



Exercise – Positioning paragraphs

Instructions

In order to produce a well organised piece of academic text it is important that you understand how paragraphing is used to subdivide a main topic into smaller themed subtopics. Generally, in an academic essay or report, a new paragraph indicates a new theme or idea. It is therefore important for you as a writer to be able to identify when to start new paragraphs to give your assignment a coherent and logical organisation. This exercise will help you to self-assess how well you can identify when it is appropriate to use new paragraphs.

On pages 3 and 4 there is block of text. You are required to read through the text and identify where new paragraphs should have been placed. On page 5 and 6 there is a suggested answer.

Further information

The Learning Resources Study Hub provides a range of opportunities (such as workshops and drop-ins) for you to enhance your academic skills. For more information visit:

lrweb.beds.ac.uk/studyhub



Exercise

The following text has been written as one paragraph. However, this single paragraph is far too long.

Read through the text (on pages 3 and 4) and indicate where new paragraphs should start.

For information: The following is a breakdown of the main topics that are addressed:

1. Starting an essay
2. Researching the topic
3. Planning
4. Writing an introduction
5. Writing the main body
6. Writing a conclusion
7. Proofreading

Prior to writing an essay it is important to ensure that you have carefully read your assignment brief. This will provide information regarding what should be included in the essay and should clarify any questions around issues, such as formatting. In order to write a good essay the assignment brief is followed. It is therefore a good idea to periodically refer back to the brief to ensure compatibility with tutor specifications. If there is an aspect of the assignment brief that is unclear or ambiguous it is important to consult a lecturer before writing. The first stage of writing an essay involves researching the topic. As with any assignment it is essential that only good quality sources (such as peer reviewed journals or books) are used. Use of poor quality sources will undermine the quality of work that is produced. Students who are unsure as to what constitute good quality sources can speak to an Academic Liaison Librarian. Whilst researching an essay it is useful to make notes and/or summaries on relevant or useful sources that have been read. It is important to make sure that sources are clearly referenced throughout notes and summaries that are made. Planning an essay will help to ensure that writing is logical and coherent. It is therefore worth taking the time to provisionally plan essay content and the order in which you will present information. However, it is important to remember that plans may need further modification once writing commences. When creating a plan it is sensible to incorporate the three main aspects of an essay – introduction, main body and conclusion. The purpose of an introduction is to set the scene for the reader in terms of topic context and essay content. Typically, the first few sentences of the introduction will form a rationale (i.e. what topic is being addressed and why this is important). To set a context a writer should start generally and become more specific. You should aim to outline why it is important to answer your assignment question (other than because your tutor has told you to). References can be included in the introduction. The introduction should then outline how the assignment question(s) will be addressed. An introduction normally comprises around 10% of the total word count. This main body is the largest part of an essay and this is where the assignment question(s) should be addressed. It is important that throughout the main body it is made clear to the reader how all parts of the assessment brief are being addressed. This can be achieved through periodically making connections between what you have written and the relevant part(s) of the assignment question. References must be used throughout. Generally 80% of the total word count is used in this part of this essay. A good conclusion will not simply repeat what has already

been said. Instead, it will aim to tie together key points that have made throughout the assignment (but perhaps not explicitly stated) and indicate how the assignment question has been addressed. A writer should not introduce new information within the conclusion. The conclusion is usually around 10% of the total word count. After writing an essay it is essential to proofread your work prior to submitting it. After writing an essay it is essential to proofread your work prior to submitting it. Checking should focus on areas such as referencing, grammar, spelling, punctuation and the level of detail you use to discuss concepts is appropriate. One very effective way to proofread work is to read out loud exactly what has been written on the page. It is also sensible to look for specific types of mistake if these have been highlighted in previous assignment feedback.

Suggested answer

Prior to writing an essay it is important to ensure that you have carefully read your assignment brief. This will provide information regarding what should be included in the essay and should clarify any questions around issues, such as formatting. In order to write a good essay the assignment brief is followed. It is therefore a good idea to periodically refer back to the brief to ensure compatibility with tutor specifications. If there is an aspect of the assignment brief that is unclear or ambiguous it is important to consult a lecturer before writing.

The first stage of writing an essay involves researching the topic. As with any assignment it is essential that only good quality sources (such as peer reviewed journals or books) are used. Use of poor quality sources will undermine the quality of work that is produced. Students who are unsure as to what constitute good quality sources can speak to an Academic Liaison Librarian. Whilst researching an essay it is useful to make notes and/or summaries on relevant or useful sources that have been read. It is important to make sure that sources are clearly referenced throughout notes and summaries that are made.

Planning an essay will help to ensure that writing is logical and coherent. It is therefore worth taking the time to provisionally plan essay content and the order in which you will present information. However, it is important to remember that plans may need further modification once writing commences. When creating a plan it is sensible to incorporate the three main aspects of an essay – introduction, main body and conclusion.

An essay introduction should set the scene for the reader in terms of topic context and essay content. Typically, the first few sentences of the introduction will form a rationale (i.e. what topic is being addressed and why this is important). To set a context a writer should start generally and become more specific. You should aim to outline why it is important to answer your assignment question (other than because your tutor has told you to). References can be included in the introduction. The introduction should then outline how the assignment question(s) will be addressed. An introduction normally comprises around 10% of the total word count.

This main body is the largest part of an essay and this is where the assignment question(s) should be addressed. It is important that throughout the main body it is made clear to the reader how all parts of the assessment brief are being addressed. This can be achieved through periodically making connections between what you have written and the relevant part(s) of the assignment question. References must be used throughout. Generally 80% of the total word count is used in this part of this essay.

A good conclusion will not simply repeat what has already been said. Instead, it will aim to tie together key points that have made throughout the assignment (but perhaps not explicitly stated) and indicate how the assignment question has been addressed. A writer should not introduce new information within the conclusion. The conclusion is usually around 10% of the total word count.

After writing an essay it is essential to proofread your work prior to submitting it. Checking should focus on areas such as referencing, grammar, spelling, punctuation and the level of detail you use to discuss concepts is appropriate. One very effective way to proofread work is to read out loud exactly what has been written on the page. It is also sensible to look for specific types of mistake if these have been highlighted in previous assignment feedback.