



2023

PERSONALISED LEARNING

22-23

BA30030E

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Week 5

Academic Writing Skills

STRUCTURE OF TODAY'S CLASS

- Announcements
- Recap of last week's class
- Overview of this week's lecture
- Today's seminar activities

By the end of today, you will:

- Why is writing so important?
- The nature of academic writing
- Process of academic writing
- Planning of academic writing



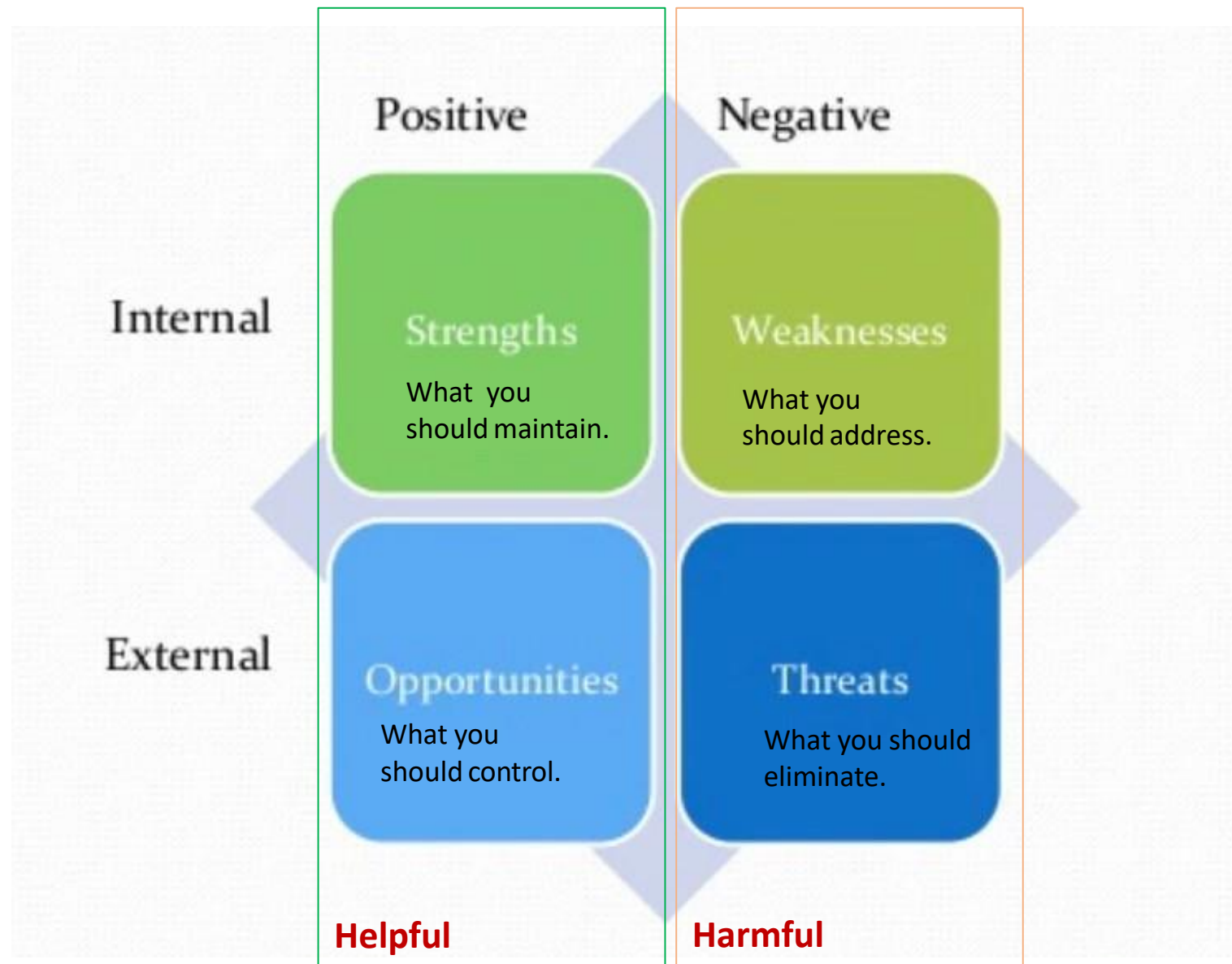
Recap From Last Week

What are the top three things you learnt from last week's class?

What is SWOT Analysis?

- SWOT: Strength, Weakness, Opportunities, and Threats
- A framework to strategically plan the evaluation of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats involved in your personal development.
- Identifying the objectives of your personal development and highlighting the favourable and unfavourable internal and external factors that can impact achieving the objectives.
- SWOT framework is credited Albert Humphrey: developed in the 1960s and 1970s at Stanford Research Institute (SRI).

Personal SWOT analysis



Critical Reflection

- Being critical help with your personal SWOT analysis
- Structured, focused, and conscious, with the end purpose of developing your understanding.

Critical Reflection

- Characteristics:
 - **Selection:** select an aspect of the experience, learning or professional practice for analysis.
 - **Changing Perspective:** analyse experience from different angles and different levels of detail.
 - **Returning to Experience:** once, periodically, or frequently, as best fits the issue.
 - **Analysis of own role:** look at reasons for, and consequences of, your own actions, rather than those of others.
 - **Drawing on received wisdom:** make use of theory, research, and professional knowledge.
 - **Deepening your understanding:** look actively for meaning, recognise what is significant, and learn from this.
 - **Using insights to effect change:** use your new understanding to do things differently in the future – ideally to the benefit of others as well as yourself.

Have you?

- **Assessment** – Read the assessment brief to understand the components of the assessment. They are important. - You need to start preparing and gathering questions for the next session.
- **Take-Home Exercise:** Attempted the take-home exercises and understand how they apply. How about all other independent study activities?
- **Any questions?**



This Week

Personal Development

Before we start...

- Have you swiped your card on SAM for this class?
- Have you swiped your card on SAM for other modules?
- Do you have any questions or queries from the classes so far?



Academic Writing

Learning Outcome



Why is writing so important?



The nature of academic writing



Academic writing as argument



Being critical



Process of academic writing



Planning of academic writing

Why is writing so important?

- Helps you to remember
- Helps you to observe and to gather evidence
- Helps you to think
- Helps you to communicate
- Writing helps you to learn

The nature of academic writing

- Reveal your knowledge and understanding of the subject.
- Show that your work is original in the sense that you are not simply copying word for word from someone else. You are crafting your own account.
- Following the conventions of your discipline, such as document structure, writing style and viewpoint.
- Using scholarly method. Your account must show accuracy and skill in investigating and discussing its subject. This usually means that you reveal the sources of information you are using by citing (referring to sources in the text) and referencing (listing full entries for your sources, typically at the end of your document). You are usually expected to show evidence of critical analysis, which includes considering the strengths and weaknesses of an argument and coming to your own conclusions about it.



- The essay
- Reflective writing
- The business/scientific report
- The literature review
- The dissertation

Do you know what these all are?



Key features of academic writing

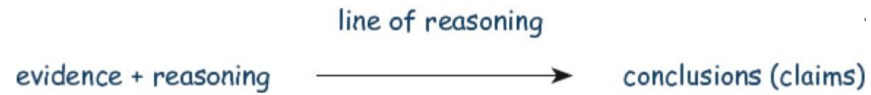
Regardless of genre, ideas are:

- Presented in a logical order
- Supported with evidence
- Expressed following the conventions of academic language

Academic Writing: The Key Components

- **Argument:** a clear line of argument.
Using available evidence to set out your lines of reasoning (your most valid interpretation of the subject)
- **Critical:** analysis, synthesising, applying, and evaluating

Academic writing as argument



- The author gives evidence and reasoning, assembled as reasons (sometimes called supporting arguments, premises or propositions) that support the eventual conclusion.
 - For example, in responding to an essay title 'Is it never too late to learn?' one of the supporting arguments might include the statement 'In the last 15 years, government schemes have helped millions of UK senior citizens (here, defined as males and females over 60) to learn to use computers and access the World Wide Web.'
- Reasons are presented in a logical order, an overall line of reasoning, which takes the reader convincingly through to the conclusion.
 - For example, by compiling evidence for improvements in literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing among over 50s who have engaged in government-backed educational initiatives.
- There is a conclusion – the position that the author wants the reader to accept. For example, 'The evidence presented suggests that, within certain limitations, it is rarely too late to learn.'

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This week's Activity

Complete Activity 1: Which of these is an argument?

- ☐ Use the Handout to do a Personal SWOT analysis
- ☐ Read with an understanding

Academic writing as argument

The main active chemicals in the Cannabis sativa plant are two forms of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and cannabidiol (CBD), collectively called cannabinoids. A ten-year follow up study of recreational cannabis users, reporting in the British Medical Journal in 2011, showed a doubling in the risk of psychosis among cannabis users compared with a control sample. Previous studies suggest that there is great variation in individual susceptibility to onset of psychosis on exposure to cannabinoids. Pre-clinical studies show promise for THC and CBD, on their own or in combination with other medicinal drugs, in halting or at least slowing the growth of specific cancerous tumours in brain or lung tissue. Further pre-clinical testing, and if successful, then clinical testing, is required to establish the value of cannabinoids as anti-cancer agents. Even if their use is indicated, their psycho-active effects need to be considered carefully, and ways found for countering or minimising them. By that time, genetic screening may have determined which patients are likely to be most susceptible to cannabinoids' negative psychoactive effects. Public attitudes to recreational cannabis use, or use of cannabis extracts in a clinical context, are very mixed. However, any public concerns about clinical use may be dwarfed by the potential for cannabinoids to treat aggressive cancers.

Is it an argument? Explain your answer. **Yes** / **No**

Academic writing as argument

Medicinal drugs can trigger an allergic reaction – an abnormal response from the body's immune system that can range from mild to life-threatening. The signs and symptoms of drug-induced allergic reactions include wheezing, swelling, an itchy rash, and nausea or diarrhoea. In the worst cases, so-called anaphylactic shock, sometimes brought about by extreme sensitivity to antibiotics such as penicillin, the person's airways narrow dangerously and their blood pressure drops dramatically. If not treated rapidly, normally by injection of adrenaline (epinephrine), the person can die within minutes.

Is it an argument? Explain your answer.

Academic writing as argument

Complementary therapies are seen by many people as a valid supplement or alternative to conventional forms of medical treatment provided by doctors. Complementary therapies such as reflexology, homeopathy and chiropractic are provided by trained practitioners, with many patients claiming that they gain great benefit. There is plenty of anecdotal evidence in support of complementary therapies but I have yet to be persuaded by it.

Is it an argument? Explain your answer.

Being Critical

- Analysing
 - Reading the work of others and breaking down their arguments into component parts in order to better understand them.
- Synthesising
 - Building your own arguments, drawing upon the work of others.
- Applying
 - Taking facts or ideas and using them in another context, such as a practical, real-world one.
- Evaluating
 - Judging the validity of elements of an argument, whether your own or those of others.

TIME FOR A BREAK



Activity 3: Using words with precision

Compare

A. Make clear the meaning of something. This might include giving a personal judgement

Contrast

B. Set two views in opposition in order to highlight the difference between them

Evaluate

C. Give an overview of the general principles and/or main features of a subject, omitting fine detail.

Interpret

D. Give reasons for decisions or conclusions reached, which might include response to possible objections.

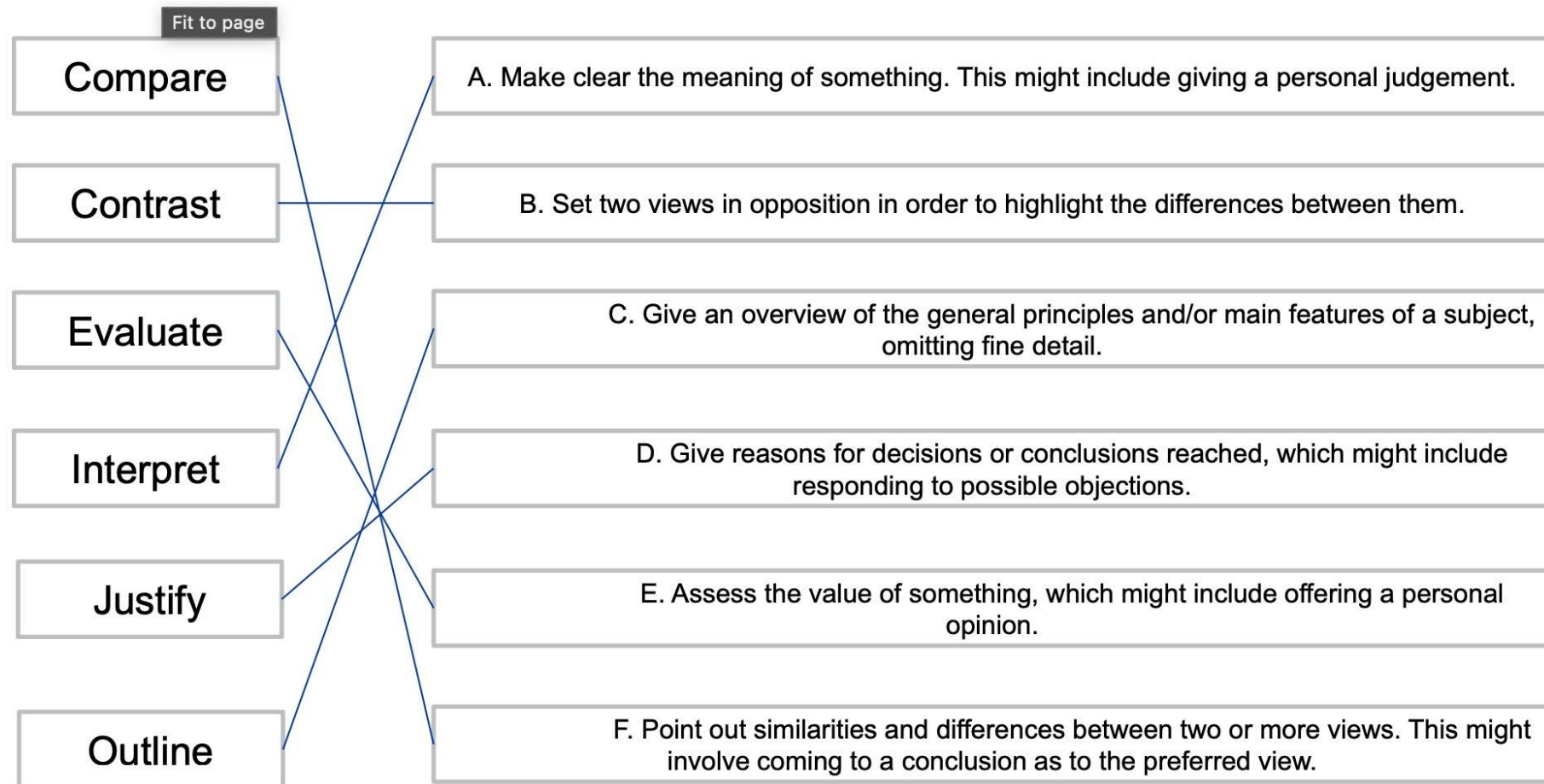
Justify

E. Assess the value of something, which might include offering a personal opinion.

Outline

F. Point out similarities and differences between two or more views. This might involve coming to a conclusion as to the preferred view.

Activity 2: Using words with precision



Process of academic writing

Planning, researching, reading and note-taking	Composing (drafting)	Reviewing and editing
(everything you do before you actually start writing flowing prose)	(writing flowing prose in sentences and paragraphs)	(evaluating, rethinking, and revising what you have written)



Planning for academic writing

	Wk 1	Wk 2	Wk 3
Planning			
Literature searching, reading & note-taking			
Composing			
Reviewing & editing			
Final checks			
Submission			

Typical structure

Introduction

Body of text

Conclusion

References

Typical Structure

Introduction:

- Introduces the topic and sets the direction of the essay and is your reader's first impression of your ability to communicate your ideas.

Body of text

- Is a series of linked paragraphs (building blocks of the argument) developing the focus that you stated in your introduction.
- You should have one main idea, perspective or point of view per paragraph

Conclusion

- Sums up your argument and reminds readers of main points
- Provides possible speculation on the issues you have raised
- Should leave the reader with a sense of completion and a sense that you have explored the topic as far as possible on this occasion

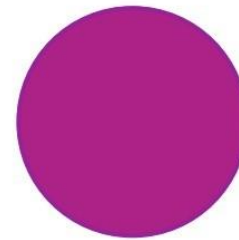
References

Referencing

Referencing is

‘an acknowledgement of someone else’s work or findings’

Dunbar (2007)



Will be covered next week.



Why do we need to reference?

- Acknowledge sources
- Demonstrate breadth of reading
- To give your work scholarly credibility
- To allow you, your tutor and other readers to retrieve the documents cited
- To signpost to the reader that this idea is not your own
- To avoid accusations of plagiarism

Will be covered next week.

Typical Structure

STRUCTURE OF YOUR Writing

- Font: Times New Roman
- Font size: 12
- Spacing: 1.5
- Aligned: Justified

PAGE STRUCTURE

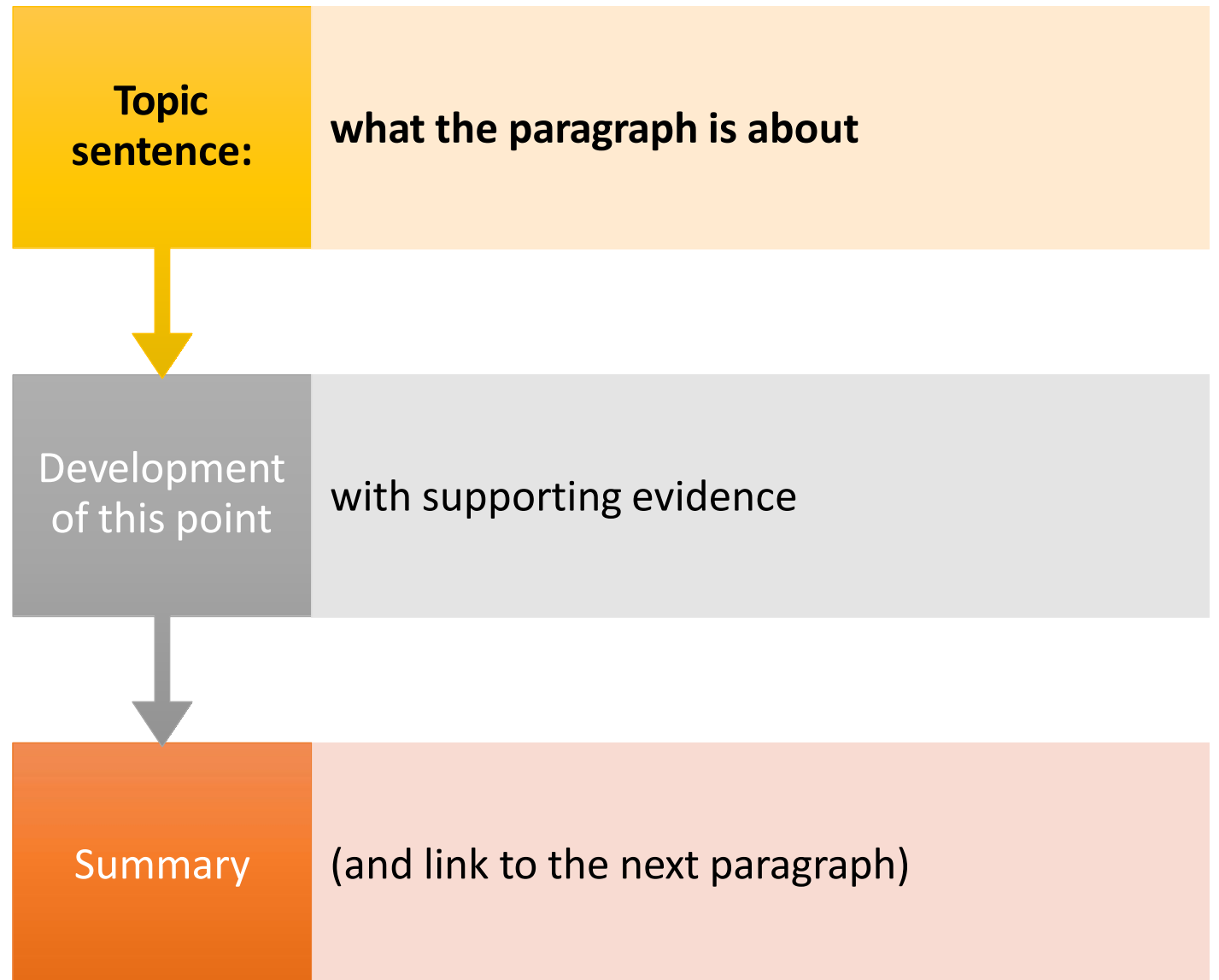
- Each page in Ms Word
 - 435 words approx.
 - 3 Paragraphs
- Each paragraph
 - 150 words
 - 7 sentences approx.
- Each sentence
 - 20 words

After 20 words, have a full stop.

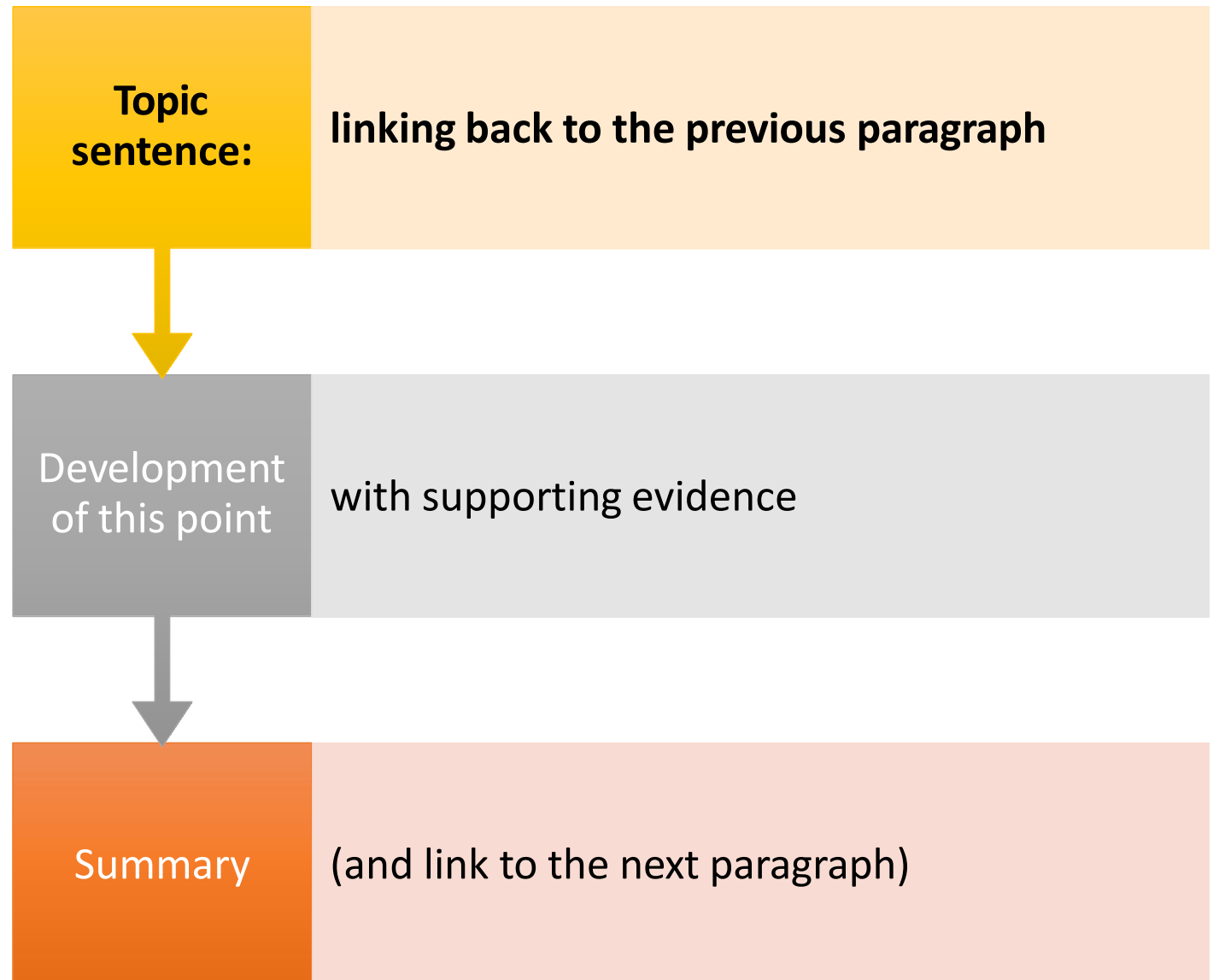
Each paragraph = at least 5-7 transition/linking.

Use punctuation marks where appropriate.

So the
paragraph
has...



And the next
paragraph
has...



Expressing yourself in academic English

- Use formal languages:
 - Academic English is more formal than the language used in everyday conversation, emails, letters, magazines, and most newspapers.
- It does not sound 'chatty'
- It also avoids slang and colloquialisms
 - (e.g. 'These findings need to be *taken with a pinch of salt*.'
 - 'The argument was a *bit over the top*.')

(Cottrell, 2008, p. 202)

ACADEMIC WRITING STYLE CHECKLIST

- Avoid idiomatic and colloquial language **kids** > **children**
- Use vocabulary accurately.
 - For example, there is a difference between *rule / law*, or *currency / money*
- Be precise with facts and figures. Avoid phrases such as ‘*about a hundred*’ or ‘*hundreds*’. To estimate numbers, use ‘***approximately***’.
- Conclusions should use tentative language. Avoid absolute statements such as ~~*space exploration is a waste of resources*~~. Instead use cautious phrases: **Certain types of space exploration could be a waste of resources.**

Expressing yourself in academic English

Avoid	Write	Avoid
<p>Avoid abbreviations and contractions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not contract verb forms. Can't > Cannot 	<p>Write words out in full:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'dept' as 'department' • 'e.g.' as 'for example' • 'didn't' as 'did not' • 'they're' as 'they are' • 'isn't' as 'is not' 	<p>Avoid overly simplistic or informal words:</p>

- ~~like~~ > such as, for instance
- ~~thing~~ > factor, issue, topic
- ~~lots of~~ > a significant / considerable number of
- ~~little/big~~ > small/large
- ~~get phrases~~ e.g ~~get better~~ > improve

ACADEMIC STYLE CHECKLIST

- ❖ Avoid question forms such as
~~*“What were the reasons for X? Firstly, ...”*~~
Instead use statements:
“There were four main reasons for X. Firstly, ...”
- ❖ Avoid using two word verbs.
e.g. go on > continue
go up > increase
set up > establish

This Week's Seminar

Work in groups



This week's Activity

Complete Activity2: Reflecting on writing capabilities.

- ☐ How confident are you at written work?
- ☐ In a group of 5 students, discuss your level of confidence in academic writing.
- ☐ What do you find easy or difficult?
- ☐ Be critical. Apply lines of reasoning.



This week's Activity

- DEFINITION OF A PARAGRAPH

1. How would you describe 'a paragraph'?
2. Now complete the following **definition**. Choose from the **endings below**. You may choose more than one.

A PARAGRAPH _____

- a) is a collection of ideas and sentences.
- b) usually begins with a general sentence that introduces the topic, followed by sentences that explain, describe or illustrate the main idea.
- c) is like a mini-essay, with a beginning, a middle, an end.
- d) consists of a topic sentence with other sentences that support it.
- e) consists of one main idea which is then described or explained.
- f) is just another name for an essay.

(Cottrell, 2008, p. 202)

PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE

- Paragraphs are not simply chunks of text;
 - they are logically structured sentences constructed around a central idea.

A PARAGRAPH HAS THREE MAIN PARTS:

- Topic Sentence
 - Usually the first sentence, to introduce the main idea
- Supporting Sentences
 - Giving details/reasons/information/examples
- Concluding Sentences
 - Optional

FEATURES OF ACADEMIC STYLE

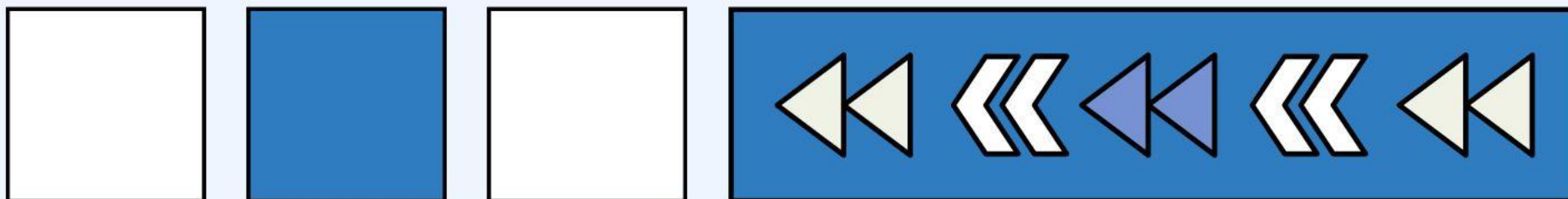
- “No-one speaks (or writes) academic English as a first language. It must be learned by observation, study and experiment” (GilleZ, 2009).
- What makes spoken or written English ‘academic’ is not the ideas but the way the ideas are presented and expressed.



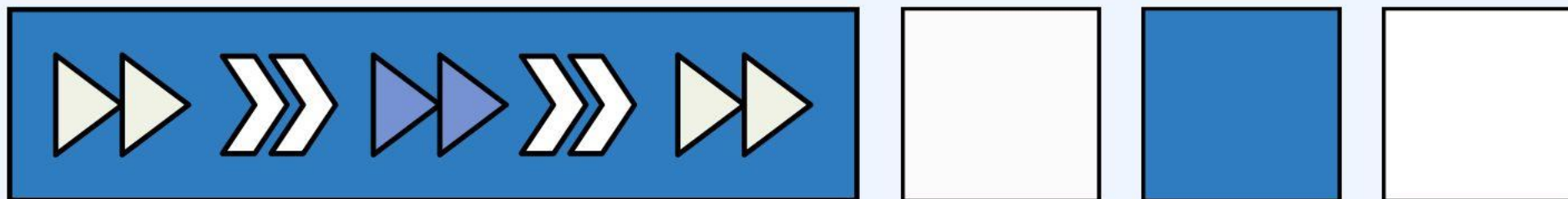
This week's Activity:

Wellbeing

- Watch the videos and join the class discussion
 - How can your well-being impact your study
 - What are the things to look out for to ensure your well-being is intact
- Review the additional well-being materials and resources to enhance your student experience



THANK YOU!



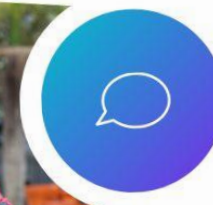
WHAT NEXT:

Take Home Exercise

To support your learning.

Revise Ahead

To prepare for next class.



Contact Your Tutor

For module specific inquiry.

Assessment

Understand the expectations and plan ahead.

What is Academic Success for PL?

- Academic Success is the ability to 'practicalise' the conceptual, theoretical and subject knowledge with a specific goal.

Dr Francisca C Umeh

