

Suggested Exercise (01):

Divide the following into manageable paragraphs and give your reasons:

5 There is a clear link between industrial waste gases and car exhaust fumes on the one hand and environmental destruction on the other, even though some of the exact details are still a matter of debate. Thus sulphur dioxide and oxides of nitrogen, emitted by various sources, combine with clouds to form acid rain, which in turn acidifies the soil, making it impossible for forests to survive. When the forests go, there is little to protect the topsoil, which is blown or washed away. The result is often a steppe-like landscape, as can be seen in several areas of Central Europe, including Germany, the Czech Republic, and Poland. Another
10 consequence of dying forests is the destruction of the earth's atmosphere, since forests play an essential role in the creation of oxygen. There is no need to point out the effects that oxygen-depletion is having and will have on human life. This destruction of the earth's atmosphere is also reinforced by emissions of so-called "greenhouse gases", above all
15 carbon dioxide, which are bringing about "global warming", i.e. a gradual rise in the temperature of the earth's atmosphere. A rise of one degree celsius would be especially catastrophic for many countries which already have a warm or hot climate, since certain of man's greatest enemies, above all the mosquito, would colonise new areas. Such a rise in temperature would also entail the gradual melting of the
20 polar ice-caps, bringing with it the prospect of a rise in sea-levels. One consequence of this would be that certain low-lying areas of Europe, such as London, Venice, and Amsterdam, would be threatened by flooding. Even if the sea-level were to rise by only a few centimeters, the costs of building sea-walls for many of the world's towns and cities
25 would be astronomical. Another by-product of global warming is that areas which are at present highly fertile, such as Northern Italy or the Ukraine, would tend to become arid, while areas further to the north, such as the Russian taiga, would tend to become agricultural. Thus, acid-rain is opening up a Pandora's box of problems whose ramifications
30 are potentially endless.

'Brainstorming' and Ordering Material

Anyone embarking on a piece of writing must be clear about a number of things. Obviously, that person must know who he is writing for; that is to say, he must know his audience, and know what kind of language to use. More importantly, there must be something worth saying. Those who do a lot of writing try to allow their ideas to incubate over days, weeks, months, and sometimes even years. Indeed, in the English culture the belief is widespread that one should "sleep on" a problem or task: in other words that one of the benefits of sleep is to allow the unconscious to provide answers to problems or at least to enhance our perception of them.

Before one writes a school- or college-essay it is important to read the title *carefully* and to think about it for a while. Needless to say, the more time one devotes to this stage, the better. In an exam it is important to spend *ten or fifteen* minutes just *thinking about* the title and *jotting down* on a piece of paper whatever — names, ideas, examples — may come to mind. This process is generally known as 'brainstorming'.

Let us suppose that you have got a homework assignment with the title: "What Needs to be Done to Improve This Country's Education-System?" So you sit down and after some minutes you have come up with the following *random* assortment of words and phrases, largely based on your memories of school:

35 in a class (!!!)
hopeless teachers
learning parrot-fashion
Latin — boring!
Dracula's Coffin

art classes — a joke
ancient textbooks
terrorist teachers
too much homework
sports
school meals
stupid timetable
the truant
teacher-student relations
teachers' wages
choice of studies
surnames
sex education?

Anyone who has ever written an essay will recognise such a list of phrases which come to mind when dealing with a given topic. You should now have a collection of ideas, key phrases and examples, which need to be sifted carefully. The material can generally be built on and grouped into categories, and from these the outline of an essay can be constructed, as in the following:

- I. (Introduction.) Catastrophic situation. National scandal. School exam-results abysmal. Many people still cannot read or write, or locate our country on an atlas (!!!!) 35 students in a class on average.
- II. Antiquated methods. Tedious exercises and presentation of material. Learning parrot-fashion. Excessive homework-demands.
- III. Antiquated attitudes. Lack of mutual trust, let alone of dialogue. Boys called by their surnames. Terrorism in the classroom. Corporal punishment still allowed. The boy who played truant.
- IV. Antiquated system. No choice. Inflexible curricula. Useless subjects. Our maths lessons (!!!!) Why not typing, shorthand, computer science? Cooking and domestic science? Sex education?
- V. Neglect of artistic subjects — music, painting, drawing, embroidery? Dancing? Sports? Judo, etc.
- VI. What's to be done? Revolution in attitudes and priorities. More money for new schools, better wages for better teachers, new textbooks, sports facilities, libraries, computers, proper school meals.

Once you have got this far with your essay you are ready to begin the writing proper. Obviously you can modify the outline as you see necessary, and divide the paragraphs further.

The principles underlying the arrangement of the paragraphs are, of course, up to the writer. If he is writing narrative, i.e. relating a story, recounting history, or describing a process, they may be *chronological*, with each development clearly marked out from the preceding one. Or the paragraphs may be arranged according to *categories of importance*; that which the writer considers the most important or remarkable would generally come at the end. But whatever approach is taken, the structure of the work must be apparent, with *clear, manageable paragraphs*, each logically progressing one from the other, and if necessary with headings and subheadings clearly marking the way. Needless to say, great care must also be devoted to a *clear, coherent introduction* on the one hand and an equally *clear conclusion* on the other.

Students who have difficulties with finding material for an essay should concentrate on possible examples and illustrations. This is very important as a way of making a piece of work interesting and of commanding the reader's attention. In the above outline you will see that virtually all of the paragraphs contain *concrete examples*, and none of the paragraphs are purely abstract. Generally speaking, concrete examples are especially effective in the first and last paragraphs.

A clear plan is crucial for any piece of work, and while examples, illustrations, and recapitulations at regular intervals are very much to be welcomed, digressions are not. Writers of English tend to avoid digressions, except in frequently discursive contexts such as travel adventures, memoirs, speeches and the like.

In an exam-situation the student himself must decide whether to write the final essay the first time round or not. He may choose to write it first in rough and then in a 'clean copy'. Unless he is very experienced, however, he will be well advised to write the essay twice over, since teachers and examiners generally find untidy work irritating and difficult to mark. Above all, it is crucial to spend plenty of time *reading the work over* when it has been finally written, checking especially for mistakes of spelling and grammar. In an exam of two and a half hours, *at least twenty minutes* should be devoted to this last stage!

If you are writing a homework-assignment, use A4-sized paper (i.e.

297 × 210 mm). Remember that teachers tend to experience a great feeling of relief when they receive work that has been neatly typed, instead of handwritten. *Always leave a wide margin (at least 3 cm) on the left-hand side.*

One last point: when writing homework-assignments in general and exam-essays in particular, it is not a bad idea to check whether you have remembered to write your name as well as the title of the essay at the top! Some people do forget.

Suggested Exercises (02):

1. Choose one of the following list of topics, then do some 'brainstorming' and finally write an outline-essay for your ideas, making the principles of organisation clear.
 - a. Would children be better off by being given unlimited freedom?
 - b. What things do you find most attractive and/or unattractive in American culture?
 - c. What are the main job-prospects for students of your department?
 - d. Europe's environmental future.
 - e. Classify the main youth-cultures at this point in time.
2. You have been asked to write a brochure designed to introduce your department to prospective students. Jot down the basic elements of the curriculum and anything else students might need to know, and from there make an outline. Finally write a brief but informative description of the place where you are studying.
3. Do the same, but this time preparing a brochure for people who intend to visit your country. Put in the brochure the information that foreign visitors urgently need to have.

Here is a list of items which you might find useful; all of them except nos. 20 and 28-36 are most likely to be found at the beginning of the sentence (brackets usually indicate a word that is optional):

1. first
2. firstly
3. first and foremost
4. firstly and most importantly
5. to begin with
6. to start with
7. second

8. secondly
9. in the second place
10. third
11. thirdly
12. next
13. then (= *next*)
14. also
15. in addition
16. furthermore
17. moreover
18. besides
19. what is more
20. likewise
21. similarly
22. in the same way
23. again
24. lastly
25. last but not least
26. finally
27. (and) to conclude
28. apart from...
29. aside from...
30. except (for)...
31. excluding...
32. if we exclude...
33. as well as...
34. including...
35. not to mention...
36. to say nothing of...
37. as mentioned earlier
38. equally important is...
39. more importantly
40. more centrally
41. worse (still)
42. making matters worse
43. more worryingly
44. the first thing to consider is...
45. the first thing to consider is whether...
46. the first point I want to make is that...
47. at the outset let me begin by saying that...

48. my next point is that...
49. the next point I want to make is that...
50. this brings us (on/back) to...
51. if we turn to X, we see that...
52. incidentally
53. by the way
54. to digress for a moment
55. for the record
56. to go on
57. to resume
58. to return to the previous point
59. one should also mention...
60. one might also mention...
61. also worth mentioning is/are...
62. it might also be mentioned that...
63. it is also worth mentioning that...
64. we may note in passing that...
65. one should also bear in mind (that)...

N.B.

1. Nos. 46-65 are found primarily in speeches, talks and lectures.
2. Nos. 52-55 introduce digressions or illustrations (especially anecdotes).
3. Nos. 56-58 are used resumptively to mark the end of a digression or illustration and to mark the next stage in the discussion.
4. Nos. 20 (*likewise*), 21 (*similarly*), and 23 (*again*) deserve special attention, since they can be extremely useful, as in the following example:

The Romans took nearly all their literary genres from the Greeks. *Thus*, Ennius, the first Roman poet, attempted epics in the manner of Homer. *Similarly* the first Roman historian of distinction, Sallust, took Thucydides as his model. Cicero, Rome's greatest orator, *likewise* saw himself as continuing the tradition of Isaeus and Demosthenes. *Again*, when we take the Roman comedy of Terence, we see it was largely an adaptation of the works of Menander.

5. Also to be noted are the useful phrases *others again* and *still others*, which can be used quite elegantly:

Some ascribed the conquests to the genius of one man. *Some* put them down to a sudden flowering of the Mongol national spirit. *Others again* (*Still others*) sought the truth in the supposed simplicity and freedom of nomad life.

There is thus a regular word-pattern consisting of the following sequence: i. *some*, ii. *some* or *others*, and iii. *others again* or *still others*.

Suggested Exercises (03):

Fill in the gaps in the following sentences with suitable link-words and phrases from the above list.

1. He often misses classes. ——— he is never prepared.
2. The aim of my government will be to accomplish a thoroughgoing overhaul of all the official bureaucracy and administration that has been hampering the national revival. ——— we are anxious to get the economy moving again.
3. The book is highly original. ——— it has been acclaimed by many scholars.
4. Some came out of the depths of the forests, where they had managed to survive; ———i.—— returned from the concentration camps, where they had not yet been exterminated; ———ii.—— came back from the Soviet Union as repatriated persons.
5. We have just been examining the problems of alcoholism and drug-abuse. ——— the problem of drug-addiction in general.
6. The Government has been facing mounting discontent lately over its economic reforms, while there have been increasingly angry scenes in the Parliament-Building. ———, there is rumoured to have been an attempt on the president's life by hard-liners.
7. In the holiday period there are loads of cars on the roads. ——— there are countless people travelling by train and bus.
8. In vegetarianism concerns about the ecosystem predominate, with all the fuss about how livestock farming is a waste of environmental resources. ———i.—— there is the heavenly food notion, in which certain foods are deemed fit for divine consumption (examples being asphodel and honey). ———ii.—— we have those who believe that a diet of vegetables is conducive to good health...

Suggested Exercise (04):

Fill in the missing words or phrases in the following passage (not all of them are to be found in the above list):

The fall of the Soviet Empire has already had momentous repercussions

for the entire world. —1— in East Asia, where the USSR's withdrawal of its fleets may be followed by those of the USA, leaving a power-vacuum for other big regional powers, —2— Japan, China and India. Pakistan —3— is suffering as a result of the end of the Cold War, as the USA is putting more pressure on it to abandon its clandestine nuclear programme —4— to improve its human-rights record. —5— the Middle East, the end of Cold-War rivalry has —6— that peace for once looks possible, —7— the Arab states have lost their main military backer, the USSR; —8— America has felt freer to twist Israel's arm — over Jewish settlements in the West Bank, —9—.

—10—, when we look at Africa, that continent has been changed in a number of ways. —11—, the concept of central planning has been largely discredited and many governments are beginning to convert to more market-minded philosophies. —12—, the USSR is no longer in a position to finance governments and insurgencies all over Africa, and various regimes have been gravely weakened. —13— the West no longer feels it necessary to support right-wing, pro-American regimes, —14— Kenya, Malawi and Zaire. —15—, scenes —16— those showing the deaths of the Ceacescus have been widely televised in Africa, —17— a change of attitude among some heads of state.

—18—, when we turn to Europe, we see how the continent has been transformed. Gone is the Warsaw Pact. —19— a group of new countries has appeared. Germany has unified. —20— others have broken up, —21— Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. Everywhere new regimes have come to power, most paying at least some lip-service to democracy and economic reform. In many places, —22—, nationalism is rapidly spreading, —23— in Germany, partly —24— the new wave of refugees from Eastern Europe. —25— the Euro-Communist parties in Italy, Spain and France are in danger of dwindling into insignificance. —26— the biggest privatisation-drive in history is underway throughout Europe, —27— many stresses and strains, —28— soaring unemployment and high, —29— hyper-inflation. —30—, the cost of unification is putting the German economy under great strains. —31— it is uncertain how long American forces will remain in Europe, —32— there are few obvious reasons for their being there any longer.

—33— the demise of the "evil empire" has produced as many problems as it has solved, and may not necessarily make the world a safer place.

The First Paragraph

Once the brainstorming-phase has been accomplished, ideas and key words assembled, and the outline of the projected work constructed, the next step will be to write the first paragraph. Needless to say, the first paragraph is one of the most important of all, and its function is generally both introductory and programmatic in character. It must lead on to what is to follow and be clearly related to it.

There are many ways to start such a paragraph, depending on the type of audience. Below are a few of the many possible formulas:

1. Many people suppose that...
2. The present thesis will be concerned with...
3. Once upon a time... (*children's narrative*)
4. Today I am going to talk about...

But the possibilities are virtually unlimited. Often it is a good idea to begin the paragraph with rather graphic, even provocative language, designed to arrest the reader's attention, as in the following suggested opening of our essay on education (note, by the way, how the first sentence begins with "Our schools and colleges", so as to avoid the colourless abstraction "Our education system"):

Our schools and colleges are widely held to be in terminal decline. People speak of a 'catastrophic situation' on almost every front, whether they mean the quality of the staff, the teacher-student ratio, the curricula, or the final exam results and the skills which the young are supposed to have learnt; they point to statistics purporting to show that many are unable to read even the simplest instructions, let alone to write...

Here, even before the writer has directly introduced himself, it is clear from the words "widely held to be", "People speak of", and