Developing the Relationship Between Ideas

You now know a couple of prewriting strategies that can help you plan out a paragraph. But a paragraph is not just a list of facts or ideas about a topic; it has to present the information in a meaningful way. In order to do that, the sentences have to be related to one another. Certain words provide clues as to how sentences are related to one another. See if you can figure out the relationship in the example below.

*Jamal is good at math and chemistry. However, he is not good at history.*

The first sentence gives us information about the school subjects in which Jamal does well. In the second sentence, “however” is used to present us with a contrast. In this case, “however” signals that the second sentence will be about a subject in which Jamal struggles.

Here is the example again, with an additional sentence added:

*Jamal is good at math and chemistry. However, he is not good at history. Yesterday some of his friends came over to help him find a job.*

What is the relationship between the new sentence and the previous sentence? The new sentence is about Jamal, but it is not related to his school work, unlike the first two sentences. Let’s look at some more sentences:

**EXAMPLE 1:**

*Jamal is good at math and chemistry (1). However, he is not good at history (2). Yesterday some of his friends came over to help him find a job (3). They ended up filling out forms all afternoon, and Jamal did not get his homework done (4).*

**EXAMPLE 2:**

*Jamal is good at math and chemistry (1). However, he is not good at history (2). Yesterday some of his friends came over to help him find a job (3). Because Jamal is good at math, Lee thought he should apply to be a cashier at a coffee shop (4).*

Which of the two examples has clearer relationships between all of the sentences? In other words, which one goes more logically from one idea to the next?

Example 2 has clearer relationships between the ideas in the sentences. The final sentence establishes the relationship between sentences 3 and 4 and relates them to
sentence 1. Each sentence is now building upon the sentences that came before, and the topic of the paragraph is how being good at school can help with other activities.

In Example 1, the final sentence creates a relationship between sentence 3 and 4, one of cause and effect. Because event A happened (his friends came over), event B followed (he did not get his homework done). However, it is not clear how not doing his homework relates to the first two sentences. As a result, the topic of the paragraph is unclear. Here are some common relationships between sentences with words used to signify those relationships:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Cause/Effect</th>
<th>Contrasts</th>
<th>Conclusions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>and, another, in addition, such as, moreover, for example, for instance, to illustrate</td>
<td>because, as a result, consequently, therefore, thus</td>
<td>but, yet, neither, however, although, nevertheless, though</td>
<td>in conclusion, finally, to sum up, in the end</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Use a highlighter to mark all of the words in the following paragraph that indicate a relationship. Check your answers on the next page.

Jamal is good at math and chemistry (1). However, he is not good at history (2). Yesterday some of his friends came over to help him find a job (3). Because Jamal is good at math, Lee thought he should apply to be a cashier at a coffee shop (4). However, Jamal really hates the smell of coffee, so he thought he’d rather work at the hot dog stand (5). In the end, they agreed that it would be best to apply to many stores to increase his chances of getting hired (6).
Your paragraph should look like this:

Jamal is good at math and chemistry (1). **However**, he is not good at history (2). Yesterday some of his friends came over to help him find a job (3). **Because** Jamal is good at math, Lee thought he should apply to be a cashier at a coffee stand (4). **However**, Jamal really hates the smell of coffee, *so* he thought he’d rather work at the hot dog stand (5). **In the end**, they agreed that it would be best to apply at many stores to increase his chances of getting hired (6).

As you can see, it is not necessary for every sentence to contain a word that establishes a relationship. In the example above, sentence 3 does not, but the sentence is still related to the rest of the paragraph.

Here is another example. Use a highlighter to mark all of the words that indicate a relationship. Check your answers on the next page.

*Sherlock Holmes solved the mystery of ‘The Red-Headed League’ by using deductive reasoning.* Deductive reasoning is when you take pieces of information and then draw a conclusion from that information. **His friend, Dr. Watson, has the same information, yet he cannot solve the mysteries.* He is smart; however, Sherlock Holmes has a unique talent. Another way Holmes can solve mysteries is through the notes and journals he keeps to track information. **In the end, it is clear that Sherlock Holmes is the best crime solver.**
Your paragraph should look like this:

_Sherlock Holmes solved the mystery of ‘The Red-Headed League’ by using deductive reasoning._ Deductive reasoning is when you take pieces of information and then draw a conclusion from that information. His friend, Dr. Watson, has the same information, yet he cannot solve the mysteries. He is smart; however, Sherlock Holmes has a unique talent. Another way Holmes can solve mysteries is through the notes and journals he keeps to track information. **In the end,** it is clear that Sherlock Holmes is the best crime solver.

**PRACTICE 1:** Create a paragraph from the sentences listed below, using one of each type of relationship word from the chart shown earlier (example, cause/effect, contrast, conclusion). You may need to rewrite the sentences for them to make sense, and feel free to combine two sentences to make one longer sentence.

1. The Sherlock Holmes stories take place in the late 1800s in England.
2. People then had to do things differently than we do today.
3. They used horse-drawn cabs instead of cars.
4. The streets were narrow and it took longer to get around.
5. Few people had access to electricity and telephones.
6. Holmes kept journals to track information.
7. It would have been fun to live at that time.