I saw my friend Emma at the end of my road. "Emma," I said, as I went along the road. She turned road and saw me. We went to school together.

When we got to school Emma said, "Have you you remembered your homework?" But I hadn't. I'd left it at home. We went into the classroom, and I knew I was on trouble. I saw Emma as she got her homework out of her bag and looked at me.

"Where's your homework, Anna?" said Mrs Smith

"I haven't got it, Miss," I apologised.

I knew that this wasn't going to be a good day.

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Look at the information on these cards and decide which belong together to make up a paragraph. The text is about a school and should contain 4 paragraphs.

While they are at the school, children study all the subjects of the National Curriculum.	Before leaving, the children take part in an end-of-year production to show off their acting and musical talents.
In winter months all students must wear a shirt with a tie.	There is also a fully-equipped Science lab, a newly-refurbished music room and a full-size gym.
Harrington Primary School is a school in Westerhome, Hampshire.	In the summer months this is relaxed and children can wear polo shirts.
There are also two other secondary schools in Westerhome, including a church school.	Students in Year 6 prepare for the National Tests, but they also study lots of other exciting subjects too.
To do this, there are special facilities for some lessons, including a kitchen for food technology lessons.	It is a very large Primary School with nearly 500 pupils.
The main colour of the uniform, including the sweatshirt, is red.	Children attend the school between the ages of 5 and 11.
The school has a uniform for all pupils with slight variations during the summer and winter.	At the end of their year many students will transfer to the local secondary school: Westerhome High School.
The school was first opened in 1975 when the town was growing bigger.	Some subjects also have specialist teachers, such as French teachers.

DRAWING CONCLUSIONS

Often it's easy, when writing, to think that you have written everything that you needed to include and to stop writing. Unfortunately, for your reader, that can leave them feeling a bit confused - they might not have remembered all of your points, and they probably weren't expecting the writing just to stop!

You can avoid this problem by including a proper conclusion to your writing. All genres of writing need a conclusion. In a formal letter you might conclude by writing a polite sentence, and then signing off with '*Yours faithfully*' or '*Yours sincerely*'.

In many types of writing, your conclusion will follow a similar format. It should remind your reader of the main points of your writing. It may also give you a chance to express your own view.

EXERCISE

Some students have written this article about school uniform. They have included many important points, and have a clear introduction. Unfortunately they fell into the trap of stopping too soon, and they haven't written a clear conclusion. Read the article, and then write your own conclusion to complete it, including a summary, and your own view.

School uniforms have been popular in the United Kingdom for many years - indeed, some schools have uniforms dating back to the middle ages. They can be very expensive, and children grow so quickly that many families end up spending hundreds of pounds on uniform over the course of an academic year. Yet, it still persists. We look at why uniform is popular - and unpopular in some cases - today.

Many parents support school uniform because it saves the issue of worrying about what to wear in the morning. Mother-of-three, Emma Wilson, said, "It just saves so much time. At the weekend it can take hours to get everyone dressed, but during the week they're all in uniform in ten minutes".

It also solves problems for the students themselves. Emma's daughter, Amy, told us how she would worry if she didn't have uniform. She explained how many children would be concerned about bullying if everyone was allowed to wear their own clothes to school, because they don't have the most fashionable labels.

Not everybody agrees with Amy. Some children at Aldington High School told us why they wish they were allowed to wear their own clothes. Fourteen-year-old Mark told us that he thinks all students should be allowed to wear their own clothes. He suggested a dress code could still be in place, that meant that no-one wore famous brands, but everyone would be free to dress in their own style.

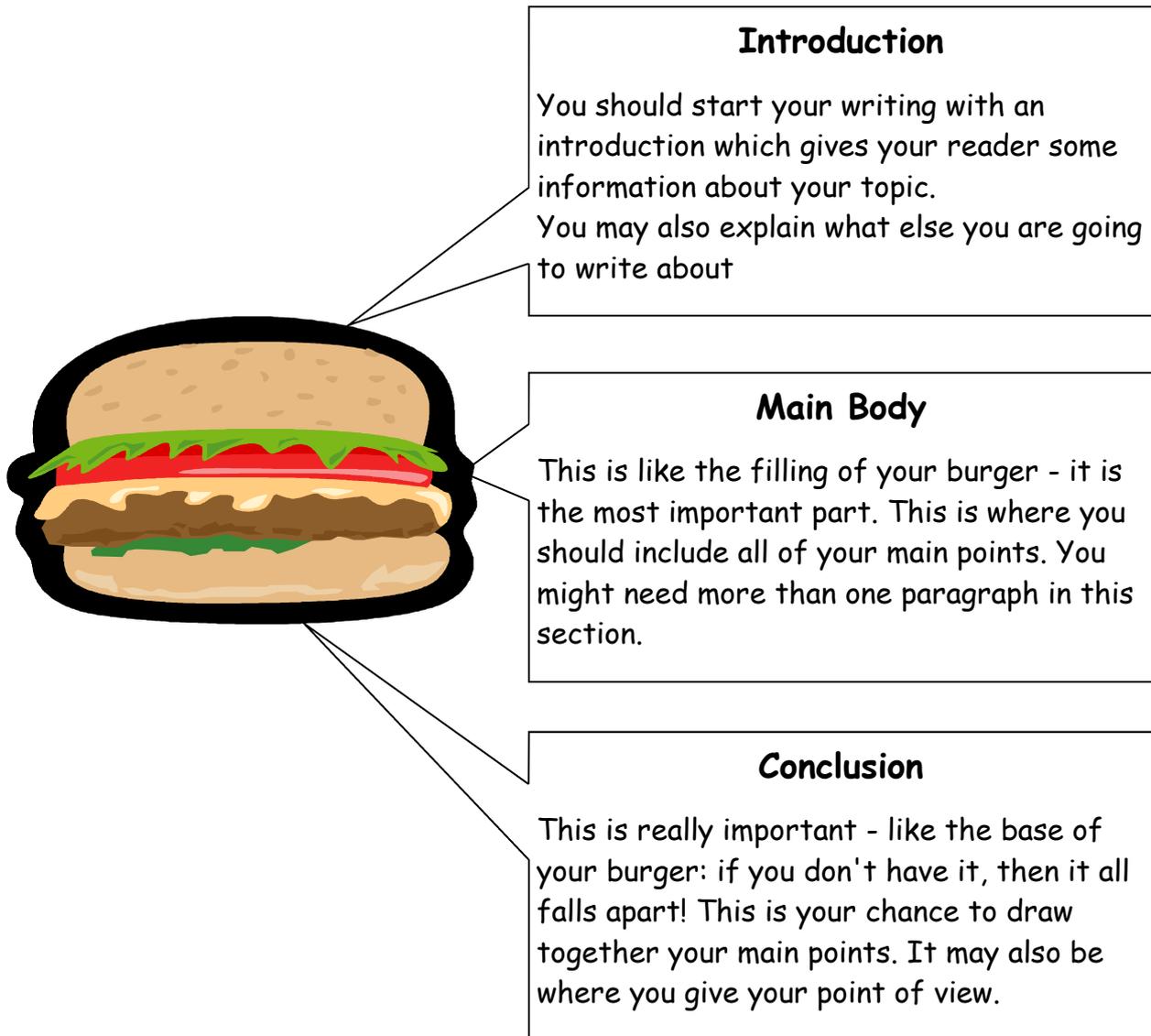
Teacher, Mrs Saunders, added her support. In twenty years of teaching she says she has never known anyone be bullied about their clothes. She said that she felt that students wearing the own clothes might feel more relaxed and ready to learn.

BUILDING YOUR TEXT

It's important when you're writing longer pieces of writing to make sure that you organise your writing to make it easy for your reader to understand.

One of the ways to make your writing easy to read is to make sure you have a clear structure. This means choosing carefully where you put each part of your writing.

You can remember this by remembering that your writing should be a bit like... a burger!



Use the burger idea to help you to write three paragraphs on the topic of school uniform. You should have an introduction which explains what school uniform is like. The main body of your text should explain why some people like uniform and other people don't. Finally, in your conclusion you should write about your opinion of whether you think uniform is a good idea or not.

MODAL VERBS

Modal verbs are a special type of verb which changes the main sentence. You use them all the time without realising it. Often they tell you whether something is possible, expected, necessary or likely. They usually change a sentence from being certain to less certain.

For example, take a look at these two sentences:

I do my homework after school

I *might* do my homework after school

In both of these sentences, the main verb is “do”, but by adding the modal verb “*might*” we are able to change the meaning of the sentence.

There are five main pairs of modal verbs:

can	will	shall	may	must
could	would	should	might	ought

We often see modal verbs used in conditional sentences. That means, we use them to explain what might be the result of some other action, for example:

If it is raining, I *might* do my homework after school

As long as I've got time, I *will* do my homework after school

Providing I can find it, I *shall* do my homework after school

Unless I can find my calculator, I *can't* do my homework after school

Notice that in this last sentence, *can* has become its negative: *can't*. You can do this with all the modal verbs.

Use your knowledge of modal verbs, and conditional phrases to construct some sentences of your own.

Try to construct at least 10 different sentences using each of the main modal verbs, and varying which of the four conditional stems you use.

As long as
If
Providing
Unless

ACTION WORDS!

Think about the last time you watched Neighbours, or Hollyoaks.

Can you remember what the most exciting part of the programme was?

It probably wasn't something someone said, but what they did that made it exciting. It's action that makes stories interesting! You can make your writing interesting by including lots of exciting action - and that means using exciting action words: verbs!

Different types of writing need different sorts of language. On this page you have been given some examples of some exciting verbs, and three different types of writing. Firstly you should match the words you have been given with the three different types of writing. Then try to think of some extra verbs to add to your lists.

You may find a thesaurus helpful - but use it carefully!

A SPORTS REPORT

A SCARY MOVIE SCRIPT

A POLITICIAN'S SPEECH

raced

promise

sever

slice

floated

declare

battled

grab

laboured

strive

demand

tackled

triumph

conceal

reveal

scramble

RE-ORDERING SENTENCES

One of the skills you have learned is to include more complex sentence structures in your writing. For example, instead of using lots of simple sentences,

I got off the train. It was raining. I put my coat on.

you have probably started combining clauses into complex sentences:

As I got off the train, it began to rain so I put on my coat.

In fact, when you add subordinate clauses (like *while As I got off the train*), you can often place it either at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of the sentence. Look at these examples:

As I got off the train, it began to rain so I put on my coat.

It began to rain ***as I got off the train***, so I put on my coat

It began to rain, so I put on my coat ***as I got off the train***

The order you choose for your clauses can make a difference to the meaning of the sentence. Look at the examples above. Did it start raining just as this person got off the train? Or was it already raining, and they just chose to put on their coat as they got off the train?

Sometimes we can put a particular clause first to make it seem like the most important to the narrative:

Emma was furious with John, despite his attempts to calm her
Despite John's attempts to calm her, Emma was furious with him

We can also change the order of clauses to help make our writing more interesting to the reader. Compare these two short paragraphs:

I walked to school wearing my favourite black blazer. I got to the school gates just as the bell rang. I walked slowly to class even though I knew I was late. I apologised for being late, and took my seat at the back of the room. I was in for a bad day: things had not started well

Wearing my favourite black blazer, I walked to school . Just as the bell rang I arrived at the school gates. Even though I knew I was late, I walked slowly to class. I apologised for being late, and took my seat at the back of the room. Things had not started well; I was in for a bad day.

In both cases, the clauses used are virtually identical. However, in the first paragraph, every sentence starts with ***I + verb***. This can get very boring for the reader. The writer has improved this work by varying the order of the clauses in the second paragraph.

Use your skills to improve this paragraph by combining simple sentences into complex ones, and varying the order in which the clauses are written.

I have never liked going to supermarkets. I always find it really boring. I went to Tesco with my mum on Saturday. I was wearing my brand new trainers. We drove in mum's car. We passed three caravans on the main road. I wished I was on holiday. I imagined flying on a plane to a desert island. The desert island was in the Caribbean. The desert island was filled with exciting things to do. There were two swimming pools. I would swim all day. It wasn't real. I still enjoyed it. It was much better than shopping with Mum.

SENTENCE OPENINGS

When you first write a piece of work, you are probably thinking more about the content than about the style of writing you choose. Unfortunately, that sometimes means that your sentences become repetitive - particularly if you are trying to describe a sequence of events. Take a look at this example:

I walked to school wearing my favourite black blazer. I got to the school gates just as the bell rang. I walked slowly to class even though I knew I was late. I apologised for being late, and took my seat at the back of the room. I was in for a bad day: things had not started well

Although this writer has included all the important information, their writing has become rather boring, because every sentence starts in the same way: **I + verb**

To make your writing more interesting, you can vary the way each of your sentences start. Use some of the techniques below to extend and improve the paragraph about walking to school to make a really interesting opening to a story.



Begin your sentence with a preposition!

A preposition is a word that tells you about where or when something happened

Examples: Before he could catch him, the dog had run off to the far side of the field.
Underneath the table, John began to wonder if he would ever escape.



Begin your sentence with a participle!

A participle is a verb with either an -ing or an -ed ending

Examples: Wearing his favourite Manchester Utd t-shirt, Max strode onto the pitch.
Petrified by the noises he could hear, the baby began to cry.



Begin your sentence with an infinitive!

An infinitive is the form of a verb which has 'to' in front of it

Examples: To escape, the children had no choice but to steal the ice cream van.
To make himself heard, Jamie took the loud hailer from its stand.



Begin your sentence with an adverb!

An adverb is a descriptive word which describes the action of the verb

Examples: Calmly, the soldier began to unhook the booby-trap.
Foolishly, the students had forgotten to leave their mobile phones at home.



Begin your sentence with a subordinate clause!

A subordinate clause is a clause which gives more information but doesn't make sense alone

Examples: Although it was still only morning, Jamie knew he had to go home.
Despite his best efforts, it was clear that the gymnast would never win gold.



Begin your sentence with some repeated structures!

Repeated structures allow you to use the same type of phrase a few times in a row

Examples: Bored of lessons, tired of teachers, and weary of writing, he ran for freedom.
From the sea in the east, to the river in the west, Amy could see for miles.

CHOOSE YOUR WORDS CAREFULLY

When you're writing, you should think very carefully about the words you choose. You'll need different words for different topics, and you can show how well you understand a topic by using words related to it. For example, if you're writing about a piece of music, it would be much better to write about *crotchets* or *a snare drum* than just *notes* or *a drum*.

In this activity, you should try to match the words to the topic. Think carefully about what the words mean, and why you might use them. You could highlight them in different colours to show which topic they relate to.

Science Report

Cooking Recipe

School Report

Horror Story

beater

measure

victory

location

beautiful

improved

sternly

petrified

disgusted

entrance

conclusion

tackled

achieving

beat

terror

service

House Sale Advert

Sports News Story

Letter of complaint

Stage Directions

When you have matched all of the words, try to think of some vocabulary you might use that links to these topics:

A Television Review

Fairy Tale

Food Tech Evaluation