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Part One

The Essentials of Academic Writing

The chapters in this part introduce you to the basics of writing in an academic environment, with a focus on your specific needs as a student of nursing or midwifery. You will first explore the principles of organizing and structuring information and see how these principles work for different kinds (and levels) of nursing and midwifery writing. You will then look at description and argumentation and how these can be put to work in different writing genres. Finally, you will examine more complex processes such as reflection and critical thinking.

• Chapter 1: An Introduction to Academic Writing

In this first chapter, you will find the essentials of academic writing at university level. The chapter starts by exploring background (what), rationale (why) and signposting (how) in essay planning. It then introduces the principles of 'macro structuring'. It will show you how to expand the structure of a paragraph into an essay, organize information in order to enhance the flow of your texts and structure ideas following an organizing principle. Next, the chapter considers 'micro structuring' at the paragraph level. At the end of the chapter you will find 'problem-shooting' checklists that deal with common grammar and English use problems such as sentence fragments, incorrect punctuation and dangling modifiers.

• Chapter 2: Exploring Academic Genres

Chapter 2 elaborates on the principles explored in the first chapter. It illustrates how these principles work for the typical texts or genres you will be asked to produce at the different levels of your undergraduate studies. In line with the demands of most university courses, the chapter works from description to argumentation. It thus starts with the generic academic essay and moves on to explore more specific genres such as the care critique and the article review. In the last part

of the chapter, you will examine argumentation for the argumentative essay.

• **Chapter 3: Writing Processes in Academic Writing**

This chapter will help you explore two complex writing processes: reflection and critical thinking. You will start by looking at what reflection involves and at how the different stages of the reflection cycle can be incorporated into the reflective essay. The chapter then introduces you to the principles of critical thinking and how you can use these principles to evaluate your sources of reference.

1 An Introduction to Academic Writing

● The basics of planning in academic writing

Have you ever written a letter? An email? Even a short mobile text? If you have, you wrote for a purpose. It was a **purposeful activity**. Academic writing is also a purposeful activity. When you write an assignment, you have a definite purpose in mind. You want a particular audience (who?) to have information (what?) with a specific focus (what exactly?). You have reasons for doing so (why?), and you are delivering the information in a certain way, such as describing, discussing or analysing (how?).

These question words (*who, what, what exactly, why and how*) can be your **guiding prompts** when you plan your next piece of writing.

Let us look at an example. Suppose you had to write an essay on the following: *Midwife means 'with woman'. Discuss how the midwife should care*

for the woman in the second stage of labour. You could use the five question words above to ask yourself some guiding questions. For instance,



Glossary

Question words

Audience: **Who** am I writing the essay for? *Lecturer.*

Topic: **What** is the essay going to be about? *Midwife care for the woman in labour.*

Focus: **What exactly** am I going to focus on? *Some ways in which the midwife can provide care in the second stage of labour.*

Rationale: **Why** am I going to focus on some ways of providing care and not others? *They are the most crucial at this stage of labour.*

Signpost: **How** am I going to deliver the information? *By discussing the different ways the midwife can provide the care.*

At the end of this chapter, you should be able to:

- ▶ recognize the five basic principles of planning in academic writing
- ▶ identify the three elements in essay questions and follow marking criteria
- ▶ understand gathering, organizing and structuring information
- ▶ reproduce the generic structure of academic texts
- ▶ identify main problems with sentence fragments, cohesion, dangling modifiers and punctuation

These questions will help you choose the right information for your essay as well as the right amount of information for your audience. Your course lecturer, your audience in this case, already knows the answer to the essay question and probably expects you will answer it in a certain way. But your lecturer does not exactly know what information you will choose or why you will choose it. This is the **rationale** for your essay. It is what makes your essay unique – only you will choose to deal with the topic in the way you have decided.

These questions give you the five basic principles of essay planning. They will help you organize your ideas and structure your information so that your



Glossary

Signpost, Rationale

essay has the focus you want it to have. Organizing and structuring your information in this way will also improve the flow of your texts.

You will need more information to develop your essay, but the five questions give you the basic approach to planning any academic text. When your lecturer finishes reading your assignment, s/he should know why you have answered the essay question the way you have.

● Planning and structuring principles

Let us now examine one possible way of planning your essays according to the five basic questions that represent basic **planning and structuring principles**. Figure 1.1 shows how you can go about planning to answer an essay question. The figure illustrates how you can organize your essay (for example from general to specific) and how you can structure it (from background information to example). When you decide to arrange the information in your text from general to specific, as in this case, or from most to least important or chronologically (from most recent to oldest), you are using an **organization principle**. But, when you decide that your text will present

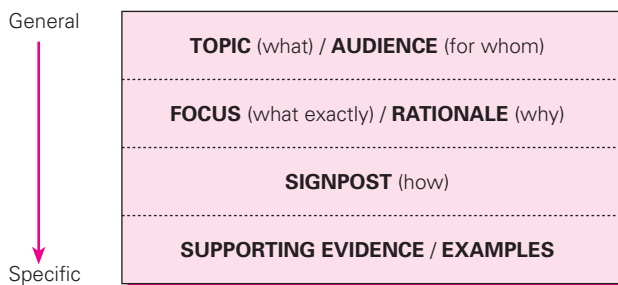


Figure 1.1 Planning essays

your reader with some background information before the focus and the rationale, as shown in Figure 1.1, you are planning the **structuring principle** for your text.

Remember that whereas organization can easily be changed, structure is not as flexible. Structure is connected with the way we transmit and understand new and given information. Structuring tends to be fairly fixed, and it largely depends on the language you are using. In English writing, background information normally precedes supporting examples. It is always a good idea to choose your organizing principle first and then decide on the most appropriate structure for your information.

You may decide, for example, that the information in your essay will be organized from general to specific. Then you may choose to structure it giving the background information first, and then the examples. Thus, your text will present,

- **background information** on the topic (what);
- the **focus** (what exactly);
- the **rationale** for answering the essay question in a particular way (why);
- the **signpost** (how the information will be delivered: by description, analysis, discussion, etc.).

● Understanding essay questions

You will find many of the ideas we have just discussed in essay questions themselves. Essay questions can tell you what information to include (what), what aspects of that information to include (what exactly) and how you should deliver such aspects (how). If you analyse essay questions carefully, you will discover that most contain these three basic elements: the **topic**, the **focus** and the **signpost**. How you approach the topic is entirely up to you and, as we said, it is what makes your essay different from all other essays.

Let us consider again the essay question:

Midwife means 'with woman'. Discuss how the midwife should care for the woman in the second stage of labour.

The topic is the care that the midwife should provide for the woman. This is very broad and you could include many things in your discussion. You could, for example, think of pre-natal and post-natal care, health promotion, care to meet the woman's social needs, and the like. However, the essay question

asks about *the second stage of labour*. Many of these aspects of midwifery care are only *indirectly* connected to the second stage of labour which is the aspect on which you need to focus your writing. Therefore, you need to narrow down your focus. You should then consider things like:

- How does the midwife's role change in the second stage?
- How do the woman's needs change in the second stage?
- This stage is called the 'pushing stage'; what is actually happening?
- Should the midwife go for 'spontaneous pushing' or 'sustained directed bearing down efforts'?
- How can the midwife support the woman emotionally until the baby is born?

Narrowing down will help you stay focused and avoid including information that is not relevant to the topic. Finally, you should look at the verb to see how your lecturer expects you to develop your answer. The verb in the

question will indicate how you need to signpost your essay. What is the verb in the example essay question? Does it ask you to,

Glossary
Narrow down

- say what is right or wrong about the care that the midwife should provide in the second stage of labour?
- examine different aspects of the care in the second stage of labour?

'Discuss' does not mean to say what is right or wrong. It means to examine different aspects of a topic. You could, for instance, think of the midwife care in terms of physical support (for example suggesting alternative positions for women without epidural anaesthesia, helping with contractions) and of emotional support (for example dealing with intense emotions and sensations). In this way, you could examine the different roles that the midwife could play in the second stage and, using **supporting evidence** from the literature (see later in the chapter), discuss alternatives in relation to physical and emotional support. As this example shows, verbs in essay

Glossary
Supporting evidence

questions are essential to understand how you are supposed to signpost your essay.

Let us look at another example. This time we will examine a typical question for nursing students:

Evaluate the importance of effective communication in nursing.

Activity 1.1

The table below lists the verbs you will see most often used in essay questions. Write the meaning of each verb in your own words. You do not need to provide complete sentences; key words will do. Use a dictionary if you are not sure of the meanings. 'Argue' and 'discuss' have been done for you as examples.

Verb	Definition	Additional information
Analyse		
Argue	To give reasons why something is right or wrong, true or untrue.	To persuade people.
Classify		
Demonstrate		
Differentiate		
Discuss	To examine in detail, showing the different opinions or ideas about something.	Frequently confused with 'argue', but a more balanced response is required in 'discuss'.
Evaluate		
Examine		
Explain		
Identify		
Outline		
Produce		

Answers See suggested answers on page 188

Again, you should identify the topic first: *communication in nursing*. Remember that topics tend to be broad. So you will need a focus. In this example question, the focus is given by the phrase 'the importance of effec-

tive communication'. You will need to tell your reader what 'effective communication in nursing' is and 'why it is important'.

You could, for example, include ideas such as 'communication with other nurses, clients, and the client's family', 'what makes each type of communication effective', 'the importance of verbal communication on admission to hospital', and the like.

Finally, you need to consider the signpost; that is, the action you are asked to take in relation to the topic and its focus. In this example, the action is 'evaluate', so you are to judge the value of effective communication in nursing to form an opinion about it (see Activity 1.1 above and the suggested answers at the back of the book).

● **Interpreting and using marking criteria**

As well as the essay question, you should also look at the **marking criteria** for the essay. These criteria are an important source of information for you. They will help you make decisions on what to include in your essay. Using the marking criteria at the planning stage will improve your chances of getting a higher mark.



Glossary

Assessment/marketing criteria

Here is another example. This is a question for a 1,000 word reflective essay and its accompanying marking criteria:

Discuss how your transferable skills of communication, effective learning, teamwork, numeracy and personal and career development have developed during the semester.

Criteria	Comments
1 Work neatly presented and easy to read	
2 Evidence of self-assessment of skills at beginning of semester	
3 Balanced view of the progress made in each of the skills	
4 Identification of further developmental needs	
5 Correct spelling and grammar	
6 List of references included	

Table 1.1 Sample marking criteria for a short essay

Did you realize that half the total marking criteria for this assignment are for the conventions of academic writing? Let us examine each of these three criteria in more detail.

Criterion 1 refers to the presentation of your work and how easy it is to read. A well-presented essay may get a higher mark than a disorganized and poorly presented one. Here are some important things to keep in mind. Your essay should be:

- word processed, with no typing errors;
- double-spaced throughout;
- written in a legible **font style** and **font size** – normally using Times New Roman or Arial, 11 or 12 pt;
- presented with generous margins – generally 2 to 2.5 centimetres all around;
- correctly introduced (see the section on paragraphing below);
- adequately paragraphed (ditto).

**Glossary**

Font size, Font style

Criterion 5 is also connected with how easy your essay is to read. If the spelling and grammar are correct, you will improve your chances of getting a better mark. You should:

- use the word processor spell-check, though it is always safer to use a dictionary;
- refer to grammar guides if you are unsure of correct uses of the language (see the section on grammar and English use below, and Further Readings and Resources at the end of the book).

Criterion 6 is about referencing, which is discussed in Chapter 10, although here are some basic considerations connected with references. When you prepare your **list of references**, you have to remember to:

- include only those references you have mentioned in the body of your text;
- organize the list of references alphabetically;
- include the basic information about the references;
- make sure there is no discrepancy between the references on the list and those in the text.

**Glossary**List of references
(compare with
bibliography)

Now that you have

- examined the essay question, and
- analysed the marking criteria,

you are ready to start the final stage in planning: searching for the information that you will include in your essay.

● **Gathering information**

This final stage in planning is known as 'search and select'. This simply means that you collect lots of information, then you choose the most useful. These two processes are closely linked, and are important for organizing and structuring information before you start writing your essay. Figure 1.2 illustrates the links between them.

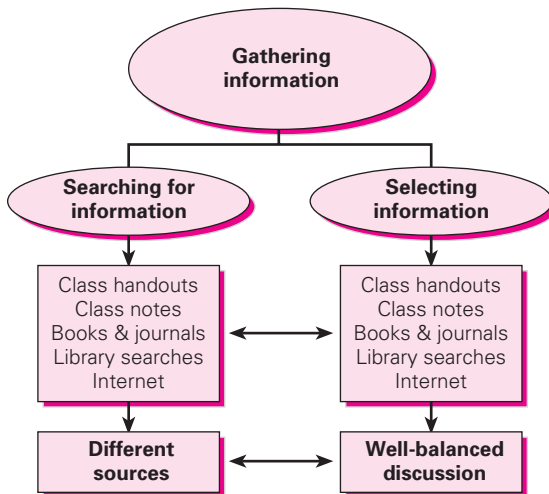


Figure 1.2 The process of gathering information

Searching for information

Where can you start searching for information? Class handouts and class notes can provide an excellent starting point, they may contain references which have been suggested by lecturers, normally in a recommended reading list. These sources of 'pre-selected information' can help you reduce the anxiety created by having to look at too many sources.

The internet is another source of information, but it can also be a source of confusion. When you do an internet search, remember to use key words instead of phrases. For instance, if you wanted to do a search for

Midwife means 'with woman'. Discuss how the midwife should care for the woman in the second stage of labour.

you would be better off using key words like 'second stage of labour'. This will reduce the number of hits you will get back as a response to your search. Alternatively, if you want to search for the whole phrase 'the second stage of labour', use inverted commas at the beginning and end of the phrase so as to avoid hitting pages containing meaningless words such as 'the' and 'of'.

A second word of warning about the internet relates to the quality of information you may find. Unlike other sources (such as journals and books), the contents of websites may not be safeguarded for their accuracy and correctness. There are no 'editorial boards' to make sure that what gets published is accurate and correct. Always check for things such as:

- who is responsible for the website;
- whether the website is associated with or recognized by a council;
- the academic credential of the person writing the information;
- the type of audience the website was designed for.

Once you have established a relationship of trust with a given website, then you can use its information safely.

A more reliable source of information for your academic activities is databases. Access to online databases will be provided by your university library. Academic databases may contain information about books, journals, newspapers, reports, and so on. You have to keep in mind that each source is different in its scope and features so it is always a good idea to start by first becoming familiar with the source you will be using. The two main ways to search databases are by using subject headings, also called 'descriptors', and keywords. You can get more detailed information on how to use the databases available at your university by using the 'Help' function in the database or by asking a librarian at your university library.

Selecting information

Not all the sources of information you have chosen will find a home in your essay. You will still have to **select** the most appropriate pieces. As shown in Figure 1.2, there are various principles you can follow. You can select information by:

- its topic;
- its focus;
- how closely connected it is to your focus;
- its quality;
- whether it is *evidence-based*.

It is also important that you present your reader with an objective and balanced account. For this, you will need to include not only those sources of information that confirm your position but also those that challenge it. We will return to this point when we deal with argumentation in Chapter 2 and, especially, in Chapter 6.

If you manage to strike a balance between these types of sources (books, journal articles and internet sources), you will provide your readers with **different sources** of good quality and updated information. Lecturers will want to see this in your assignments.

If you manage to consider not only relevant and **evidence-based** argu-



Glossary

Evidence-based

ments that support the points you want to make but also those that challenge your arguments, you will provide your audience with a

well-balanced discussion. Lecturers will want to see this in your assignments too!

● **Organizing and structuring information**

Now it is time to decide how you will **organize and structure** your essay. Remember that organizing and structuring are two related, but slightly different processes. Organization has to do with order, while structuring refers to patterns. If you were working on the different ways the midwife can support the woman in the second stage of labour, how could you organize these ways?

One way is by listing. When you list aspects, or ways like in this case, you isolate them and thus you can identify them more clearly. There is also an element of 'classifying' here. Classifying helps with logical thinking, achieving balance and clearer writing. Do not worry about the order of the elements in your list; you can change the order later on. Use bullets rather than numbers so you do not get any particular order fixed in your head at this stage.

For example, you can list the ways in which the midwife can support the woman physically and emotionally:

Supporting women in the second stage of labour

A Physical support

- Monitor the fetal heart
- Assess and protect the perineum
- Provide equipment e.g. beanbag

B Emotional support

- Talk her through the process
- Encourage verbally
- Support choice of position

The next step is to give the selected items a certain order. This step should always be guided by some principle. As we discussed above, you can organize them chronologically, in order of importance, or by dealing with the most difficult first. In this case we will organize the items following a chronological order:

Supporting women in the second stage of labour

1 Physical support

- 1.1 Monitor the fetal heart
- 1.2 Provide equipment e.g. beanbag
- 1.3 Assess and protect the perineum

2 Emotional support

- 2.1 Support choice of position
- 2.2 Encourage verbally
- 2.3 Talk her through the process

Notice that you can now change bullets into numbers as this is the order in which the essay will be developed.

Activity 1.2

Here are some scrambled ideas about the second essay question we considered above: *Evaluate the importance of effective communication in nursing*. How would you organise and structure them to write an essay on this question? You may need to leave some out, depending on the rationale you have chosen.

The importance of effective communication in nursing

- Collaboration and negotiation skills with clients and families
- Common barriers to effective communication
- Communication as a therapeutic space
- Communicating with the family
- Work teams in nursing practice
- Dealing with aggression
- Focusing on feelings, being warm and non-judgemental
- Self-disclosure and small groups
- Facilitating empathy

Answers See suggested answers on page 189.



Organizing and structuring will help the ideas in your **text flow** more smoothly, while enhancing your chances of a higher mark.

● Paragraphing information

Now that you have finished planning, it is time to shape your information into texts. This process is called '**paragraphing**'. Paragraphing refers to putting information into 'blocks' or paragraphs which contain one principal idea.

Activity 1.3

Read the following paragraph and answer the questions below.

Nurses can work in many healthcare settings, which gives them the opportunity to gain experience in all aspects of caring for clients and their families. Nurses can thus build their professional career in many different ways. They may choose to become clinical specialists or consultant nurses, or they can opt for managerial positions as a head of nursing services or supervisor of other nurses. Some may prefer to pursue an academic career in education and research. These are just a few examples of the opportunities that nurses currently have to develop their professional interests.

The paragraph has five sentences. Can you identify,

- 1 the sentence that introduces the general idea of the text (**topic**)?
- 2 another sentence that provides the focus/point of view of the topic (**focus**)?
- 3 the examples that develop/support the focus (**examples/evidence**)?
- 4 the sentence that brings the text to an end (**conclusion**)?

Answers See suggested answers on page 190.

The first sentence in a paragraph sets the scene for the reader. It discloses the **topic** of the text; that is why it is usually called the 'topic sentence'. This sentence provides the reader with enough background information to understand the text.

The topic and the focus in the paragraph above tell us that nurses can build a professional career in many different ways. But what are these ways? To answer this question, we need to go on reading and find either **examples**

or **evidence** that support the claims made in the focus. The text above uses examples to do this. After the text presents examples exploring different possibilities for nurses, it moves on to a conclusion. The **conclusion**, the fifth sentence in the example, brings a text to an end in a satisfactory manner.

But what is a *satisfactory manner*? The answer is in the focus of your text. When you present your readers with the focus of your text, you create certain expectations in them. For example, if you said you would discuss ‘the three fundamental reasons that make the third stage of labour the most critical’, your reader would immediately expect to read three fundamental reasons why you consider the third stage of labour the most critical.

Also a satisfactory conclusion takes the reader back to the focus of the text. In the text about careers for nurses, we can clearly see how the conclusion **rephrases** (states the same idea by using similar words) the focus of the text. Thus, we can draw a parallel between the focus of the text (‘nurses can thus build their professional career in many different ways’) and its



Glossary

Cohesion, Paragraph,
Paragraphing, Rephrase

conclusion (‘these are just few examples of the opportunities that nurses have to develop their professional interests.’). This conclusion is also satisfactory because it gives the reader

something further to think about. The writer is inviting the reader to ‘engage’ with the ideas in the text by thinking of other ways that nurses can develop their careers or professional interests. Good conclusions always leave the reader with something to think about.

There is one last thing we need to consider: how all these parts of the text have been put together. This is called ‘**cohesion**’. Cohesion is the ‘glue’ that sticks the text together. You can create cohesion by:

- repeating key words that remind the reader of what the text is about and link the ideas expressed in different sentences;
- using a network of words (e.g. nurses, nursing, care, clients, etc.) that helps the writer put ideas together, while avoiding heavy repetition of the same word or words;
- using connectives (e.g. and, but, thus) that give unity to the text and show the connection between one idea and the next, one sentence and the next or even one text and the next (see the section on grammar and English use below).

● From paragraph to essay

The basic structure we have just analysed is sometimes referred to as the generic structure of a paragraph. A generic structure is like the ‘backbone’

of a text that can be used to generate similar texts. You can use this generic structure again and again every time you need to create a new paragraph.

The generic structure of a paragraph can be expanded to create the generic structure of an essay, and Figure 1.3 shows how the generic structure of a short text like the paragraph about careers for nurses can be expanded to create the structure of an essay.

The inverted triangle in the essay introduction represents the general-to-specific way in which information has been organized. In the conclusion, on the other hand, information has been organized from specific to general. We will come back to this at the end of this section.

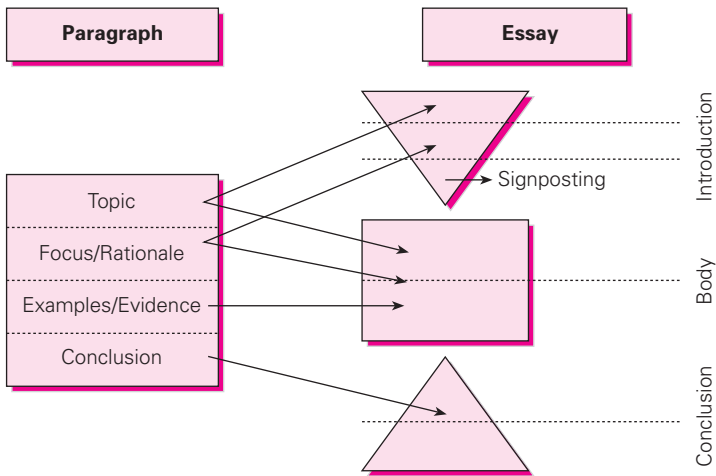


Figure 1.3 Expanding a paragraph into an essay

Sources: Adapted from Oshima and Hogue (1998), and Swales and Feak (1994).

The function of each part of a paragraph (for example the topic sentence provides the reader with background information about the text) can be mirrored in the function of each part of an essay. So, the introduction of an essay will first present the topic, then the focus, and then the rationale. The only function that we do not frequently find in a paragraph but which should be present in the introduction of an essay is signposting (how you will deliver the information in your essay).

Let us look (Figure 1.4) at how the topic and the focus in the paragraph about careers for nurses can be expanded into the introduction of a short essay.

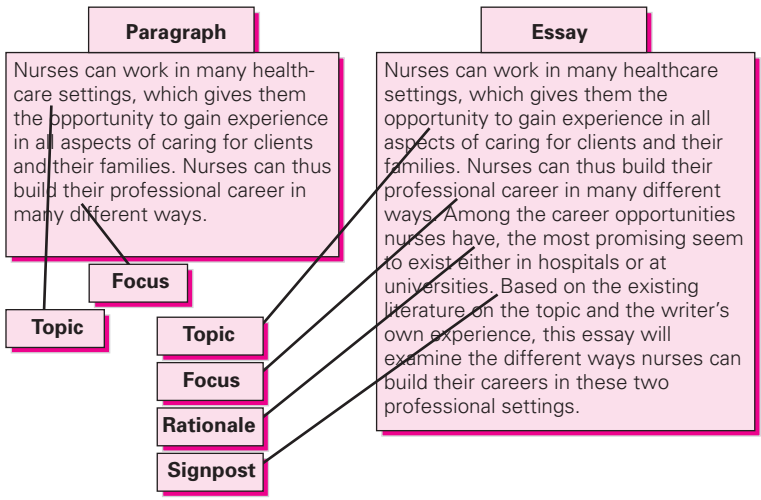


Figure 1.4 From paragraph to essay – example 1

The examples used to support the claims we have made in the focus of the paragraph and in the essay introduction can be organized in different paragraphs in the body of the essay. Figure 1.5 illustrates one way of doing this.

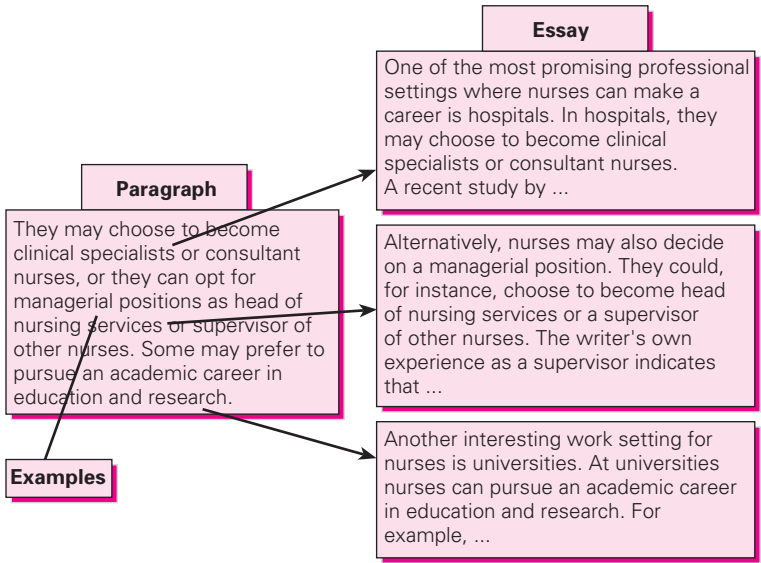


Figure 1.5 From paragraph to essay – example 2

Notice how each supporting example has generated one body paragraph in the essay. Can you also see how each of the paragraphs in the body of the essay follows the generic structure we discussed above: topic, focus and evidence or examples to support the claims? Figure 1.6 now shows how the conclusion in the paragraph about careers for nurses can be expanded into the concluding paragraph of the essay.

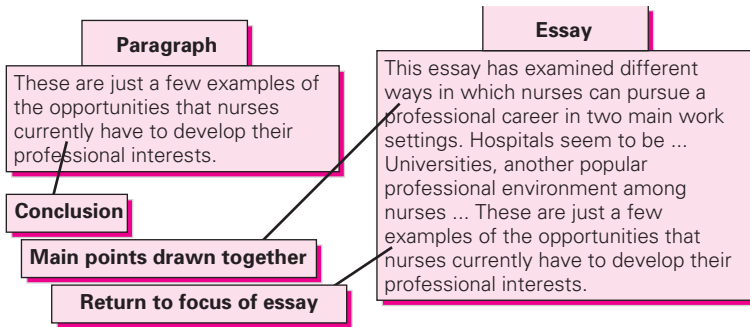


Figure 1.6 From paragraph to essay – example 3

As you can see, the concluding paragraph in the essay first draws together the main points mentioned in the body by summarizing them. It then returns to the focus of the essay. Notice also that while the information in the introductory paragraph is organized from general to specific, the organization of the information in the conclusion goes from specific to general. Although you may come across variations of this kind of essay organization and structuring, this is a typical ordering and patterning of information in an academic essay.

You will find more on planning, organizing and structuring specific assignments (the reflective essay, the care critique and the like) in Part 2 of the book.

● Grammar and English use

This last section of the chapter deals with some of the main grammar and language-use problems that many students experience when writing academically. We look at sentence fragments, cohesion, dangling modifiers and punctuation. For easy referencing, these problems are examined in the form of a trouble-shooting list. If you feel you need more detail on any of these

topics, see the Glossary of Key Terms and the list of Further Readings and Resources at the end of the book.

Sentence fragments

Sentence fragments are incomplete pieces of writing which do not make sense on their own. The most common fragments are:

- phrases without a main verb (e.g. *All treatments available at hospitals.*);
- parts of a longer sentence which have been used independently (e.g. *Because they made the wrong decision.*);
- phrases with a verb but without a subject (e.g. *In the end decided to go for a caesarean operation.*).

Problem	Solution
<p>Phrase without a main verb Some more comments about the procedures. (a phrase)</p>	<p>Add a verb Some more comments were made about the procedures.</p>
<p>Unconnected fragment Patients were asked to sign consent forms. Before the doctors made a final decision. (a part of the previous sentence)</p>	<p>Join the two parts to make one sentence Patients were asked to sign consent forms before the doctors made a final decision.</p>
<p>Missing subject Through not carefully monitoring the fetus created a risky situation for both the mother and the baby. (no subject)</p>	<p>Add the doer of the action Through not carefully monitoring the fetus, they created a risky situation for both the mother and the baby.</p>

Table 1.2 Sentence fragments

Cohesion

Cohesion refers to the use of words or phrases that allow you to put parts of a text together. You can provide cohesion by, for example, repeating key words, creating a network of similar words, and using connectives (words or phrases that connect, e.g. and, but, so). Cohesion is important to make sure the text flows and to link ideas, paragraphs and longer texts.

Problem	Solution
<p>Group of choppy sentences Nurses can specialize in different areas. They can, for example, choose to do mental health, dual diagnosis. They can also choose neonatal nursing. Nurses can specialize within hospitals. They can work as a school nurse. They can move out into the community.</p>	<p>Use connectives Nurses can specialize in different areas. They can, for example, choose to do mental health, dual diagnosis <i>or</i> neonatal nursing. They can also specialize within hospitals, work as a school nurse or move out into the community.</p>
<p>Little cohesion Breastfeeding can help the mother have a faster recovery after childbirth. The hormones that are normally released during nursing help the uterus return to its normal size. It can reduce bleeding. Nursing mothers can lose weight more easily.</p>	<p>Use a connective Breastfeeding can help the mother have a faster recovery after child birth. The hormones that are normally released during nursing help the uterus return to its normal size. It can <i>also</i> reduce bleeding. <i>In addition</i>, it has been found that nursing mothers can lose weight more easily.</p>
<p>Very little cohesion Nurses can work in many health care settings, which gives them the opportunity to gain experience in all aspects of care. They can thus build their career in many different ways.</p>	<p>Create a network of words <i>Nurses</i> can work in many healthcare settings, which gives them the opportunity to gain experience in all aspects of care for <i>clients</i> and their <i>families</i>. <i>Nurses</i> can thus build their <i>professional</i> career in many different ways.</p>

Table 1.3 Sentence cohesion

Dangling modifiers

A dangling modifier is a word or a phrase that has no clear connection with the rest of the sentence. For example:

Having asked all patients for their consent, the survey was carried out.

In this case, ‘having asked all patients for their consent’ is dangling (loosely or not clearly connected with the following part of the sentence). One impor-

tant point to remember here is that phrases at the beginning of a sentence do not have a stated subject but take the subject of the following sentence, sometimes creating a humorous effect. Consider another example which appeared in an American newspaper article:

While driving on Greenwood Avenue yesterday afternoon, a tree began to fall toward Wendy H's car. (As is, it sounds as if the tree was driving!)

Problem	Solution
<p>Dangling modifier Having finished the shift, all uniforms worn on the day were sent to the laundry.</p>	<p>Change the subject of the sentence Having finished the shift, <i>the caretakers</i> sent all uniforms worn on the day to the laundry.</p> <p>or</p> <p>Add a subject to the first part When <i>the shift</i> was finished, all uniforms worn on the day were sent to the laundry.</p>
<p>Dangling modifier Without numeracy skills, drugs cannot be administered to patients.</p>	<p>Change the subject of the sentence Without numeracy skills, <i>nurses</i> cannot administer drugs to patients.</p> <p>or</p> <p>Add a subject to the first part If nurses do not have numeracy skills, they cannot administer drugs to their patients.</p>

Table 1.4 Dangling modifiers

Punctuation

Punctuation is used to signal pause, emphasis, expansion or clarification.

The most frequently used punctuation marks are the *colon*, *comma*, *dash*, *full stop*, *parentheses*, *quotation marks* and *semicolon*.



Glossary
Punctuation marks

Problem	Solution
At this hospital, nurses can specialize in one of three areas, mental health, dual diagnosis or neonatal nursing.	Use a colon to introduce other related ideas At this hospital, nurses can specialize in one of three areas: mental health, dual diagnosis or neonatal nursing. NB: if the colon introduces a list of objects, names, or phrases, they should be separated by commas. If the colon introduces complete sentences, they should be separated by semi-colons (;).
Before they can register with the council nurses have to have the necessary qualifications.	Add a comma after an introductory sentence Before they can register with the council, nurses have to have the necessary qualifications.
After finishing their shift all midwives should sign the register.	Add a comma after an introductory phrase After finishing their shift, all midwives should sign the register.
The results contradicted previous studies. However replication of this study has been highly recommended.	Add a comma after an introductory connective The results contradicted previous studies. However, replication of this study has been highly recommended.
Doctors, nurses and consultants, considered all the possible ways of saving his life.	Delete the comma that separates the subject (what is being talked about) from the verb Doctors, nurses and consultants considered all the possible ways of saving his life.

Problem	Solution
<p>Organization, structuring and paragraphing, such are the qualities of good academic writing.</p>	<p>Mark off a summarizing statement with a dash Organization, structuring and paragraphing – such are the qualities of good academic writing.</p>
<p>The midwife should provide her clients with all the necessary information for them to make informed decisions</p>	<p>Finish a complete sentence (not a question or exclamation) with a full stop The midwife should provide her clients with all the necessary information for them to make informed decisions.</p>
<p>The consultant, who had received more than one prize, someone said more than a dozen, denied the accusation.</p>	<p>Put extra, non-essential, information between parentheses The consultant, who had received more than one prize (someone said more than a dozen), denied the accusation.</p>
<p>When this happens, health promotion has proven to be the most effective strategy (Stallen, 2003).</p>	<p>Use quotation marks to enclose somebody else's words When this happens, health promotion 'has proven to be the most effective strategy' (Stallen, 2003, p. 345). Also see Chapters 9 and 10.</p>
<p>They tried all possible ways to save his life however, his heart did not restart.</p>	<p>Use a semicolon before a connective that connects two sentences They tried all possible ways to save his life; however, his heart did not restart.</p>

Table 1.5 Problems with punctuation

Revising the objectives of this chapter

Tick those objectives you feel you have achieved and review those you have not yet managed to accomplish. Then, complete the **Achievement Chart** at the back of the book.

In this chapter, you have learnt to:

- recognize the five basic principles of planning in academic writing
- identify the three elements in essay questions and follow marking criteria
- understand gathering, organizing and structuring information
- reproduce the generic structure of academic texts
- identify main problems with sentence fragments, cohesion, dangling modifiers and punctuation

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