

Questions for Ensuring Logical Development

I have:

- Begun the document (memo, report, letter) with your main point – why am I writing to you? Why has the report been commissioned and what has it found? And so on. Then support that with a little context and background. There's your first paragraph.
- Organised my content – the body of the document – into blocks of related information. Each may turn into just a paragraph or many pages.
- Labelled each block with a heading or a topic sentence and used subheadings if the sections become too long.
- Begun each of those blocks with its main point. If your heading is a question, answer it in your first sentence.
- Used detail, examples, research data, etc. to back up each main point.
- Asked for action, pointed the way ahead (after restating my purpose, if the document is long).

Source: Mark Tredinnick and Geoff Whyte, *the little black book of business writing*

Paragraph Structure

The coherence and rhythm of your writing will depend not only on your word choice and sentence structure, but also on how well you construct your paragraphs. A paragraph is a cluster of sentences built around one main idea or point. Its most important function is to group together the sentences that are dedicated to one main idea and to separate them visually from the ideas that precede and follow them.

To make your paragraph work this way, you must ensure that the main point of each one stands out sharply.

You can usually do this by applying the inverted pyramid. This usually takes the structure of starting with a topic sentence that states the main idea of the paragraph. You can then build on that with a sentence that explains or discusses the paragraph's main idea.

Although, sometimes a standard pyramid works better, especially if the audience needs some data first. This often happens if your audience might be a little reluctant to receive your points and results in your topic sentence occurring at the end of the paragraph with the discussion preceding it.

A paragraph will typically be organising content around a:

1. course of action
2. recommendation
3. summary
4. quotation
5. question or challenge
6. restatement of the introduction

CHECKLIST –

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LOGIC

Another key element of the paragraph is to ensure the logical progression of information. The easiest way to do this is to use linking words such as ‘therefore’, ‘consequently’ or ‘however’. This allows you to clearly show causality and the relationship between ideas rather than just placing them for the reader to make their own conclusions. You must take the reader by the hand from one idea to another.

I have:

- tried changing the order of the sentences in your paragraph to see if they are easier to logically follow in a different order.
- asked yourself ‘so what?’ when I placed a sentence in your paragraph. (If you haven’t answered this question on the page but you can in your head, it’s a sure-fire way to tell that you need to write more.)
- considered varying paragraph length to give variety to your writing.
- checked that my paragraphs link together in a logical order to make my document clear and unified.
- Made sure my paragraphs stand alone with a clear idea solved in each one. (This is the concept of MECE – Mutually Exclusive, Collectively Exhaustive – google this for more information).

Source: Judith Dwyer, *The Business Communication Handbook*

Sentence Structure

1. The Head-On Sentence
2. A short, simple sentence
3. A longer, complex or compound sentence
4. Conjunctions
5. Linking words and phrases

Source: Roslyn Petelin and Marsha Durham, *The Professional Writing Guide: Writing Well and Knowing Why*

What is logical development / critical thinking?

An ordered paragraph uses a familiar pattern to help readers understand the logical connection between ideas. A pattern ensures that sentences are not completely independent. Each sentence has a function, that is, a reason for being there. Think of each sentence growing out of the sentence preceding it. Functions of a sentence include:

- | | | |
|------------|--------------------|-------------|
| - compare | - elaborate | - qualify |
| - concede | - exemplify | - refute |
| - conclude | - identify cause / | - rephrase |
| - contrast | result | - state |
| - define | - narrate | - summarise |
| - describe | - particularise | - support |
| - evaluate | - prove | |

Robust Reports

Readers are used to certain patterns of information, so effective writers use these patterns to help readers follow the development of their ideas. Common patterns developed within paragraphs are:

- analogy
- cause and effect
- classification
- comparison and contrast
- definition
- description
- process
- example or illustration
- partition
- problem and solution
- question and answer

Source: Roslyn Petelin and Marsha Durham, *The Professional Writing Guide: Writing Well and Knowing Why*