

Paragraphs, topic sentences,  
the problem-solution pattern

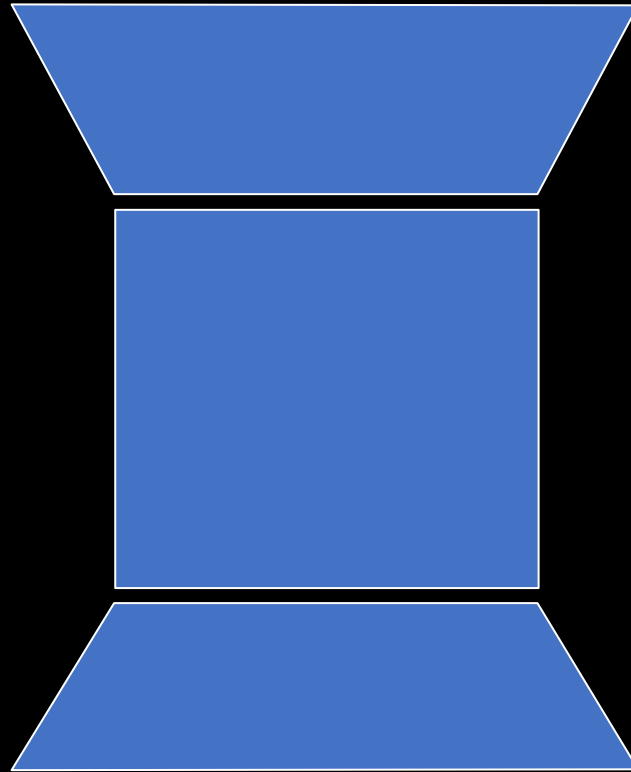
# Do you have any advice for writing effective paragraphs?

- Are there any rules?
- What makes an effective paragraph?
- When & why should you begin a new paragraph?
- *Discuss in small groups, and be prepared to share your ideas with the class.*

# Paragraphs

Open the handout in MyCourses. In which places would you begin a new paragraph?

# Visualising the structure of a paragraph



# The structure of a paragraph

Each paragraph should have a unified purpose (focus on **one** main theme/idea).

## Introduction

- **Topic sentence:** usually the first sentence, introduces the focus of the paragraph

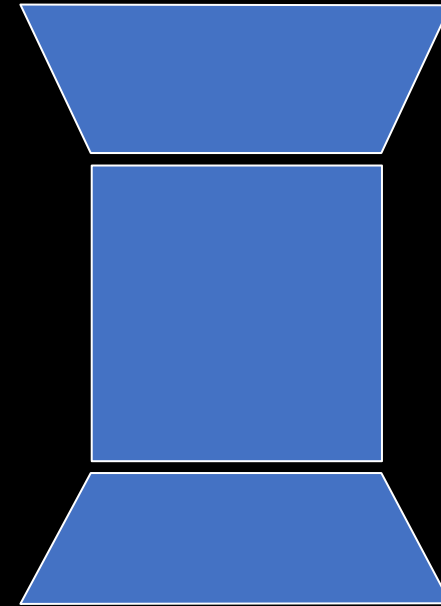
## Body

- **Supporting sentences:** explanation, evidence, examples, argument

## Conclusion

- **Concluding sentence:** may summarize or underscore the main thought of the paragraph / transition to the next

**New idea = new paragraph + new topic sentence**



# Topic sentences

Nietzsche's remark that 'God is dead' encapsulates one of the central tenets of his philosophy

topic



Nietzsche's remark that 'God is dead' encapsulates one of the central tenets of his philosophy.

Controlling idea



# A good topic sentence contains

- The topic of the paragraph
- The controlling idea to be developed



# Speed reading

- Pair work

Find an academic article on a subject of your choice using Google Scholar

Read through the article by reading **only the first sentence** of every paragraph

Discuss what the article was about

If you had a good idea of the content

The author was effective at using TOPIC SENTENCES

Why is this a poor topic sentence?

- **"Sartre was a French writer and philosopher"**

Topic



- **"Sartre was a French writer and philosopher"**

Controlling idea?



Topic



- "Sartre's existentialist ideas revolutionized French literature and philosophy"

Controlling  
idea



# Structure & Organisation

## - small group task

Read the three versions of the same project proposal (handout in MyCourse)

In groups of three, discuss which version best convinces the reader to fund the project. Why? Why are the others less effective?



# Project funding proposal

Which text is the most effective and why?

Text A



Text B



Text C



# Project funding proposal

What makes TEXT A the most effective?

- First sets the scene for the problem (relevance)
- Then introduces the problem
- Provides a solution for the problem
- Evaluates the solution



*Problem-solution pattern*





# The Toulmin-Zappen model (Problem-solution pattern)

Arguably, the most important pattern of organization in academic writing.

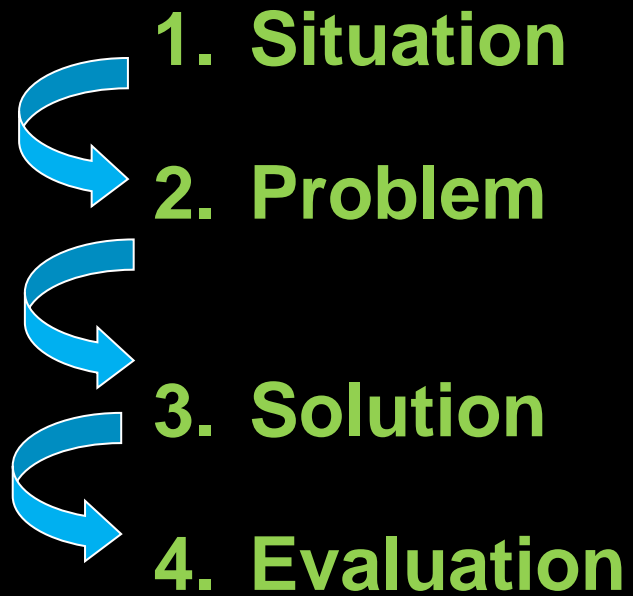
**This model and its variants are commonly found in:**

- argumentative and evaluative critical thinking
- Bachelor, Master's and Doctoral thesis introductions and abstracts
- research articles
- research reports and funding proposals



# The Problem-Solution Pattern

## Four rhetorical moves

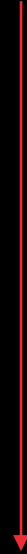


**SITUATION: What is the current situation?**

**PROBLEM: What is wrong with the current situation?**

**SOLUTION: What is the solution to the current problem?**

**EVALUATION: What makes this a good solution?**



**Situation**

Importance?  
Relevance?

- What is the current situation?
- Why is the topic important for this reader?

**Problem**

Causes?  
Consequences?  
Past problem?  
Criteria for solving?

- What is wrong with the current situation?
- What is needed / lacking?

**Solution**

What are its features?  
How does it work?

- What is your solution?

**Evaluation**

How effective is it?  
Meet criteria?

- Is this a good solution?
- Why?

**Situation**

**Importance, relevance**

*major, important, popular, common, and many*

**Problem**

**Causes, consequences, past solutions, ...**

**contrast** (*However, despite, although, but*),

**negative** (*limited, few, little, no, not, none*),

**synonyms** (*danger, drawback, disadvantage, weakness, need, shortcoming, obstacle*).

**Solution**

**Features? How does it work?**

**nouns** *solution, answer, approach, strategy, improvement*

**verbs** *solve, address a problem, work out, develop*

**causative connectors** *therefore, as a result, thus*

**Evaluation**

**How effective? Meet the criteria?**

**nouns** *benefit, advantage*

**verbs** *provide, offer, enable, allow*

**adjectives** *effective, efficient, reliable, safe, useful*

# Think about the introduction to your report

- What is the situation?
- What is the problem (or research gap)?
- What is your proposed solution?
- How effective is that solution?

Discuss with a partner



Begin writing the introduction to your report using the problem-solution pattern



# Homework

- Write introduction to report on Thematic Studio I project: 1-2 paragraphs containing problem-solution pattern and submit it to MyCourses by Thursday morning. Bring to class for peer review.
- Read key grammar terms handout

