Ambassador League

OUT OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE. INTO YOUR COMMUNITY.

Grammar Guide

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Dear Agents,

"The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and a lightning bug."   - Mark Twain

Creating art requires mastery of the artform.

The written word has immense power. Think how many epic moments in history revolved around the written word. The written word has saved lives, shaped societies and governments, drawn people together, and compelled them to enact change. When Gutenberg pioneered the movable type press, he started a fire that has yet to be quenched. Now, with computers, social media, and an abundance of tools of mass communication at our fingertips, the world has more capacity than ever to harness that power for good. It is vital that believers today embrace the challenge of being godly stewards of this medium. Communication is an art form and writing even more so. Writing allows one to paint with the brush of ideas and captivate readers with the imagination of what could be. However, that picture must be clear and resonant if it is to be memorable and compelling. That clarity is achieved by honing proper use of grammar and style.

In the Ambassador League, your readers should be focused on your content and not distracted by its presentation. This guide is intended to help you sharpen and refine the skills you already have so that your written communication is as dynamic as possible. Proverbs 25:11 attests that "a word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver." Make your communication crisp and flavorful, beautiful in its simplicity, and valuable in its refined worth. As a representative of the Master Artist, don't just meet the standard; set the standard with style.

It is my hope that this resource will prove valuable to your mission in the field and that it will be a tool that contributes to lifelong success. Mastery of the technical disciplines today is an investment in the masterpieces you will paint tomorrow. Together, may our communication always be to the glory of the Master Artist.

In Christ,

Grace Anne Rosbury
Ambassador League Coordinator

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Phrases and Clauses

Properly wielding the building blocks of sentences

Groups of words may be arranged as phrases or clauses. Understanding how they interact and function can help avoid many issues in writing. When you want to use commas and semicolons in sentences or when you are concerned about whether a sentence is or is not a fragment, identifying the phrases, independent clauses, and dependent clauses is a good place to start.

- **A phrase** is a group of words that stand together as a single unit and may even function like a single part of speech within a sentence but does not express a compete thought. While one may have a noun phrase or a verb phrase, both a subject and a noun will never appear in a single phrase. Other phrases include adjective phrases, adverb phrases, and prepositional phrases. A phrase includes the part of speech and the words that modify it.
Examples: after the dinner   a story as old as time   might enjoy the book

- **An independent clause** is a group of words that contains a subject and verb, expresses a complete thought, and may function as sentence.
Example: She enjoys reading   I couldn't believe it

- **A dependent clause** is a group of words that contains a subject and verb but does not express a complete thought because of a word at the beginning that makes its meaning dependent on another clause. Words like *when, while, where, because, as, since, if, although, because, until, before*, and *after*. Dependent clauses create logical dependency. Think of them as an incomplete thought.
Example: when she is waiting for friends to arrive

Consider these tips when interacting with phrases and clauses:
1. Avoid sentence fragments. Every sentence must have a subject and verb and express a complete thought. From time to time, complex phrases and clauses may masquerade as complete sentences. The easiest ways to fix a fragment are to either supply the missing subject or verb or connect it to the previous sentence.

2. Avoid run-on sentences. Run on sentences are multiple independence clauses joined together without proper punctuation. To fix run-on sentences, identify where they should be split, then insert the proper punctuation and capitalization.

3. Beware of misplaced modifiers. Sometimes phrases can get split and a modifier becomes separated from the word it modifies within the context of the sentence. In English a good rule of thumb is to keep modifiers as close as possible to the word or clause they modify.
Example: Bill packed his favorite clothes in his suitcase, *which he planned to wear on vacation*. (This would imply that Bill is planning to wear his suitcase).
Corrected: Bill packed his favorite clothes, *which he planned to wear on vacation*, in his suitcase. (Now we don't have to wonder if the suitcase fits the Bill.)

4. Use coordinating conjunctions to join independent clauses or descriptive phrases. Coordinating conjunctions include *and, but, for, or, nor, so,* and *yet.*

5. Use independent marker words to connect a new independent clause to the previous independent clause. Common examples of independent markers include *however, consequently, furthermore, however, moreover, nevertheless, also,* and *therefore.* Using these words or another conjunction can help you avoid comma splices.

Proofreading Clauses and Phrases: If you struggle with run-on sentences or fragments, this section is for you. Review each sentence to make sure it has at least one independent clause by locating the subject and verb. If a sentence begins with a word that makes it dependent or contains a phrase like *such as, make* sure there is a sperate independent clause.

Agreement

Keep subjects and verbs consistent in expressing thought

Chances are, you are well versed in the concept of subject-verb agreement. To native speakers of English, simple errors of this type often sound wrong and are easy to detect. However, as sentences get more complex, take care not to lose sight of basic rules and tips.

1. Subjects and verbs must agree in number as they reference singular or plural terms. If a subject is singular, the verb must be singular; if the subject is plural, the verb must be plural. In the present tense, singular nouns add an **S** to the singular verb, while plural nouns have an **S** and the verb does not.
   Examples: The student talks.   The students talk.

2. Where the rules get more complex is when collective nouns, helping verbs, irregular verbs, and other tenses enter the mix.

3. Keep in mind the verbs **is** and **are** and how they work with collective/compound nouns.
   Examples: She is at LEAD.   They are at LEAD.   She and her friends are at LEAD.

4. Beware of contractions. Doesn't (contracted form of does not) may only be used with singular subjects. Don't (contracted from of do not) may only be used in plural cases.
   Examples: She doesn't want to leave.   They don't want to leave.

5. Don't confuse modifying phrases with the actual subject.
   Example: During Feats of Strength, the team **captain**, as well as his players, **was** filled with adrenaline.
   Example: During Feats of Strength, the **teammates were** filled with adrenaline.

6. Be sure to keep agreement correct when using pronouns as a subject or object. Notice the singular noun and pronoun and the verb with an **s**.
   Example: A special agent completes **his** assignments throughout the year.

   This seems simple, but it can get trickier when dealing with indefinite pronouns. Indefinite singular pronouns include words like "*each*" and "*one*" as well as words like *someone,*

everybody, anybody, and *nothing.* An easy way to remember many indefinite singular pronouns is to note the following columns:

Some	one
Every	thing
No	body
Any	

Any word that can be created by combining a word from each column is an indefinite **singular** pronoun. For example: Someone, something, somebody, everyone, everything, everybody, etc. While words like "everybody" may seem to be plural, we can easily see that it is singular by observing that a singular verb accompanies it in the sentence "everybody **is** here."

Plural pronouns include words like: several, few, both, many.

Incorrect Example: Just think about it…when **someone** murders an unborn baby who was made in the image of God, **they are** killing part of God.

"Someone" is a singular pronoun, so you shouldn't use "they" to refer back to it. There are a couple ways to fix this.
1) Use a singular pronoun instead of "they": Just think about it…when **someone** murders an unborn baby who was made in the image of God, **he is** killing part of God.
2) Change "someone" into a plural subject: Just think about it…when **people** murder an unborn baby who was made in the image of God, **they** are killing part of God.

7. Don't worry about being politically correct when using gender specific pronouns. In English, the longstanding rule has been to default to the masculine from. In other words, you don't need to say "his or her." The simple masculine pronoun suffices. Consider these examples:
    - Justice is when **someone** has done something wrong and ~~they are~~ **he is** punished for it according to what ~~they~~ **he** did.
    - The **person** deserved to die or at least live the rest of ~~their~~ **his** life in prison.
    Because the subjects are singular, you should use singular pronouns like "his" or "her" if your subject is going to be singular. Most English teachers say you should say "his or her" to be politically correct. Some writers switch between "his" and "her" to represent each gender. At Ambassador League, we tend to go old school and say just use "his." In the same way that "mankind" refers to all men and women, using male pronouns to include everybody isn't unheard of. In fact in languages where there is a different word for male children and female children, the word used to describe a mix of both is the male version.   In summary, when you start with a singular subject like "someone" or "the person," to refer back to it, use a singular pronoun, preferably a male one.

Proofreading for Agreement Errors: One of the best ways to spot agreement errors is to read your paper aloud. Your ear will often pickup something that sounds a bit funny. If you have any trouble diagnosing the problem, see if you can isolate the subject and verb.

Quotations

Showcasing someone else's words with punctuation

1. Always use quotation marks in pairs to open and close a quote.

2. Make sure the closing quotation mark always comes after the punctuation. "Example." Make sure that you never have the quotation inside the end mark. "Incorrect Example".

3. Capitalize the first letter of a direct quote *only* when the quote forms a complete sentence.

4. Quotations are most effective when used sparingly, and lengthy quotes should be used rarely. The majority of content in any paper should be your original thought, and any quotations used need to be discussed and clearly connected to the specific point they support.

5. If the original quote is lengthy and you feel a portion is non-essential in your paper, you may omit the superfluous portion by using an ellipsis (…). However, words that change the meaning of the original quote should not be removed. Always be faithful to the intent of the original speaker; if necessary, use brackets and additional words to clarify their meaning or the context (see point 6).

6. If you add or alter something within a quotation, denote the change with brackets.
   Example: Original Quote: "The end of law is not to abolish or restrain, but to preserve and enlarge freedom. For in all the state of created beings capable of law, where there is no law, there is no freedom." – John Locke
   Changed in a sentence: The English philosopher John Locke rightly observed, "The end of law is not to abolish or restrain, but to preserve and enlarge freedom….[In each] state of created beings capable of law, where there is no law, there is no freedom."

7. Use single quotation marks to indicate a quote within another quote. If there are multiple layers of quotes, alternate between double and single quotation marks. Be sure that there are closing quotation marks for each set.
   Example: In Zechariah 1:3, God is instructing Zechariah what message should be conveyed to Israel saying, "Therefore tell the people, 'This is what the LORD Almighty says, "Return to me," declares the LORD Almighty, "and I will return to you," says the LORD Almighty.' "

8. If something within a quote is incorrectly written, the Latin term *sic* (meaning "so" or "thus") may be inserted to show that the issue is intentionally being left in the quotation for context and clarity. *Sic* is generally italicized and is always surrounded by brackets to indicate that it was not part of the original quote.
   Example: A politician thanked his constituents with a message on Facebook that read, "I wan [sic] to publicly thank everyone who has been so supportive of me."

A Note on Quotation Marks: Quotation marks may also be used to indicate words used with irony or reservation, but where possible, this practice should be avoided or used sparingly.

Homophones

Words with similar pronunciations and different meanings

In English many words sound similar but are spelled differently and have different meanings. When proofreading, watch for grammar notes from your word processor and for contractions. If in doubt, look it up and double check. Here are a few frequently confused homophones:

- Accept/Except: *Accept* is a verb that means to receive (Example: She accepted his proposal). *Except* is a used as a preposition to exclude something or to show an unequal relationship between things like *but* (Example: I packed all my shoes except my flip-flops).
- Affect/Effect: *Affect* is verb that refers to the act of influencing something (Example: Stress affects everyone differently). *Effect* is usually a noun that indicates a result (Example: the effects of the Civil War).
- Farther/Further: *Farther* is an adjective that refers to an extent, distance, or degree (Example: Just a bit farther down the road). *Further* can be used as an adjective or adverb and refers to a figurative or literal distance (Example: Before we discuss this further), or may function as a verb (Example: He furthered his career).
- Then/Than: *Then* is an adverb that refers to a specific time or instance (Example: First I ran, then I walked). *Than* is a comparative preposition than can also function as a conjunction at times (Example: Israel's descendants are more than the stars in the sky or sands on the shore).
- To/Two/Too: *To* is a preposition and shows relation (Example: Going to town). *Two* is an adjective indicating the number 2 (Example: My two brothers). *Too* is an adverb that describes a degree or extent (Example: I hope you can come, too).
- Weather/Whether: *Weather* is a noun that describes the conditions of the air and sky (Example: The weather forecast is sunny). *Whether* is a conjunction that functions like the word *if*, in that it introduces alternatives (Example: Whether or not you come is up to you).
- You're/Your: *You're* is the contracted form of *you are* (Example: Make sure you're taking care of yourself). *Your* is a possessive noun (Example: Your shoes are untied).

The Comma (,)

Used to offset and organize important information

1. Commas separate, independent clauses (a group of words that can stand on their own as a sentence) joined by any of these coordinating conjunctions: *and, but, for, or, nor, so, yet.* Example: He has erected a multitude of new offices, and he has sent hither swarms of officers to harass our people...

2. Commas should separate three or more words, phrases, or clauses appearing in a series. If joined by a conjunction, such as "and," Headquarters strongly encourages the use of a comma after the item preceding the "and," as shown below after "our fortunes." This comma is known as the Oxford comma. While no longer strictly required in every context, it adds structure for items in a list by clarifying when things should be grouped together. Example: We mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.

It is interesting to note that while this use is considered unnecessary by some, a missing Oxford comma cost a Maine company 5 million dollars during February of 2018. The payment was for overtime wages initially withheld from drivers. The law said that overtime pay was not required for those who participated in several elements of food production, and it ended with "…marketing, storing, <u>packing for shipment or distribution of [the listed foods]</u>. The court sided in favor of the drivers saying that because it wasn't clear whether the law spoke only to the **packing** for "shipment or distribution" or whether the law was listing both "packing for shipment" and "distribution" as two separate elements, it would limit the law to the narrower interpretation of only applying to those who package "for shipment or distribution." The drivers were thus given their wages as well as a settlement.

3. Use commas after introductory a) clauses, b) phrases, or c) words that come before the main clause.
   Example: When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary…
   Example: To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world.

4. Insert a pair of commas to set off clauses, phrases, and words that are non-essential to the meaning of the sentence. Use one comma before to indicate the beginning of the pause and one at the end to indicate the end of the pause. You should easily be able to determine the subject and verb, even amid several clauses and phrases.
   Example: **We**, therefore, the Representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, **do**, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly **publish and declare**, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States….

5. Use commas to separate two or more coordinate (of equal importance) adjectives that describe the same noun. A good rule of thumb is that in cases where you could place an "and" between the two adjectives, you should use a comma. Never add an extra comma between the final adjective and the noun itself or use commas with non-coordinate adjectives (where one adjective takes precedence over the other).
   Example: the independent, self-governing colonies…

6. Use commas to set off phrases at the end of the sentence that refer back to the beginning or middle of the sentence. Such phrases are free modifiers that can be placed anywhere in the sentence without causing confusion.
   Example: He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their public records, **for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures.**

7. Use commas to set off all geographical names, items in dates (except the month and day), addresses (except the street number and name), and titles in names.
   Example: In Congress, July 4, 1776.

8. Use a comma to shift between the main discourse and a quotation.
   In the *Declaration of Independence,* citizens are reminded of the most rudimentary natural law, "that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

When to avoid Commas: One of the most common comma errors involves using a comma when stronger punctuation and/or verbiage is needed; this is known as a comma splice. A comma alone is not strong enough to join two independent clauses (groups of words that could form complete sentences themselves). You may remedy a comma splice with a period, a comma and a conjunction, a semi-colon, or the subordination of one of the clauses. Some writers also struggle with using commas in unwarranted situations.

Don't use commas:

- Before a quotation introduced by "that"
- To separate a compound subject or noun phrase
- To separate a compound verb or verb phrase
- To separate the subject from the verb
- To separate the verb from the rest of the predicate (words following the verb)
- To separate a dependent clause from an independent clause when the independent clause comes first.
- To separate adjectives from the words they modify

Proofreading for Comma Errors: Be aware of what comma rules you are most likely to break. If you know that you especially struggle with comma use, start at the end of your paper and read it one sentence at a time so that you can focus on the balance of the sentence and punctuation. Doing this on one or two pieces of writing can make you aware of what habits you want to break. Otherwise, as you edit, circle and check rules on anything dubious.

The Semicolon (;)

Structures independent clauses and complex lists

1. Join two related independent clauses without a conjunction by using a semicolon.
   Example: "All get what they want; they do not always like it." C.S. Lewis

2. Use a semicolon to organize a complex list or series where the items in the list already contain commas.
   Example: Lewis and Clarke explored Fort Mandan, North Dakota and Great Falls, Montana in the North; Fort Clatsop, Oregon and the Pacific Ocean in the West; and the Yellowstone and Missouri rivers to the South.

Proofreading for Semicolon Errors: Be careful not to use semicolons where a comma is needed. Make sure that if you are using a semicolon to separate independent clauses, you do not use a conjunction or begin the second clause with a capitol letter. Check sentences to make sure that there is, in fact, an independent clause on either side.

The Apostrophe (')

Indicates possession, plurality, or omission of letters

1. To show ownership of a singular form of a word, add an **'s**, even if the word ends in the letter **s** already.
   Example: At my **friend's Bible study**, we talked about how one day, we will all bow and worship at **Jesus's feet**.
   Note: While formal grammar guides call for 's on words ending in an **s** like Jesus, it is an acceptable practice in many circles to say **Jesus' feet.** Headquarters accepts either.

2. Likewise, add an **'s** to plural words that do not end with the letter **s.**
   Example: Afterwards, we helped lead the **children's games**.

3. If a noun is plural and already ends in an **s**, simply add an apostrophe to the end.
   Example: We even took turns racing down the **kids' slide**.

4. Add an **'s** the last word of a compound noun phrase to show joint possession.
   Example: Later, picnicked at **John and Abigail's orchard**.

5. Use apostrophes to indicate where letters have been omitted for any reason. Sometimes you will see this in poetry or lyrics of a hymn, but the most common use of this rule applies to contractions. Avoid contractions in formal communication. Occasionally, in narrative or creative writing, they do have a valuable place.

   Examples:
don't = do not	shouldn't = should not
I'm = I am	didn't = did not
he'll = he will	could've= could have (not "could of")
she's = she is	'70 = 1970

   An exception to the above worth noting is **its** and **it's**. **It's** is a contracted form of "it is," while **its** shows that "it" possesses something. Another word that breaks the normal pattern is **who's** and **whose**. **Who's** is the contracted form of "who is," while **whose** is the possessive form.
6. Apostrophes are also uses to form the plurals of letters that appear in lower cases by placing an **'s** after the letter being referenced.
   Example: Mind your **p's and q's** was a popular saying in the early **1900's**.

Proofreading for Apostrophe Errors: If you tend to omit apostrophes, proof your paper with a pen or pencil in hand and mark every word that ends in **s** or **es**, then look at the context to see if it requires and apostrophe. If your habit is to use extra apostrophes, mark each apostrophe and then check the context to see if it is required. Remember that personal possessive pronouns, like his, hers, and theirs, do not require apostrophes.

The Hyphen (-)

Used to show compound terms or word division

1. Compound terms consist of more than one word but represent a single item or idea. Example: sister-in-law

2. The best rule of thumb is to check anything that is suspect in a good dictionary or style guide. Open compounds, like chief of staff, or closed compounds, like bookstore, do not use hyphens. Hyphenated compounds are formed by a combination of one of the following: noun + adjective (Example: acid-free), noun + participle (Example: custom-built), or adjective + participle (Example: wide-eyed).

3. Before hyphenating, ask yourself if the hyphenated term is functioning as a single part of speech (requires a hyphen) or as a phrase (un-hyphenated).
    Example: If one is contemplating the phrase "build up," 1 Thessalonians 5:11calls us to "encourage on another and build up one another," which is a phrase, but if you were addressing the "excessive build-up of regulatory power under the executive branch," you would be using the term as a noun.

4. Hyphens can also be used to join a prefix to another word.
    Examples: "pre-Columbian inhabitants"   "post-revolutionary America"

5. Hyphens are also used to show word breaks at the end of the line of text where *syll-ables* of a single word are split between lines. Splits should always follow syllables. In the previous sentence, it would have been awkward if the split were sy-llables or syllabl-es.

Be careful not to confuse hyphens with dashes. In culture today, especially with email and texting, dashes are becoming a popular replacement for commas. While an Em Dash (which is a long dash—as opposed to a short dash -) may be used as a pair to offset nonessential information in a sentence, commas are preferred in formal writing. If an Em Dash is used, there should be no space on either side.
Example: Upon discovering his cookbook's errors—all 86 of them—the chef immediately recalled the book from publication.

Should you need to create an em dash, in most word processors, simply type two dashes and the word which follows, then press space, and it will autoformat the two short dashes into the longer em dash.

"BE" Verbs & Voice

Choosing vivid verbs and improving clarity in writing

The most irregular verb in the English language is "to be." Verbs indicating a state of being are also some of the most widely used. Below, see the list of the complete family of "Be" verbs:

Infinitive	to be
Present	am, is, are
Past	was, were
Present Participle	being
Past Participle	been
Present Subjunctive	be
Past Subjunctive	were
Imperative	be

There are a couple challenges presented by "Be" verbs.

1. First, while sometimes used as linking verbs, **be** verbs are often employed as auxiliary verbs, which displace stronger verbs with more vivid meaning. Make clarity a priority in your writing by choosing the most vibrant verb phrase that fits the occasion.
   Weak: The politician **had** an obstruction of justice that required immediate action.
   Strong: The obstruction of justice **required** the politician's immediate action.
   Weak: With little aid, the criminal **has gotten away** in the past.
   Strong: With little aid, the criminal **escaped custody and evaded capture** in the past.

2. Voice indicates the relationship between the verb and the agent carrying out that verb. Voice has only two forms: active and passive. Active voice exists where the agent of action is stated explicitly and functions as the grammatical subject of a sentence. For example, in the preceding sentence, where "voice" functions as the subject, the subject performs the verb "exists." Conversely, where passive voice is achieved, the grammatical subject of the sentence **is acted upon** by the verb. If that last sentence sounded like it was beating around the bush, it was. Using the verb phrase "is acted upon" made "the grammatical subject" the recipient of the action, and not the executor of the action. Consider the difference between saying "Gretchen **sweeps** the floor" and "The floor **is swept** by Gretchen." Because the noun is not executing the verb in the second instance, but being acted upon, the meaning is less clear. In most case, simply eliminating "be verbs" like "is" forces one to choose stronger verbs and employ active voice.

Proofreading to Enhance Voice and Verb Choice: While it is true that both active and passive voice are legitimately correct grammatical forms, the purpose of communication should be evaluated carefully to determine which form of voice is stylistically and rhetorically appropriate. In most cases, active voice is far more dynamic. When you edit your paper, you can use a word processor to do a "Ctrl + f" search for the "Be" verbs listed above. Evaluate each be verb and consider if it could be replaced with a stronger verb or if the sentence could be rearranged for stronger emphasis on the logical subject. The best writers choose syntax (word order) that reinforces both the explicit message and attitude of their words.

Parallelism

Create equal emphasis through equal arrangement

Use the same pattern of words when providing a list of words, phrases, or clauses in order to show each the same level of importance and create a smooth flow of thought in your reader's mind. This is achieved by being consistent in word forms.

Example: We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, **establish** Justice, **insure** domestic Tranquility, **provide** for the common defense, **promote** the general Welfare, and **secure** the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

Notice how each of the enumerations in the Preamble take the same verb form. If the Framers had said, "provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and *by securing* the Blessings of Liberty…," it would have sounded rough and disjointed. One of the most important places to have parallelism is in your thesis or topic sentence, but even in a simple list, parallel structure enhances clarity.

Proofreading for Parallelism: If parallelism is a new concept for you, skim your paper and pause when you see words that signal an opportunity for parallel structure. Looks especially for words in lists, juxtaposed ideas, or keywords such as and, or, not only, but also, either…or, both…and, etc. The items in connected by these words should have the same grammatical form. Verbs should appear in the same tense, and in a list, if some words have modifiers, all word should have modifiers (Example: walking quickly and running slowly). When you see an indicator word, check that there is equal balance and emphasis.

Style & Support

Powerful development and transitioning unify writing

Think of writing as building a bridge between your mind and the minds of your readers. You need more than just the wood to build a bridge (wood being the ideas you wish to communicate). Building requires an amount of planning and strategic support. The bridge must be properly framed and fastened if it is to hold up under any amount of weight. When writing, think of structure and support as the fame and transitional devices as the fasteners.

When it comes to writing, especially mission reports, not all assignments require a formal introduction or conclusion. However, every paragraph should be well developed, and where introductions and conclusions or formal arguments are being made, strong structure should flow smoothly. Within a paragraph, consider the following template:

A. Sentence expressing the main point of the paragraph which may enumerate or foreshadow supporting ideas. A transition sentence or greater explanation may be warranted here.

    1. Supporting idea
        a. Evidence of supporting idea
        b. Discussion of supporting idea and what evidence illustrates
        c. Link back to main idea and/or transition to next support

    2. Supporting idea
        a. Evidence of supporting idea
        b. Discussion of supporting idea and what evidence illustrates
        c. Link back to main idea and/or transition to next support

B. Clincher that refocuses the reader on the impact or significance of the main point in light of the supporting ideas

Based on the above model, a well-rounded paragraph should be approximately 8-12 sentences long and may include any number of supporting points. Keep in mind that each time you introduce an idea or support, it deserves to be developed and connected. If developing the idea or reconnecting it to the main idea does not fit with the scope of the paper, then there is a good chance the idea itself does not fit with the scope of the paper. There are certainly times for creative license, but in general, the more fully developed your ideas are, the more compelling they are.

Bear in mind that what is true at the paragraph level is also true when it comes to the flow of a complete piece of writing. Your introduction should do more than just pull the reader into the topic; it should include a topic or thesis statement that structures the paper and foreshadows the key points of the paragraphs that follow. When thinking about the layout of main points, consider how the supporting points might logically build off one another to form a dynamic conclusion. Think of the supporting paragraphs as forming a macrocosm of the outlined pattern above. Each paragraph should intertwine with the other paragraphs and be connected by smooth transitions that link back to the main assertion of the thesis, while building off other paragraphs. As a writer, being intentional about this technique sharpens your focus on that main assertion and helps keep both you and your readers on topic, thereby forming a functional bridge of ideas.

Once a structure is established, remember to use your fasteners. Clarity in writing gently leads and shapes the thoughts of the reader by connecting key points to the logical conclusion. In this way, the reader is never presented with an opportunity to wonder what one was trying to say. This gentle guiding of thought is largely achieved with the use of transitional devices. Transitional devices may occur between main points, but they should also be employed between sentences and within a paragraph. The following chart shows devices that can help you eliminate abrupt jumps and breaks in the follow of ideas.

Purpose of Transition	Transitional Words and Phrases
To Add	Additionally, again, besides this, furthermore, further consider, moreover, of equal importance, next, what is more, and then
To Compare	Although, but, conversely, comparatively speaking, consider, on the other hand, however, in contrast, on the contrary, by comparison, this might be true, whereas, while, when weighed against
To Prove or Affirm	Since, because, compelled by, evidently, indeed, in fact, for this reason, as illustrated by, as exemplified by, acknowledging that
To Show Cause	Because, therefore, as a result, resultingly, in light of
To Show Exception	Yet, still, in spite of, with the qualification that, excepting, despite, occasionally, of course, nevertheless, however, in certain instances
To Show Time	Presently, immediately, following, preceding, in the course of, thereafter, hereafter, after a time, previously, finally, formerly, initially
To Repeat	Reiterating the afore mentioned, in brief, as previously discussed, again
To Show Emphasis	Indeed, importantly, significantly, emphatically, certainly, positively, without reserve, unquestionably, absolutely, undeniably, never
To Show Sequence	First, second, third, finally, initially, next, then, following, at this time, now, at this point, subsequently, consequently, simultaneously, concurrently, therefore, hence, thus, previously, afterward
To Exemplify	For example, as exemplified by, for instance, to illustrate, consider the case of, as attested, as witnessed by, on this occasion, illuminated by
To Introduce a Quote	As argued by X, "… ", X observed, "…", Originally articulated by X, "..." X stated, "…", X claimed, "…", X once remarked, "…", X expressed concern that, "…", X articulated the sentiment that, "…"
To Introduce	Beginning with, primarily, consider, initially, foundationally, first
To Conclude	Therefore, thus, consequently, justly, in conclusion, as demonstrated, accordingly, hence, overall, on the whole, finally

Other tips for Improving Style

1. KISS (Keep It Simple, Silly). Be straightforward. Language should be clear, concise, and uncomplicated. If an idea could be expressed in 20 words or 10, use 10.

2. Avoid redundancy. Quality and depth add more flavor than repetition.

3. Be aware of when you use the same word more than once, even if it is indifferent contexts. It can be easy to use the same adjective or verb over and over.

4. Replace qualifications with confidence. Using words that qualify statements and make them less than absolute is important for giving a true and accurate account, but overuse of these type of words can cause the reader to doubt your credibility. Always faithfully represent truth but speak with certainty and confidence wherever possible.

5. Avoid meta commentary. In other words, don't discuss the fact that you are discussing something by using words like "I," "you," or "we" to talk about how you are progressing through the piece of writing. First person pronouns should be used sparingly in formal writing. While they may be used in anecdotes and narratives, generally speaking, they should not be used in persuasive or informative writing.

6. Keep writing specific. Avoid overusing pronouns. Use vivid words, especially strong verbs. Use active voice and parallel form. All of these make your writing more specific.

Additional Resources

https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/grammar - Oxford Dictionary Grammar Guide

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html - Purdue Online Writing Lab

https://www.grammarly.com/blog/category/handbook/ - Grammar Tips Handbook