

English for Academic Purposes



The Center for Professional Communication

Guide to Icons:



Discussion Activity



Writing Activity



Editing Tip



Good Example: Reader/writer communication



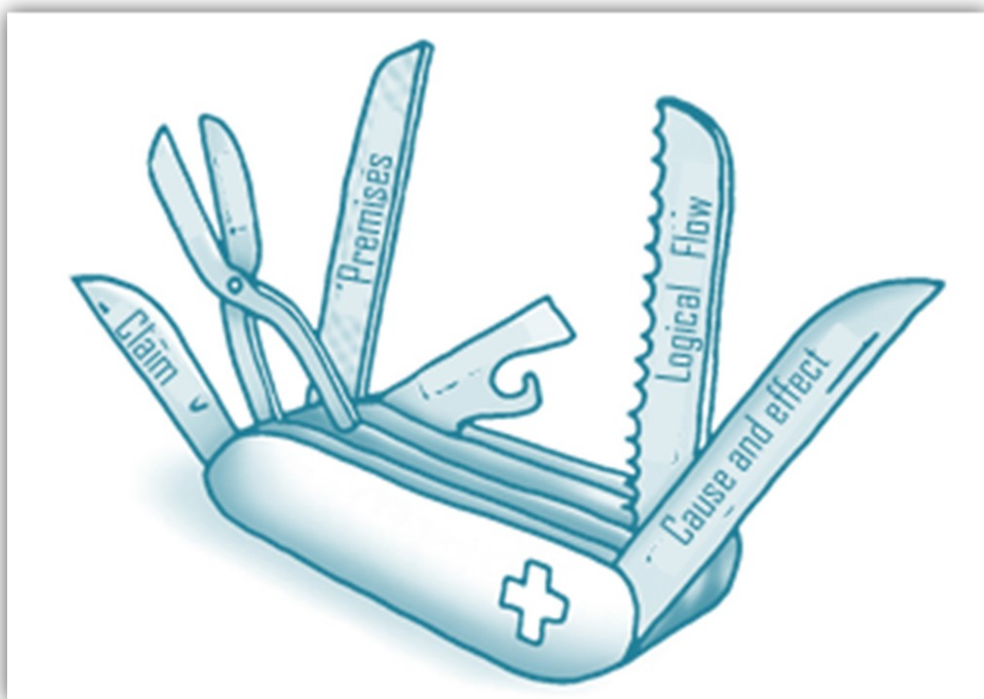
Bad Example: Reader/writer communication



Detour to Vocabulary Building

Unit 3:

Paragraphs for Purposes



DISCUSSION



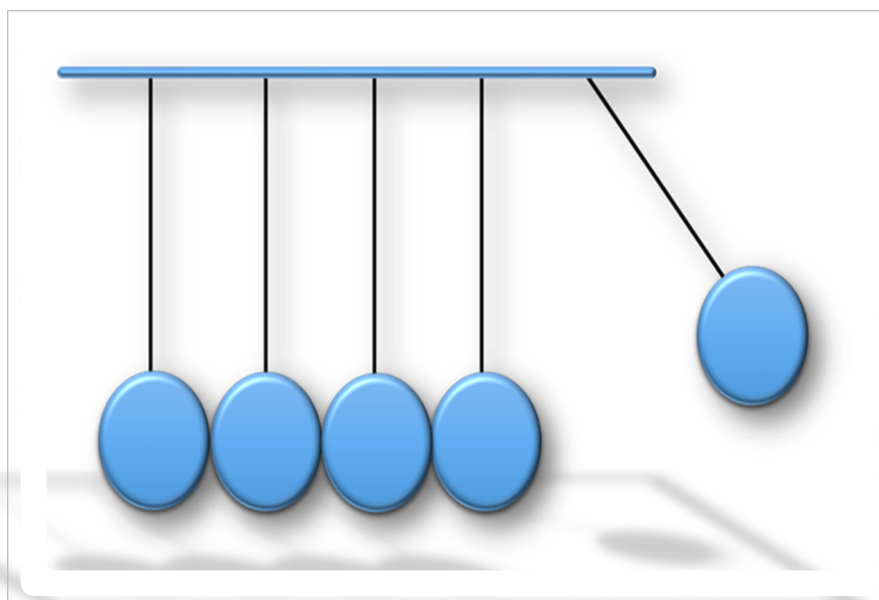
If the only tool you have is a hammer, you tend to see every problem as a nail.

- Abraham Maslow

Look at the title of this unit, the picture above, and the quote from Maslow. What do they suggest about paragraphs in academic writing?

In Unit 1, we learned about the basic academic paragraph: a claim, evidence to support the claim, and a concluding sentence. In this and the following lessons, we will look at how this basic paragraph is adapted to suit the author's needs. These [adaptations](#) include

- Explaining cause and effect in paragraphs
- [Hedging](#) in paragraphs
- Transitioning in sentences and between paragraphs
- Describing tables and figures in paragraphs
- Citing and synthesizing sources in paragraphs



CAUSE AND EFFECT PARAGRAPH COMPONENTS I

The academic writing done by undergraduate and graduate students often concerns itself with the impact of a change in one thing (an independent/predictor variable) on another thing (a dependent/outcome variable). In order to explain this impact, the academic writer must use a paragraph structure and a set of vocabulary that are appropriate for explaining cause and effect in academic writing. Look at the examples of causes and effects below.



Fill in the missing boxes in the table.

Investment	Result	Result	Result
Hiring more teachers	Improved student-to-teacher ratio	More attention for each child	<u>Superior</u> quality of education
Increasing and improving teacher training programs	Improved teacher quality	Superior lesson planning and <u>execution</u>	Superior quality of education
Building of new schools	New schools in rural and other underserved areas	More children with access to education	
Buying and renovating school facilities			

It is important that you clearly explain the complete process of cause and effect. It is not your reader’s job to fill in the missing parts of your argument; it is your job to fully explain the link. Consider the following example:

Cause

Hiring more teachers will lead to a superior

Effect

quality of education.

Although the link between this cause and effect may be clear to the writer, it may not be clear to the reader. It is the writer’s responsibility to clarify each step in the cause and effect chain.



Topic

One way to improve the quality of education that

Sentence

children receive is to hire more teachers.

Cause

Effect

Hiring more teachers will improve the student-to-
-teacher ratio. This improved ratio means that

Cause

teachers will have fewer students to supervise

Effect

and will be able to spend more time assisting

Cause

individual students. This individual assistance as a

Effect

result of having more teachers will improve the quality

of education each child receives.

Cause and Effect: Activity 2



Clarify each step in the cause and effect chain for this example (include a topic sentence).

Increasing and improving teacher training programs will lead to a superior quality of education.

THE LANGUAGE OF CAUSE AND EFFECT

There are many ways to express a cause and effect relationship. This section introduces some of the vocabulary and expressions preferred in academic writing.

USING CAUSE VERBS

1. Cause

A decrease in teacher salary will **cause** a decrease in demand for teaching positions.

2. Lead to

Improved teacher training will **lead to** improvements in lesson preparation.

3. Result in

Hiring more teachers will **result in** improved student-to-teacher ratios.

4. Produce

Investment in education will **produce** improvements across a range of educational factors.

USING CONJUNCTIONS

5. Because (of)

Teachers will be able to give more individualized instruction **because** of the improved student-to-teacher ratio.

6. Due to

Fewer college graduates will be interested in careers in teaching **due to** the comparatively lower salaries offered to teachers.

7. As a result (of)

More children will be able to attend primary and secondary education **as a result of** increases in the number of schools in rural and other underserved areas.

8. Therefore

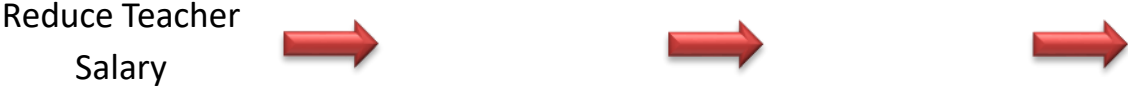
Better student-to-teacher ratios will enable teachers to provide more individualized instruction and will, **therefore**, improve the quality of education.

9. Thus -ing/ Thereby -ing

New facilities will allow teachers to utilize technology in the classroom, **thus** creating an opportunity for children to learn some of the 21st Century skills they will require in the future.



A. Working with another student or in a group, complete the cause and effect chain below.



B. Now write a paragraph explaining the cause and effect chain you have just created.

Paragraph planning area

CAUSE AND EFFECT PARAGRAPH COMPONENTS II

Regardless of how well research is designed, it is very difficult for a researcher to prove cause and effect beyond any doubt or debate. For this reason, it is wise to [hedge](#) your claims in academic writing. Look at the following example:



Reducing the starting salaries of teachers will reduce demand for these positions.

While the above claim may seem logical, it is possible that some people would criticize this cause and effect chain. These critics might suggest that starting salary is not always the determining factor for graduates choosing their career and that there are many other factors that could impact demand for teaching positions (e.g., average starting salaries of other professions, job security concerns, location of employment, etc.). In order to prepare for such criticisms from the reader, the academic writer can use a number of expressions to lessen the certainty of the claim.



Reducing the starting salaries of teachers **may reduce** demand for these positions in areas where there are more financially attractive employment opportunities.

In the above example, the writer has weakened the claim using a hedging device: *may*. The writer has also narrowed the scope of the claim from reducing *demand for these positions* (everywhere) to reducing *demand for these positions in areas where there are more financially attractive employment opportunities*. By so doing, the writer has reduced the risk of criticism from the reader.

THE LANGUAGE OF HEDGING

Below is some of the language that can be used to hedge a claim.

Will be	100%	Won't be/couldn't be	-100%
May/ might be	70%	May not/ might not be	-70%
Could be	50%		
May/ might have been	70%	Couldn't have been	-100%
Could have been	50%	May not/ might not have been	-70%
Probably	80%		
Possibly	50%		

Examples of cause and effect language and hedging of claims

Although increasing the starting salaries for teachers ¹⁰⁰ ₁₀₀ [%] will certainly increase the attractiveness of teaching as a career choice for new graduates, simply increasing salary ⁷⁰ ₇₀ [%] may not be sufficient to attract the number of new teachers required to significantly impact student-to-teacher ratios, particularly ^{narrowing the scope} in rural areas.

Extensive training programs for new and existing teachers were implemented in 1995 (Education Report, 1997); however, these programs did not ^{Cause & effect} lead to improvements in the quality of education being received by students—as measured through changes in student ...

performance on international examinations (Education Report, 2005). This failure of the teacher-training programs to result in improved educational quality may have been due to the lack of quality-assurance monitoring of the training programs. As there was no system of monitoring put in place alongside the teacher - training programs, it is impossible to ascertain how well these training programs were being conducted or even if they were being conducted at all; as was the case in Ireland, where it was found that in some cases teacher-training materials were being given to teachers as take-home self-study projects (instead of workshop activities) and completed projects were never returned or checked (McChancer, 2012).

Cause and Effect: Activity 4



Hedge and narrow the scope of the following claims:

Investing in school facilities will improve enrollment in schools

Increasing and improving teacher training programs will reduce dropout rates in schools.

Reducing school fees will improve enrollment in schools.



Research Notes:

Jay & Bob (1996)

Topic: Education reform in Thailand

Education is needed as the country develops. Differences in investment in human capital account for some of the differences in economic development rates. Therefore, investment in education is a key component of economic development.

Lacey & Cagney (2007)

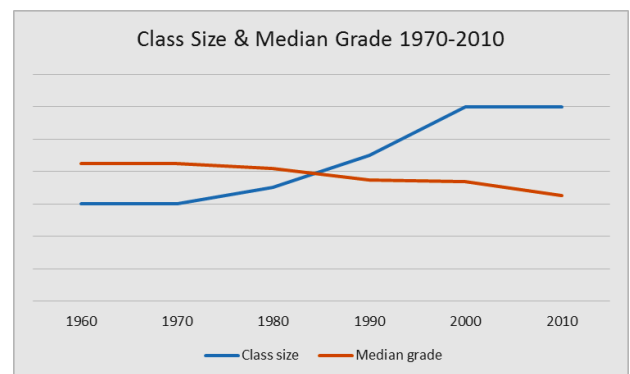
Topic: Education in the United States

Quality, not quantity of teachers, is the deciding factor. Unqualified teachers will have little impact on educational attainment. Therefore, governments wishing to improve education must invest in teacher training rather than recruiting larger numbers of teachers.

Stimpy & Ren (2005)

Topic: Educational attainment in Ireland

The decline in education can be linked to the increases in class size. Reducing class sizes by hiring more teachers will result in higher quality education.



Hardy & Laurel (2015)

Topic: Education reform in Japan

Evidence showed that the gains made in educational attainment were mainly in kindergarten. At the end of kindergarten, children in small classes score better than those in large classes. They then maintain this differential for the next three years.

Clyde & Bonnie (1999)

Topic: Education in the United States

Statistical investigations show almost as many positive as negative estimates of the effects of reducing class size. Only 15 percent give much confidence (i.e., are [statistically significant](#)) that there is the expected improvement from reducing class sizes. The [bulk](#) (85 percent) either suggest that achievement worsens (13 percent) or gives little confidence that there is any effect at all.

World Bank (2014)

Topic: Southeast Asian Education

In the first comprehensive study to analyze the performance of Southeast Asian educational systems in terms of student learning, the World Bank highlights two main areas of concern. First, nearly 13 million children ages 8 to 14 years are not in school. Second, and perhaps more importantly, the quality of education for those attending school is low and does not equip students with adequate skills to join the workforce.

While there is no magic bullet to fix the quality of education in South Asia, the report identifies a few key strategic priorities.

- **Make learning outcomes the central goal of education policy.**

Defining and tracking student learning.

- **Invest in early childhood nutrition.**

Malnutrition has a damaging effect on children's ability to learn.

- **Improve teacher effectiveness and accountability.**

Clear standards for teacher recruitment and deployment, with strong safeguards against non merit-based decisions.

- **Adequate instructional support in early grades.**


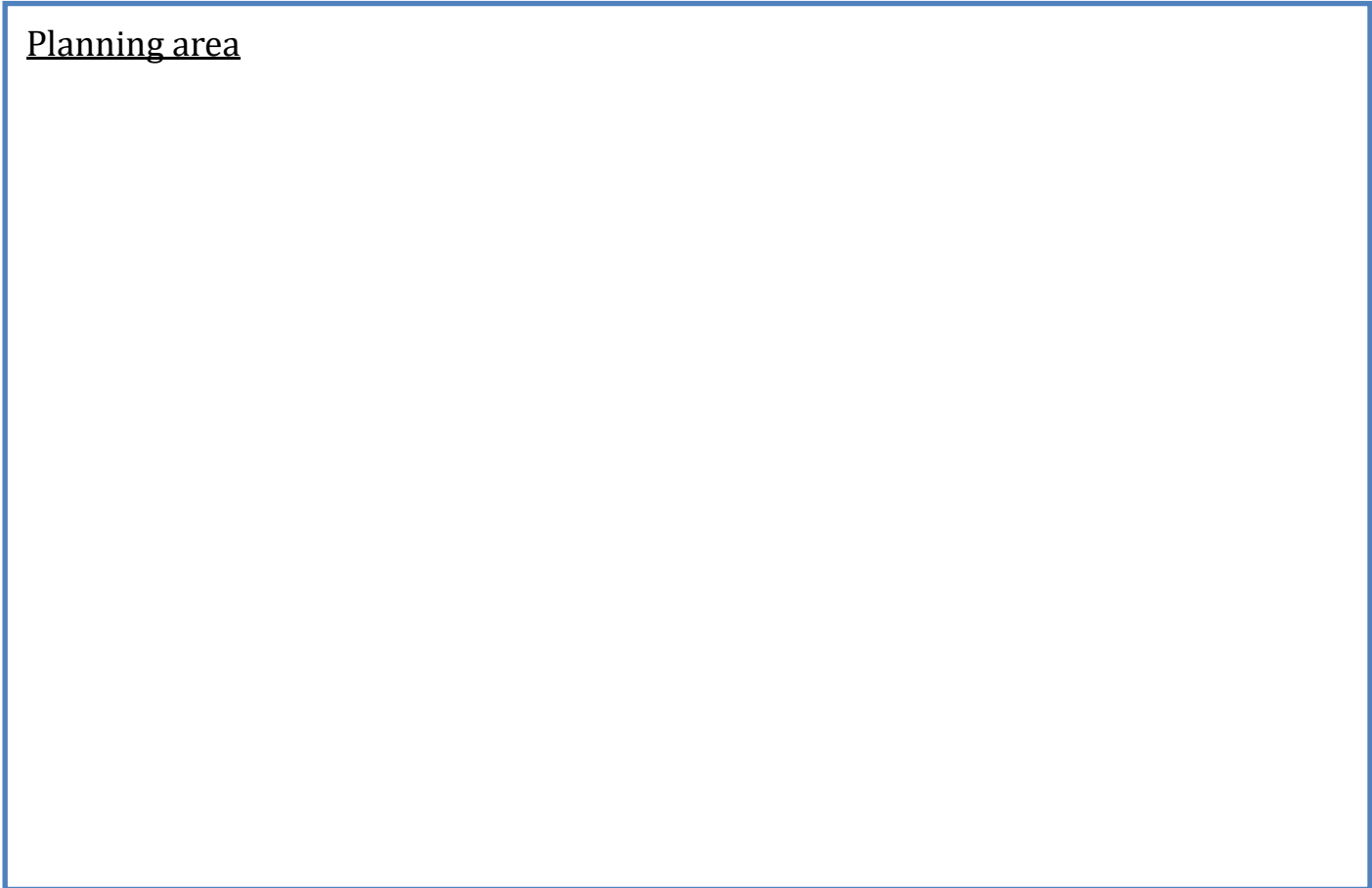
To help first-generation students succeed, teachers need to be trained to improve early grade reading skills.

- **Leveraging the contribution of non-state players.**

Non-state players should be encouraged to participate in the designing of innovative ways to improve schools, finding ways to ease barriers to entry, carefully designing public-private partnerships, and using nimble but effective mechanisms to increase the education sector's accountability to students, the state, and society.

Topic Source				

Planning area





Vocabulary Builder

The following words appear throughout this unit and are from the Academic Word List. They will be important for writing and reading academic texts written in English. Fill out the form by adding in the related words.

Keyword	Keyword type	Noun form	Verb form	Adjective form	Adverb form	Opposite by prefix
Adaptation						
e.g.						
Bulk						
e.g.						
Clarify						
e.g.						
Execution						
e.g.						

Vocabulary Builder

Keyword	Keyword type	Noun form	Verb form	Adjective form	Adverb form	Opposite by prefix
Hedge						
e.g.						
Statistically						
e.g.						
Superior						
e.g.						
Thereby						
e.g.						
Utilize						
e.g.						