

# READINGS IN BASIC ENGLISH *for* Higher Education

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## ***Chapter Seven***

### **WRITING: ESSAYS, LETTERS AND PARAGRAPHING**

*By Richard C. Ihejirika*

#### **7.1 INTRODUCTION:**

In this chapter, we shall attempt to discuss different types of essay writing, letter writing and paragraphing. But before we do that, we shall begin with general discussions which apply to all forms of writing.

Out of all the four skills of language acquisition and learning, listening, speaking, reading and writing, writing appears to be more complex and laborious. The reason is that in writing, apart from battling with the correct use of language, one has to organize his ideas in such an acceptable fashion in order to achieve the desired effect. The problem of writing is made more complex in a second language situation such as ours where one thinks in his mother tongue (L1) and writes in English Language (L2).

However, these problems can be adequately taken care of if one painstakingly goes through the rules and regulations governing writing, understands them and tries to put them into practice.

#### **General considerations:**

There are different forms of writing with their individual peculiarities. But there are some issues in writing that





cut across writing types. The aim of this section is to discuss these general considerations that affect all forms of writing.

## **7.2 Stages in Writing:**

There are three basic writing stages one has to pass through irrespective of the form of writing one is involved in.

1. Pre-writing stage
2. Writing stage
3. Re-writing stage

### **7.2.1 Pre-Writing Stage:**

At this stage the primary thing a writer does is to choose a topic. In doing so, one should choose a topic that is familiar to him for which he has enough ideas to discuss. He should also consider the time duration so that he does not choose a topic he cannot finish within the time limit.

When the writer settles for a topic, he should go further to think out ideas that are relevant to the topic. Where time permits, he can carry out library research in order to supplement his own ideas. In such a situation, ideas borrowed from other sources must always be acknowledged.

There is always the need to organize the ideas already sourced from here and there. It is at this stage that outlining comes in. An outline is the arrangement of the skeletal ideas that are relevant to a topic and the way

they are related. An outline is very important to a writer because it does not only help him to arrange his ideas logically and sequentially but also helps him to remember the ideas when the writing is in progress. Students are advised to always draw an outline for any topic they want to write before they commence writing.

For example, the topic: "Drug Abuse Among Youths" can have the following outline:

1. Introduction
  - (i) What is drug abuse?
  - (ii) Instances of drug abuse
2. Causes of drug abuse
  - (i) Ignorance
  - (ii) Peer group influence
  - (iii) Poor family upbringing
  - (iv) Frustration
3. Effects of drug abuse
  - (i) Mental ill-health
  - (ii) Death
  - (iii) Reduction in work force
  - (iv) Imprisonment.
4. Solutions
  - (i) Counselling
  - (ii) Good up-brining
  - (iii) Creation of job opportunities.
5. Conclusions

### **7.2.2 Writing Stage:**

It is at this stage that the writing proper is carried out making use of the outline. One is expected at this stage to add flesh to the skeletal ideas listed on the outline. There are certain steps that should be taken to ensure that one's writing is not only effective but also achieves the desired objective. The steps include:

#### **1. Paragraph Development:**

Paragraph, as we all know, is a collection of sentences on one idea. A good paragraph should be an embodiment of one central idea which is usually expressed in the topic sentence. While other sentences go on to elaborate the main idea.

With the outline already on ground, all the writer needs do is to pick the ideas one after another and develop them in paragraphs. In doing so, efforts should be made to ensure that the qualities of paragraph – unity, coherence and emphasis are emphasized.

In addition, the individual paragraphs should not be left hanging. They should be made to link with one another in a chain-like manner. The cohesion between the paragraphs could be achieved through the use of transitional words and paragraph linkers or connectives. The following paragraph linkers should be noted and put in use when necessary.

<b>Function</b>	<b>Linkers</b>
1. Addition –	moreover, further, and, also, in addition, etc.
2. Concession –	although, though, even though, etc.
3. Contrast –	however, but, on the other hand, on the contrary, etc.
4. Emphasis –	in fact, indeed, certainly, etc.
5. Explanation –	as I was saying, in other words, that is, etc.
6. Example –	for instance, for example, to illustrate, etc.
7. Order –	first, second, third, finally, next etc.
8. Similarity –	like the last , similarly, in the same manner, etc.
9. Clarification –	in other words, that is, in particular, etc.
10. intensification –	particularly, most important, etc.

## **2. Use of Appropriate Language Style:**

For any writing to succeed, the language and style must be appropriate. There should be effective use of language. The level of vocabulary, the register and diction should be appropriate.

The choice of words should not only agree with the topic but also suit the audience and the occasion. Formal occasion should require formal language while



informal language should be suitable for informal situation. Emphasis should be placed on sentence types. They should be varied and blended where necessary.

### **3. Effective use of the mechanics of the language:**

The mechanics of the language include punctuation, spelling, tense, agreement, etc. A writing is bound to fail where effective use of these mechanics is not made. Experience has shown that examination candidates lose mark in their essays because of poor application of the mechanics of the language. Therefore, students should endeavour to ensure that their writing is devoid of wrong punctuation, spelling, tense, and agreement.

## **THE STRUCTURE OF ESSAY**

A well written essay no matter the type usually has three parts. They are:

- 1 The introduction
- 2 The body
- 3 The conclusion

### **The Introduction**

The introduction of an essay usually sets the topic in motion and gives it a focus. In writing the introductory part of an essay, effort should be made to ensure that it is good enough to stimulate the interest and attention of the reader. First impression, they say, lasts long. Therefore the introduction should be devoid of all mistakes or misinformation which may discourage the reader. There

is no one way of introducing an essay. Introduction varies from topic to topic or from writer to writer. While some writers may choose to commence their introduction with quotation, others may start with anecdote, definition or explanation. Notice that introducing an essay with definition is only appropriate when the topic is not a familiar one or when a writer wants to examine a topic from his own perspective other than the universal view of the topic.

### **The body**

*The body of an essay contains all the discussions, explanations, facts and figures. The body of an essay should be developed in line with the outline earlier drawn. The ideas should be developed in paragraphs and the paragraphs properly linked.*

### **The Conclusion**

The conclusion sums up the discussion. At times some essays are concluded by reiterating the main ideas already stated in the body. A good conclusion naturally signals that the essay has come to an end, and after it, nothing more could be said on the topic in that dispensation. Students should ensure that the concluding part of their essay is sound enough because conclusions just as introductions hardly escape the critical eyes of the reader.

### **7.2.3 Re-Writing Stage:**

One's writing may not be perfect at first attempt, hence the re-writing stage. Re-writing stage is a stage in writing when the writer goes through what he has written with the aim of effecting necessary corrections. The nature of the corrections depends on the situation. If it were examination situation, the much the writer can do at this stage is simply reading through the piece meticulously and making necessary corrections as much as time can permit him. But if the situation is such that one is writing on his own and he has all the time, this stage may imply outright re-writing of the piece with the intension of producing a better write-up. In view of this explanation, students are advised to always carve out time to go through what they have written before submission or dispatch whether in examination situation or when they are writing on their own. It is a way of saving marks or saving oneself from embarrassment.

## **7.3 Types of Essays**

There are basically four types of essay. They are:

1. Descriptive Essay
2. Narrative Essay
3. Argumentative Essay
4. Expository Essay

### **7.3.1 Descriptive Essay:**

A descriptive essay is one that attempts to describe a person, place, object, event, scene, etc. Take for

instance, if one's friend is missing, he can write a description of him and give to the police to enable them locate his friend. Also, one can describe his father's compound to somebody else who does not know it. All these are instances of descriptive essay. The import of descriptive essay is to create a true picture of a person, object or an event through description. To be able to achieve this goal, one should possess descriptive power as much as possible. There is also the need to possess good mastery of vocabulary. A descriptive essay does not give room for exaggeration as the aim is usually to present a true picture of what is being described.

According to Uzoma et al, (1990) the points to note for more effective description are:

1. Describe only what you know well and limit the scope of your topic.
2. Choose your words carefully and for the best effect. You require a wide vocabulary (i.e. know many words) to be able to do this. And the only way to acquire this is read widely (novels, essays, biographies, magazines, journals, etc.)
3. In describing events it is better to proceed orderly from what happened first to what happened last.
4. In describing persons decide whether to start with simple external aspects such as dress, physical characteristics, etc. or with personality and character.
5. Involve all your senses in the description, shapes, colours, sound, smell, sizes, feeling, etc.
6. Use a lot of analogies, similes, examples, etc., to make



- your description clearer and richer. Also compare and contrast with what you think the reader already knows.
7. There should be variety in your description. Some description can be simple and straight forward, others can be more emotionally charged because of your involvement.

Below is a sample of a descriptive essay:

### **THE MADMAN OF OBIA VILLAGE**

In Obia, Ukala, the madman, is as prominent a landmark as the gaint achi tree which stands in the centre of the village square. It is said that he was made mad by a jealous business partner somewhere in Ibibio land many years ago.

Ukala is dark-complexioned and of medium height. He has a very pronounced bow-leg and his hands are abnormally long. When he walks, he reminds one of a chimpanzee. His eyes are very remarkable indeed, they are widely set apart, dark and piercing. Despite his age and difficult circumstance, there is no tinge of grey in his dark hair. His bushy moustache is, however, snuff-stained.

It is said that Ukala's madness is a seasonal one which is controlled by the moon. During his normal, or shall we say off-season period, one can hardly know that Ukala is a madman. He is as hardworking and clean as the next man. Perhaps he is a bit too hardworking then, for he not only worked his aged mother's farms, he also

fetches firewood, sweeps and cooks like a young girl. The work of the day done, he would sit with the men under the Achi tree listening to their conversation, but he would not say a word. When others retire, he goes back to his mother's hut to eat and sleep. Ukala has neither a house of his own nor a wife.

But when Ukala starts wandering about the village, talking to himself and laughing loudly, everybody knows that his madness has returned. He would not go near his mother's hut, rather he would sleep out in the open and go to the village rubbish dumps to scavenge for food. During this period, his looks change dramatically. His eyes take on a lunatic sheen, his hair tangled and unkempt, while his dress become dirty and ragged. And as he wanders the village paths night and day, his maniac laughter rings out, the people avoid him for now because his tongue has sharp and biting edge.

It is, however, during the annual Igba EKpe Festival that Ukala becomes the undeniable showman of the village. During this period, he always contrives to be mad. On top of that, he becomes the clown and conscience of the village. He jokes and imitates shady things that villagers had thought they were doing in secret. Ukala, in this mood, does not exempt anyone. He calls the names of prisoners, adulterers, fornicators, thieves, etc. and he gives the date and place of each mis-deed. Because of his eccentricity, Ukala has not only, paradoxically, become the star performer at Igba EKpe Festival, but he, ironically, keeps Obia village morally

clean.

(*Culled from Use of English for Advanced Students* edited by C.O. Uzomah)

### 7.3.2 Narrative Essay:

A narrative essay is the one that tells story. For instance, an essay on the topic "My First Day as a Student in a University" or "The Most Interesting Journey I Made" or "The Most Memorable Day in my Life" is undoubtedly a narrative essay. A narrative essay just as a story can only succeed if it is capable of sustaining the interest of the reader. Therefore, in writing a narrative essay, one should try as much as possible to ensure that the story is good enough to sustain the interest of the reader. In doing so, it is not out of place to bring in element of exaggeration.

According to Uzoma et al, a narrative essay can be planned as follows:

1. Follow a chronological order. This is because in life, events take place one after the other. For example, infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood and old age or seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks and years.
2. Make your introduction simple and direct.
3. Each idea should contain one main idea. There should be a topic sentence.
4. Concentrate only on those details and facts that are important to your narrative. Don't allow long winded explanations to destroy your essay. Give your



narration a setting – locality and characters. Stories do not take place in a vacuum.

5. Add dialogue and humour to your narration when necessary. It makes it interesting and lively.
6. Avoid repetition and vary your sentence structure.
7. Begin with an exciting incident (in an imaginary narrative). And if you want to point out a lesson, state it simply and clearly at the end.

Although we have attempted to delineate descriptive and narrative essays, it should be pointed out that none of them is entirely exclusive. The reason is that in descriptive essay for instance, some situations may call for narration. On the other hand, it is also possible to have some elements of description in a narrative essay. Below is a sample of a narrative essay:

### **A REMARKABLE FIRST DAY IN THE UNIVERSITY**

As I sit by the swimming pool watching my wife and children swim, I remember my first day in the university, twenty years ago. It was indeed a remarkable first day.

The day had started very early for me. At 6 o'clock that morning, I was already seated in the dilapidated Austin lorry. I was wedged between two fat women, who were going to the town to sell their farm produce. My feet rested on bags of cocoa. The noise in and around the lorry was indescribable. The acrid smell of freshly dried cocoa mingled with that of cassava and rotting vegetables, not to mention the smell from unwashed



sweaty bodies. I endured the inconvenience stoically because "No Telephone to Heaven", that is the old Austin lorry, was the only means of transportation out of my village.

Our journey to the city had taken almost the whole day. At the city motor park, I took a taxi to the university campus. My box was in the booth of the taxi while I put my briefcase on the seat beside me. As the taxi cab swept through the impressive university gate and drove down the treelined main avenue, I felt seven feet tall. I was proud. Here was I, a mere village boy in the university at last. The taxi stopped in front of Hall I to which I had been assigned in my admission letter. I came out collected my box, paid the driver and went into the lounge. There, I joined the queue in front of the Porter's Office and waited for my turn to register.

When my turn came, the Porter asked to see my letter of admission. I did not take it out of the taxi. I ran out of the lounge, but the taxi had gone. I was stunned. All my papers- letter of admission, testimonials, certificate, even my fees and pocket money were in the briefcase. I was completely dumbfounded by the misfortune.

Some sympathetic fellows around took me to the Taxi Union Office in the city to lodge a complaint about my missing briefcase. When I was asked if I could describe the taxi that took me to the university, I remembered neither the make of the car nor the number plate.

On our way back to the campus, we stopped to inform the police at the Central Police Station.

My misfortunes were not yet over: when I returned to the campus, I found that the porters had closed registration for the day, there I was in a strange environment without money and without a room to sleep in. I felt tears well up my eyes and as I left the lounge blinded by the tears, I missed one of the steps and rolled down the staircase to end up at the feet of a girl, who was about to ascend. People around cried out in alarm. As I struggled to get up, the girl helped me to rise. When she discovered I was not injured, she burst into laughter. Others around joined her. I exploded in anger and started to abuse them. They were all taken aback by my rudeness, and as I walked away, I heard the girl say with contempt: "Don't mind him, he is a village boy". I was stung by that remark, and I felt ashamed, but I kept going. In spite of my discomposure, I could not help but notice the sweetness of her voice.

Now, as I watch my wife's rather matronly figure, I cannot help but remember that remarkable first day at Ibadan and the slim sweet voiced girl who called me 'a village boy' and who, is today my wife.

**(culled from Use of English for Advanced Students  
edited by C. Uzoma)**

### **7.3.3 Argumentative Essay:**

This is the type of essay in which attempt is made to prove that one side of a thing is better than the other side. Argumentative essay is a debate in writing in the sense that an argumentative topic usually has two sides.

which can be argued for or against. The essence of argumentative essay is to assess one's ability to critically evaluate and pass judgment. Since this type of essay is argument or debate one can only succeed in writing it if his argument is sound and convincing. Therefore, efforts should be made to ensure that one's stand or opinion is buttressed with concrete and convincing evidence. There should be no room for ambiguous statements as the presentation should be straightforward and clear.

In examination situation, argumentative essay could be presented in form of a debate. The writer should take cognizance of this situation and present the essay in speech form. The essay should therefore begin with vocatives where people present are formally recognized. For instance, we can have:

The Chairman,  
Panel of Judges,  
Moderator,  
Fellow Debaters  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The vocatives should be followed by greeting and the statement of the stand of the writer, that is, whether he is proposing or opposing.

In the body of the essay, the writer should use expressions that would indicate the presence of an audience. This could be achieved through the use of rhetoric questions (questions that do not require answers). At the end of the essay the writer should also indicate that the essay has come to an end by thanking

the audience.

As regards the structure of an argumentative essay, the choice of structure depends on the writer. Since it is an essay that has two sides: proposing and opposing sides, a writer might take a stand and goes on to argue to defend his stand. However, a more mature approach to this kind of topic is the one in which the writer begins by advancing arguments which sparingly support the contrary side only to turn around to take a contrary stand and goes on to support his stand with strong arguments. Take for instance, for the topic: "Should capital Punishment be Abolished?", a writer who wants to oppose it may begin by first advancing some loose arguments in support of the topic as a kind of preamble only to turn around and take his opposing stand and goes on to support his stand with strong arguments. Below are samples of an argumentative essay:

**Question:**

**Write your contribution for or against the proposition: "The Standard of Education in Nigeria Has Fallen"**

**Answer:**

**A CONTRIBUTION FOR THE PROPOSITION:  
'THE STANDARD OF EDUCATION IN NIGERIA HAS  
FALLEN'**

There is no gainsaying the fact that in Nigeria today, the standard of education has fallen. Between 1914 and



1967 the products of primary schools, secondary schools, training colleges, vocational schools and tertiary institutions were the pride of this nation.

In those days, a pupil in standard three or four could write good letters and essays. A child who successfully completed his primary school education spoke very good English and his writing was admirable. He was well educated in every sense of the word. In fact, many teachers in primary schools during this period were people who had only standard six certificates. In spite of this, they taught as born teachers. Those of them who took up appointments in the civil service also proved themselves.

Secondary schools and training colleges at this time were quite few and exclusively for students with very high intellectual abilities. Products of these colleges were good in all branches of learning and served Nigeria meritoriously in all fields of human endeavour.

Today, with the government take over of schools from voluntary agencies in 1970, indiscipline has been the order of the day. It is my contention that the situation would have been different if the voluntary agencies -who were mainly missionaries and highly disciplined -were allowed to continue running the schools.

Soon after the Nigerian Civil War, there was an explosion in the training of teachers. Some of them combined their training with other activities that yielded them some monetary gains. Because of this fact, they received training for a period of not more than four months

before writing the Teachers' Grade Two Certificate Examination. With this group of half-baked teachers handling our children, a fall in standard of education became unavoidable.

In the good old days, teachers in primary and secondary schools organized evening lectures regularly and free of charge for the students. Today, teachers have no time for evening lectures and when they do, it will be for a fee. Absence of evening lectures and undue emphasis on handouts contribute something noteworthy towards the present falling standards in education.

There are syndicates that forge certificates for the various examinations today. Lazy students buy these certificates at exorbitant prices. These forged certificates help them to enter institutions of higher learning. From time to time, however, universities discover these fake certificates and expel the fraudulent owners sometimes during their degree examinations! The production of fake certificates has done incalculable harm to the standard of education in this country.

In the olden days, students worked independently in the examination halls but today, many of them copy from their mates. Others carry their notebooks, textbooks and copied materials into the examination hall. If students refuse to work hard but insist on passing their examination only by indulging in examination malpractices, the standard of education must fall as it has.

Teachers are, perhaps, the most neglected and most disgruntled set of workers in Nigeria today. Consequently,

they often go on strike leaving their students like sheep without shepherds. Teachers' strikes are so frequent that there is little to teach the students. If during one particular academic session, the students are taught for only about three or four months, why should the standard of education not fall?

Between 1930 and 1965, students in institutions of learning had only one ambition: to acquire sound education, sound education would eventually lead them to good jobs. Good jobs in turn enabled them to enjoy life abundantly. They realized their aim. Premature pursuit of wealth was not a part of their ambition. But what is the position today? Students in primary and secondary schools often discuss the need for them to ride in V Boot, Mercedes 380, Volvo and Jagua cars. They envy those who erect modern storey buildings or who have costly furniture. They do not believe that it is better to first of all acquire good education before thinking of wealth.

Some primary and secondary school students, in fact, withdraw from their institutions before the completion of their courses only scramble to some places where they think they will achieve the 'El Dora do' of their dreams. Frustrated and disappointed, they return once again to join the 'flotsam and jetsam' in their various communities. This mad rush to acquire wealth too early in life distracts students and provide fertile ground for the fall in the standard of education.

In the olden days educational policy in Nigeria was clear-cut and definite. Today, the authorities engage in



endless exercises in trial and error. The newly introduced continuous assessment compels the teacher to spend most of their time filling forms so that there is no time left for teaching. In the long run, every child passes without learning. The result of this gamble is falling standards of education.

In many of our tertiary institutions, morality has no place at all. Some female students refuse to work hard like their male counterparts. They use their seductive dresses, voices as well as subtle maneuvers lure the weak-minded lecturers who award them unjustifiably high marks in exchange for sex. As such, female students who are prepared to descend to this shameful level in order to attract undeserved marks, have no need to work hard. Do we need a prophet to tell us that certificates obtained through such means are useless?

**(Culled from Model Essays and letters for School**

**Certificate by A.N.C. Odu)**

***Question:***

There has been a debate on whether the teacher is more useful to the citizens of Nigeria than the doctor or whether the reverse is the truth. The Debating Society of your school has asked you to speak for or against the proposition. Write your speech.



**Answer:**

**The Teacher Is More Important To The  
Nigerian Community Than The Doctor**

The Moderator and Judges,  
Our Respected Principal,  
Distinguished Members of Staff,  
Co-Debaters,  
Fellow Students,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

By the time I would have finished my speech, it will become obvious to all of you that there is no basis whatsoever for comparing the usefulness of the teacher and that of the doctor to the Nigerian community because there is an ocean of difference between the roles played by the two professionals.

The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English defines the teacher as a person who teaches, especially as a profession. Teachers may be divided into the following categories: teachers in the kindergarten or nursery schools, teachers in primary schools, teachers in post-primary schools and teachers in tertiary institutions. All of them do the same job - they all teach children and make them become useful citizens.

There are many reasons why it is clear that the teacher is more useful to the community than the doctor. Adam and Eve, the first couple created by God were teachers. They produced children and taught them how to do many things. For example, they taught their children

how to take their bath, how to cook and how to eat. They taught them how to cover their bodies when it was cold, the names of animals, trees and objects. Whenever they made mistakes, they corrected them. They rebuked them when the need arose. They answered their questions whenever they asked questions and their children learnt lessons from the answers of their parents. Parents today play the same role that our first parents played thereby showing the importance of parents as first teachers of their children.

Today, schools have been built. There are professional teachers. In the schools, teachers teach the children many subjects. Some of these subjects are Health and Physical Education, Mathematics, English Language, Moral Instruction, Social Studies and so forth. Every morning the parents feed their children and send them to school where they are taught by the teachers. They love their teachers and respect them because everyday, they come in contact with them. In the same way, the parents love the teachers and respect them. They approach them for advice.

Why do they react this way? It is because the teacher teaches the children, corrects them and takes care of them from about half past seven in the morning until about half past one in the afternoon.

Does the doctor play any of these roles? No. The children can stay for one full year without coming in contact with the doctor.

If a child is disobedient; truant or not amenable to

discipline, who do the parents approach? It is the teacher not the doctor. If the child has unusually dirty habits, who helps him to cultivate the habit of cleanliness? It is the teacher not the doctor. Who teaches the child to balance his diet, wash his clothes regularly and wash his hands before he eats his meals? It is the teacher not the doctor. Who makes the child realize it is important to eat moderately? Who gives the child elementary ideas about common ailment, for example, dysentery, leprosy, chicken pox, tuberculosis, cough and many other diseases? The teacher teaches children to keep their surroundings clean so that mosquitoes may not bite them. By teaching the children to form healthy habits, eat balanced diets and take physical exercises regularly, the teacher is doing much to help the children avoid diseases. According to a common adage, 'prevention is better than cure'. The teacher does his best to help the children and their parents avoid diseases. Who then is more useful to the citizens of Nigeria, the person who prevents diseases or the person whose only work is to cure diseases? Surely, the teacher who prevents diseases through his teaching is definitely more useful to the community than the doctor who remains silent and inactive until citizens contract diseases and come to them for treatment.

A community can do without doctors but no community can do without teachers. In the absence of a doctor, the teacher can teach the citizens what to do in order to keep alive. Therefore, the teacher is more useful to the community than the doctor. If all the teachers in



this country were to stop work for a long period, Nigeria would go back to the 'Dark Ages'. A doctor may specialize in gynaecology, cardiology, obstetrics, orthopaedics, dermatology, neurology, etc., but the teacher is the maker - 'the creator' - of the doctor no matter his field of specialization. No teacher, no doctor!

The greatest thing you can do for an individual is to educate him. Education is an inalienable right of every person. If a person is uneducated, he is only a little better than the lower animals. Whose work it is to educate human beings? It is the work of the teacher. It is not the work of the doctor. The teacher is a very simple man. If he is well treated, he is prepared to teach the children because he enjoys the work of imparting knowledge to others. While the teacher naturally wants to enjoy a reasonable standard of comfort, he cannot be described as lover of money. The doctor on the other hand, is a great lover of money. Many doctors charge exorbitant fees before they treat patients. Many teachers are satisfied with their pay packets. If teachers go on strike, they do so when they are provoked beyond human endurance. Therefore, the teacher is a greater friend of the community than the doctor who on many occasions, exploits members of the public.

Socrates lived in the 5th Century B.C. He was a Greek. He went to market places and public squares and taught thousands of people. The Greeks during his time, gained immeasurably from his philosophy and teaching. Why did he prefer teaching to other professions, for



example, medicine? He knew that he would be more useful to his people as a teacher than as a doctor.

Aristotle was a great philosopher and teacher. He chose teaching and philosophy because he knew the worth of teaching as a vehicle for helping the masses.

Plato, was a Greek philosopher and teacher who lived in the 5<sup>th</sup> Century B.C. He was a great teacher and writer. He chose teaching because he knew that he would be more useful to his people as a teacher than as a doctor. Jesus Christ was a well-known teacher. He did not choose to be a doctor because He too believed that the teacher was and is still, more useful to the community than the doctor. As a teacher, He came in contact with thousands of people. He taught many useful lessons on humility, love, hardwork, honesty, patience, simplicity and many other virtues. If He were a doctor, He would not have made much impact on the people.

Prophet Mohammed was a teacher not a doctor. He knew that he would be more useful to the people as a teacher than as a doctor. He taught many useful lessons. For example, he taught the people to believe in God (Allah) as well as in the angels. He taught the people to believe in the Holy Scriptures, the prophets and the Apostles.

Many people who have succeeded in politics or business have taught at one time or the other. If they have not taught at all, they must have been influenced directly or indirectly by the life-style or ideology of a teacher. During electioneering, politicians move from

place to place and as they speak to vast crowds, they 'teach' them to support them and their own ways of thinking. Teachers who take part in politics succeed better and attract more amenities to their people than the doctors.

Let us look at certain national duties such as: the population census, elections into the Federal and State Assemblies, registration of children for free primary education and the presidential election. The Federal Government usually relies on the teachers to accomplish these objectives. The numerical strength of the teachers is re-assuring. The teachers are always willing to work especially when the interest of the masses is at stake. The teachers are always willing to go to any part of this vast country where their services are required. Invariably, they always handle their assignments satisfactorily. Does the Federal Government run to the doctors in cases of emergency? No Why? Their number is small and they have no time and cannot cope with the task of handling these assignments. They are not prepared to leave their places of abode in order to do national duties like the ones mentioned above. Who then is more useful to the community, the teacher or the doctor? Certainly, it is the teacher.

In Nigeria as well as in many other countries, there are many illiterate citizens. If a country has a big percentage of illiterate persons, even if her scientists have gone to the moon and come back safely, that country cannot be described as civilized or advanced. Because

of this, evening and night classes are being organized for the illiterate ones in all parts of Nigeria. The aim is to wipe out illiteracy from this country. Who are people fighting tooth and nail to educate our unfortunate brothers and sisters?

Who is helping the illiterate masses in Nigeria to write their names on documents and not put down their thumb prints on them? The teacher. Who is helping the illiterate masses in Nigeria to write letters and books? The teacher. Who is helping the illiterate masses in Nigeria to speak not only their native dialects, but also the English Language? Who is trying to remove the social stigma, embarrassment and inferiority complex which illiteracy has stamped on the faces of our illiterate brothers and sisters all over Nigeria? Is it the doctor? No, it is the teacher.

Dear Moderator and everybody in this room, no matter the angle from which the issue of the teacher and the doctor is looked at, the teacher is indisputably more useful to the community than the doctor.

**(Culled from Model Essays and letters for School  
Certificate by A.N.C. Odu)**

#### **7.3.4 Expository Essay**

This is the type of essay that attempts to expose, inform, interpret or explain with particular reference to a given topic. Take for instance, if a writer goes to explain the causes of road accident to the best of his knowledge, such a writer-up is said to be expository. The research



projects written by students in fulfillment of the award of NCE, first degree or higher degree are instances of expository writing.

Expository essay can be in form of an article for publication either in a newspaper or magazine. It can also be in form of an address or lecture. Whichever one it is, students are advised to ensure that they keep to the format. Below are samples of an expositing essay.

**Question:**

In the recent past, there have been many reports about robbery with violence in various parts of your country. Write an article for publication in a local newspaper, describing two cases you have heard of or read about and suggest ways through which this tendency can be checked.

**Answer:**

### **VIOLENT ROBBERIES**

I have read numerous reports about robbery with violence in many parts of the country. In Lagos, robbery with violence has become the order of the day. In the western states of Nigeria, robbery with violence occurs daily and in broad daylight everywhere. In the eastern parts, the frequency of armed robberies could be described as alarming. In the north, one cannot help pitying the defenceless people that live there. I wonder where we are heading for. Are the policemen no longer able to cope with the situation? Are the armed robbers now more powerful than the government?



A week ago, there was a case of armed robbery in Lagos. It occurred in broad daylight. A group of armed robbers organized themselves and successfully robbed a branch of U.B.A. For the operation, the robbers got four dispatch riders with siren who led them to bank as it was the Head of State or military administrator's entourage. The dispatch riders were followed by some occupants of a Mercedes Benz 280SE car. A few other cars came behind and were all occupied as though by commissioners or ministers.

Most incredibly, nobody around suspected any foul play. The robbers soon arrived the U.B.A premises. The workers on hearing the robber's siren, speculated that an august visitor was probably paying them an unscheduled visit. But, before they could understand what was happening, the robbers had jumped out of their cars, released a few warning shots and commanded everybody to lie face down. The Bank Manager was ordered to either open the strong room for them or have hot bullets pumped into his body. Faced with this awkward dilemma, the Manager opened the strong room for them.

The robbers moving with the speed of lightning, quickly transferred all the money in the strong room into their cars and disappeared with their fantastic loot through another route. To the residents of that area of Lagos, the story was a near fable.

Another case I read about took place near Onitsha in Anambra State. A big lorry was returning from Lagos fully loaded with electronic equipment and other precious

materials. It arrived Onitsha in the early hours of the morning and left for Owerri at about 4:30a.m. After about half an hour's drive, the vehicle ran into a roadblock constructed by armed robbers. The robbers fired warning shots and commanded the driver to stop. He refused to obey. The robbers then shot him in the head. He inevitably stopped and was groaning desperately. Only a few passengers succeeded in escaping into the bush.

The robbers searched those that could not escape and took all their money. They also inflicted machet cuts on some of their victims. They transferred the equipment in the Owerri-bound lorry into their own vehicle, quickly raped some girls and drove away. The driver was afterwards rushed to the hospital where he died. Some of the passengers in the lorry reached the police station at about 7:00a.m. Although the police arrived at the scene of the robbery without much delay, their arrival was of no use. They could not get any clue to who carried out the robbery attack.

I wish to offer a few suggestions on how to check this growing menace. First and foremost, the police should be armed with sophisticated weapons so that they can successfully face the armed bandits who often boldly open fire on them. The armed robbers live in the midst of law abiding citizens. Very often the armed robbers are known to the citizens among whom they live. If the citizens form the habit of always giving useful information to the police concerning the robbers, they can be arrested with ease by the police.

Governors and Chief Judges should stop releasing

robbers who are serving various terms in our prisons on important occasions as such criminals easily graduate into armed robbers. The police should grant licences to as many responsible Nigerians as possible so that they can purchase firearms. If armed, he will think twice before attacking him. Villagers should form vigilante groups who can face armed robbers squarely. The government should provide means by which the villagers can quickly contact the police in cases of emergency.

The police should declare a relentless war on armed robbers. They should discover all their dens and get them dismantled. Popular hotels, which may serve as hideouts for robbers should be visited by the police from time to time with a view to arresting all robbers there and dealing with them. All schools where armed robbers are trained should be identified and raided. The cooperation of the members of the public is of crucial importance in this regard.

More stringent measures should be taken against hemp addicts or farmers of marijuana. The police should intensify their vigilance on our highways. This will help them to arrest some of the robbers who keep moving from place to place.

If there is real cooperation between the police and the law-abiding citizens, armed robbery will be effectively checked.

Ajayi Olanrewaju,  
Ibadan.

*(culled from Model Essays and Letters for School  
Certificate by A.N.C Odu)*



**Question:**

*There have been series of articles in one of your local newspapers on the increase in the activities of pickpockets and other petty thieves in your town. Write your contribution discussing who the pick-pockets are, their method of operation and how their activities can be stopped.*

**Answer:****THE ACTIVITIES OF PICKPOCKETS**

I have read many stories on the menace of pickpockets and other petty thieves in my town, Onitsha. Hardly does any day pass without a decry in the media about the activities of these rogues. Their harassment of innocent citizens has now reached an alarming proportion and it is high time something is done to save us from their menace.

A very relevant question is 'Who are these pickpockets and petty thieves?' They are none other than the hefty idlers who we see daily in our midst. They have no gainful employment. Although food is scarce nowadays, they are not prepared to practice agriculture. Some of them are ex-soldiers who fought during the Nigerian Civil War. Others are motor touts who pretend to be the friends of travelers but in actual fact, they are their worst enemies.

They operate in various clever and dubious ways. All of them are vigilant and they can easily discover when their would-be victim is absent-minded or careless. They



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They operate in various clever and dubious ways. All of them are vigilant and they can easily discover when their would-be victim is absent-minded or careless. They

are fond of mixing up with people whenever and wherever there are big crowds, for example during football matches, funeral ceremonies, wrestling contests or in market places. They are fond of drinking and enjoying life in hotels. As soon as they have the slightest opportunity they dip their hands into the pocket and bags of unlucky people and remove valuable amounts of money or property.

If you see them, they look quite innocent and friendly and they often smoke cigarette or Indian hemp. Many of them are often very mean in dress and appearance. Those of them who claim to be motor touts can be heard often shouting 'Enugu!' 'Owerri!' 'Abal' 'Pora Court!' No sooner they get hold of a passenger's load than the load is lost since they often move quickly to any direction they like

The inevitable question is whether the activities of these criminals can be stopped. My answer is an unqualified yes. Let the police as a matter of routine, raid motor parks and hotels and arrest these idlers. When they are arrested, they should be allowed to board cars and buses of their own choice without the 'help' of those 'good Samaritan'. Able-bodied young men who can do nothing except motor-touting should be arrested and forced to work in farm settlements.

Law-abiding citizens who are usually the victims of these pick pockets should not fold their hands and do nothing. They should make available to the police vital pieces of information which will help them to identify and

arrest these criminals. The police should reduce their concentration of attention on traffic offences and pay more attention to the pickpockets and petty thieves.

Finally, everybody should cultivate the habit of being careful and vigilant, especially in public places since the nefarious activities of pickpockets succeed better when they are dealing with the careless and unwary citizens.

Raymond Okoye

Onitsha.

*(Culled from Model Essays and Letters for School  
Certificate by A.N.C. Odu)*

## **7.4 LETTER WRITING**

### **7.4.1 Introduction**

The skill of letter writing is one of the essential skills a student should possess. The reason is that at one time or the other one may be required to communicate through the channel of letter writing. It is therefore our aim in this section to discuss in full all aspects of letter writing and it is our hope that the readers would find it interesting and useful.

### **7.4.2 Types of Letters**

Based on format, letters are traditionally classified into three. They are:

1. Formal letter
2. Semi-formal letter
3. Informal letter

**7.4.2.1 Formal Letter:** Formal letter, otherwise referred to as business or official letter, is any letter written for official purposes. It includes such letters as:

1. Letters of application for job
2. Letters to government establishments or departments
3. Letters from one institution to another
4. Letters to the editor, etc.

### **The formal features of Formal Letter**

The formal features of formal letter include the following:

1. The addresser's address
2. The date
3. The addressee's address
4. The salutation
5. The subject matter of the letter
6. The body
7. The subscription
8. The signature
9. The Writer's name.

### **The Addresser's Address:**

The addresser's address is the writer's address which is usually stated at the right hand corner of the writing sheet. Note that it is wrong to write one's name on top of the address. Also it is wrong to state the address all in capital letters. Conventionally, the address could be presented either in block form or indented form depending on the writer's choice.



### **Examples:**

#### **(a) Block form**

Department of Economics,  
School of Social Sciences,  
Alvan Ikoku College of Education,  
Owerri,

Or

No. 10, Douglas Road,  
Owerri,  
Imo State.

#### **(b) Indented form**

Department of Economics,  
School of Social Sciences,  
Alvan Ikoku College of Education,  
Owerri,

Or

No. 10 Douglas Road,  
Owerri,  
**Imo State.**

The inclusion of local government, state or even the country on the address depends on the destination of the letter in question. If a letter is meant to move from one local government to another, one state to another or one country to another, the addresser's address should include the local government, the state or the country. Take for instance, a letter meant for overseas can have

the following address:  
St. Peter's Church,  
Umuoziri Inyishi,  
P.O. Box 38,  
Ikeduru L.G.A.,  
Imo State,  
Nigeria.

In the above examples, you would notice that at the end of each line of the addresses there is a comma but one may decide to do away with the commas only to have a final full-stop at the end of the address. This convention is also acceptable. Example:

P.O. Box 45  
Owerri West L.G.A.  
Imo State  
Nigeria.

### **The Date**

After the addresser's address, what follows is the date. There should be no gap between the addresser's address and the date if the letter is hand written. The date could be written in any of the following formats.

9th February, 1999.  
February 9, 1999.  
9 February, 1999.

## **The Addressee's Address**

The addressee's address is the address of the recipient which is written by the left hand margin of the writing sheet immediately after the date. It usually begins with the designation of the recipient followed by the address. Example:

The Personnel Manager,  
Shell Development Company,  
P.M.B. 1030,  
Port Harcourt,  
Rivers State.

Or

The Registrar  
Alvan Ikoku College of Education  
Owerri .  
Imo State.

There should be uniformity in stating the addresser's address and the addressee's address. That is, if the writer chooses to use block form, the two addresses should be written in block forms.

## **Salutation**

**Any of the following salutation formats is suitable for official letter:**

Dear Sir,  
Sir,  
Dear Madam,  
Madam,

Where it is not possible to know the sex of the recipient, it is better to write "Dear Sir",

### **The subject matter or Title**

The subject of an official letter is usually summarized and stated immediately after the salutation. The title can either be capitalized or written with initial capital letters for the lexical words. The subject matter should not be written before the salutation, and it is usually underlined if it is written with initial capital letters. But, if all the letters are capitalized, there is no need underlining again.

### **The Body**

The body of an official letter is usually made up of three parts, namely, the introduction, the message and the conclusion. In the introduction, there is no room for exchange of pleasantries, instead the main aim of the letter is stated. Subsequently, the message of the letter is stated and developed in paragraphs. When the message is exhausted, the conclusion is drawn.

The language of a business letter is strictly official. By this we mean that there is no room for informal language. The use of slangy expressions, colloquial expressions, and contracted forms is strictly prohibited. The language should be polite as much as possible and should not degenerate into abuse no matter the emotional state of the writer.



## **The Subscription**

There is only one acceptable form of subscription in official letter, and that is "Yours faithfully". The 'Y' of "Yours" is usually written in capital letter while the 'f' of "faithfully" is written in small letter. There is a mandatory comma immediately after "faithfully".

## **The Writer's Name and Signature**

The subscription is immediately followed by the writer's signature, full name and designation where applicable. Notice that the signature comes before the name and not the other way round. Note the following:

Yours faithfully,  
Signature  
John Ade,  
General Secretary.

Below is a sample of a formal letter:

### ***Question:***

Your school has directed you to go on an industrial attachment for six months. Apply to any company of your choice.

**Answer:**

Department of Transport  
Management Technology,  
School of Management  
Technology,  
Federal University of Technology,  
Owerri.  
20<sup>th</sup> November, 2007.

The Manager,  
ABC Transport Company,  
Owerri.

Dear Sir,

Application for a Position for Industrial Attachment

I humbly wish to apply for a position for industrial attachment in your company.

I am a student of the Federal University of Technology, Owerri. I completed my third year in the Department of Transport Management Technology (Transport Option) in the just concluded 2006/2007 academic session. My age is 20 years.

In my academic performance, I have so far kept a clean record. Till date, I have no reference in any course. Above all, my cumulative grade point average is 4.25.

The following people have given their consent to serve as my referees if the need arises.

1. Dr. P.C.Eke, Head,  
Department of Transport Management Technology,  
Federal University of Technology, Owerri
2. Dr. C.C Ibe, Lecturer,  
Department of Transport Management Technology,  
Federal University of Technology, Owerri
3. Mrs B.A. Okon, Assistant  
Registrar, Student Affairs,  
Federal University of Technology, Owerri

In keeping to the University regulation, the industrial attachment is expected to last for six months beginning from July 2006.

If my application is considered for a position, I shall endeavour to keep to the rules and regulations of your company and work very hard to justify the confidence reposed in me.

**Yours faithfully,**  
**signature**  
Peter Obi.

#### **7.4.2.2 SEMI-FORMAL LETTER**

Semi-formal letter, just as the name implies, is partly formal and partly informal. A good example of semi-formal letter is a letter to an adult friend or one's parent's friends. It can also be a letter to one's boss or employer asking for recommendation.

#### **The Formal Features of Semi-Formal Letter**

The Addresser's Address and Date:

Unlike formal letter, there is only one address in semi-

formal letter and that is the addresser's address. All that was said with regard to addresser's address and date also applies here.

### **The Salutation**

Any of the following salutations is suitable for semi-formal letter.

Dear Mr. Eze,

Dear Mrs. Obi,

Dear Sir,

Dear Madam,

### **The Body**

The body of semi-formal letter usually has three parts, namely, the introduction, the message and the conclusion. The introduction states the theme of the letter followed by the message which is developed in paragraphs. Finally, there is the conclusion which is usually abrupt since there is no need for parting words.

The language of semi-formal letter is in between formality and informality. It is a combination of some features of formal and informal language. Whereas colloquial expressions such as contracted forms are permissible in semi-formal letter, the use of slangy expression is not allowed. The language should be framed to reflect the relationship between the writer and the recipient.



## **The Subscription**

The subscription of semi-formal letter depends on the salutation. If the salutation is Dear Mr .... or Dear Mrs. ..., the subscription should be "Yours sincerely" where "Yours" begins with capital "Y" while "sincerely" begins with small "s". But if the salutation happens to be "Dear Sir" or "Dear Madam", the subscription should be "Yours faithfully".

## **The Writer's Name:**

In semi-formal letter, the writer's full name (first name and surname) is required.

*Below is a sample of a Semi-formal letter*

### **Question:**

As you are about to graduate from your university, write a letter to one of your lecturers who have impacted on you positively, pointing out some of his qualities that have impressed you and thank him for being your role model.

### **Answer:**

Department of Physics,  
School of Science,  
Federal University of Technology,  
Owerri.

10th July, 2007.

Dear Sir,

I do hope that this letter will not come to you as a surprise. Having spent about five years in this University

and had the course to pass through you, I can't but confess that your attitude and personality impacted on me positively. And my mind tells me that if I fail to bring this to your knowledge, it is either I am ungrateful or irresponsible.

I recall with nostalgia my first semester in this University. A mere village boy who had just graduated from a community secondary school to a university, I didn't know my left from my right. The first set of lecturers I encountered could not help matters as their method of teaching and attitude to students made my predicament worse that I almost concluded abandoning the admission. But thank God I had the opportunity of attending your maiden lecture for the semester. It was GST 101. In fact, that lecture was a turning point in my seeming academic crisis. At that lecture, you did not only teach to my understanding but also counselled the students as if you are a professional counselor. As the lecture lasted, I almost concluded that you are a magician because all you said touched on the emotional trauma I was passing through as if somebody related it to you. But the high point of that encounter was that the solutions you proffered worked like miracle when I applied them to my problems. There after, I never missed your lectures till the end of the semester.

The level of competence you demonstrated in handling the topics in your subject area is highly commendable. Before then, I had serious problem with English to the extent that I managed to have ordinary

pass (p7) in the WASCE. But when I started attending your classes, I wished you had taught me before I took WASCE. I bet you nothing would have stood between me and an 'A' grade. I so admired your impeccable speech pattern to the extent that I started imitating you. As a result, my classmates nicknamed me after you. Can you imagine!

Your moral uprightness stands you out from other lecturers. These days when "sorting" is a way of life for many lecturers, you vehemently condemn it and advise students to work hard in order to avoid being victims. Your assessment of the students' performances has always remained objective. In fact, it is in your course that I was made to know that students can make an 'A' grade without first 'sorting' the lecturer. To the best of my knowledge and that of well meaning students, your relationship with the female students has been that of father-daughter. You need to hear the good remarks the female students always make about you.

I can go on and on. But what is obvious is that you have set an enviable record as regards your personality and conduct. I have an ambition, and that is, to be your replica in all ramifications. I am really proud of you. Thank you immensely for shaping my academic, moral and social life. May God bless you.

Yours faithfully,

**Chinedum Ogo.**

### 7.4.2.3 INFORMAL LETTER

Informal letter is also referred to as personal or private letter. This is the kind of letter written to a close relation or friend. This kind of letter is usually very common among students because they are always writing to their relations (father, mother, brother, sister, uncle, aunt etc.) or friends.

#### **Formal Features of Informal Letter**

**The Addresser's Address and Date:** These are as discussed previously under formal and semi-formal letters. Students should be reminded that on no account should they write their name on top of their address. Again, the address can either be stated in block or indented form.

**The Salutation or Greeting:** This takes various forms depending on the recipient. The following should be noted:

Parents:

My dear father,

My dear mother,

Siblings:

My dear brother,

Dear brother,

Dear Brother Mike,

Dear Chidi,

My dear sister,

Dear sister,

Dear Sister Mary,



Dear Chinyere,

Other relations:

Dear uncle

Dear aunt,

Dear cousin,

Dear Uncle John,

Friends:

Dear Ben,

Dear Joy,

Ben.

In an informal letter it is wrong to write "Dear friend" when writing to a friend. The above examples should be strictly adhered to as there is no alternative to them.

### **The Body**

The body of informal letter just as other forms of letter is made up of three parts namely, the introduction, the message and the conclusion.

The introduction is devoted for exchange of pleasantries. In some cases it could be a forum for the writer to acknowledge the receipt of a previous letter from the addressee. Whichever is the situation, the introduction is meant to establish the close relationship that exists between the writer and the recipient. Students should ensure that their letters are well introduced to stimulate the interest of the reader.

For every letter there is always a message or messages the writer wants to put across. After the introduction the message follows. The message should be developed in paragraphs, keeping the rules of paragraph development.

The conclusion sums up the letter. However, there is no one way of concluding a letter. The conclusion depends on the writer's intentions. A writer may conclude his letter by wishing his recipient well. Whatever the case may be, the conclusion should be written to ensure that the letter has come to a conclusive end.

### **The Language of Informal Letter**

The language is strictly informal. There is no room for formal usages. Thus, the use of colloquial expressions such as contracted forms and slangy expressions are permissible. Note that where slang is used, it must be enclosed in quotation marks. The language of informal letter should also be chatty, hence some of the sentences are likely to be short.

### **The Subscription**

The subscription of informal letter can take any form provided it is not "Yours faithfully" or "Yours truly". Therefore any of the following can be suitable:

Yours sincerely,

Yours ever,

Yours affectionately,

Your affectionate son/daughter

Yours, etc.

Note that in the examples above the “Y” for “Yours” is written in capital letter while the subsequent words begin with small letter. It should also be pointed out that the word “Yours” has no apostrophe before or after ‘s’. It is therefore wrong to write:

Your’s or Yours’

### **The Writer’s Name**

In informal letter, only the first name of the writer is required. The surname is not necessary. Thus, for a writer whose name is Emeka Njoku, only Emeka should be written. *Below is a sample of Informal Letter.*

#### **Question:**

After many years of trial and failure you have finally gained admission to read a course of your choice at your choice university. Write a letter to your friend informing him/her of the development and advising him/her to work hard so that he/she can also gain admission.

#### **Answer:**

Department of Medicine,  
Faculty of Health Sciences,  
Obafemi Awolowo University,  
Ile-Ife.  
22<sup>nd</sup> October, 2007.

Dear Emeka,

You may have wondered why I have not written for sometime. Surely, there is no cause for alarm for all is

well. How about you?

As you can see from my current address, the storm is finally over. Guess what! At long last I'm now a medical student at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. What a dream come true! You may recall that over the years I've been on the struggle and I insisted that it must be medicine at no other university but "Great Ife". My experience and what I've passed through within these years have really proved to me that "ambition is made of sterner stuff". I'm exceedingly indebted to God for answering my prayers because it is neither my power nor might.

Emii, you remember, I've always admired medical doctors and dreamt of a day I shall hang a stethoscope over my neck. As it pleases God, I'm now on the path of achieving that lofty ambition at no other place but "Great Ife". Boy, the University is really great! No wonder it is acclaimed the most beautiful university in black Africa. Talk of the beautiful architectural designs, the landscaping, the serene atmosphere that pervades every nook and cranny of the campus, and above all, the rich academic and social environment that characterize the University. Well, this may sound incredible to you but I assure you that I shall arrange for your visit so that you see things for yourself.

I've completed the registration formalities, and I'm gradually settling down to my studies. Usually, it is difficult to begin but I'm not taking any chances because I've a mission and a vision. I'll never let my parents or even



you down.

Emii, I've known you as a hard working person. But I must advise that you put more effort in your struggle to gain admission. I assure you that you will definitely make it. It is only a question of time. Never you drop your ambition of reading engineering but you can forget UNN. I've discovered it is a glorified secondary school, when compared with "Great Ife". Try Ife when next you put in for JAMB. If you succeed, that would be the best thing that would happen in our relationship.

Strengthen your faith in the Lord and remain prayerful. He will never fail you. My best regards to your parents and siblings. Bye for now and remain blessed.

Yours sincerely

Uche.

## EXERCISES

1. Write an essay of not more than two foolscap pages on the topic: "A memorable Day in my Life".
2. Write an essay of not more than two foolscap pages on the topic: "My Alma Mater".
3. Write an article for publication in any of the national newspaper on the topic: "If I were the President of Nigeria".
4. Write an essay arguing for or against the proposition. "Poverty is the cause of Crime".
5. Given your experiences after spending about one academic session in your University, write a letter to

your Vice Chancellor pointing out the strengths and weaknesses of your University and suggesting ways forward.

6. In one of the applications you have written for employment, you chose one of your lecturers to serve as your reference. Write a letter to him or her requesting him or her to write a reference report on you in support of your application.
7. Information reaching you says that one of your friends could not graduate after spending five years in the University. Consequently, he has become frustrated and has threatened to abandon his studies. Write a letter to him advising him on what he should do.

Let us at this juncture examine briefly paragraphing as an essential component in writing skills. We shall consider paragraph structure and development.

## **7.5 PARAGRAPHING- STRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT**

### **7.5.1 What is a Paragraph?**

The grammatical units -morpheme, word, phrase and clause culminate in the formation of sentence which is the largest grammatical unit used to express thought. Higher than a sentence in expressing thought is paragraph. As the lower grammatical units combine to form sentence so also sentences combine to form paragraph. Hence a paragraph is defined as a combination of related sentences that express one given

idea.

In Writing, paragraph is indicated by indentation from the margin of the first line. Introduction of a paragraph in a write-up usually signals the introduction of a new idea or a turn in the thought process. Besides, paragraph serves as a kind of punctuation mark in that it indicates a pause which is longer than a full stop.

### **7.5.2 Paragraph Structure and Development**

The nucleus of a paragraph is a topic sentence. The topic sentence is a sentence in a paragraph that contains the main idea. Other sentences that help in building the paragraph are called elaborating sentences. There are three positions where the topic sentence can be found in a paragraph. The positions are the beginning, the middle and the end.

However, the most common paragraphs are those that have their topic sentences at the beginning.

Paragraph has no specific length as the length varies according to the writer and the ideas being expressed. However, there are one sentence paragraphs as can be seen in newspaper reporting and dialogues in novels. Also, long paragraphs which can consist of about ten sentences exist. Be that as it may, students are advised to vary the length of their paragraphs and ensure that the paragraphs are proportionate to the ideas and thought they express.

### 7.5.3 The Qualities of a Paragraph

The three basic qualities of a paragraph are unity, cohesion and emphasis.

#### Unity:

A well written paragraph should have unity. The unity can only be achieved if there is only one central idea, which is expressed in the topic sentence followed by other elaborating sentences, which illustrate the topic sentence. The principle of unity of a paragraph is violated if the writer in the course of his writing includes materials that are not relevant to the central idea.

#### Cohesion:

Any paragraph whose sentences are not logically and sequentially arranged lacks cohesion. A coherent paragraph should be an embodiment of sentences that have causal relationship. Cohesion in a paragraph is usually a function of the logical sequence of ideas which are achieved through the following stylistic devices:

1. **The use of transitional words or expressions and linkers:** Transitional words or expressions which help to link sentences in a paragraph abound but they perform different functions such as:
  - (a) Addition - moreover, furthermore, in addition, next, finally, etc.
  - (b) Contrast - yet, however, nevertheless, but, in contrast, on the other hand, etc.
  - (c) Comparison - similarly, likewise, in like manner, by way of comparison, etc.



- (d) Time - meanwhile, afterward, immediately, presently, etc.
- (e) Result -consequently, as a result, accordingly, thus, therefore, etc.
- (f) Illustration -for example, for instance, to illustrate, etc.
- (g) Purpose -for this purpose, to this end, etc.

It should be pointed out that although the above transitional words and expressions are used within paragraphs in order to achieve cohesion, they are also used to link up paragraphs in the body of an essay.

2. **The use of Pronouns:** Cohesion is also achieved in the body of a paragraph through the precise use of pronouns to reiterate their antecedents and link one sentence or idea to another.
3. Cohesion in the body of a paragraph can be achieved through the repetition of specific ideas, but not necessarily the same word or phrase.

**Emphasis:** A well developed paragraph should have emphasis as one of its qualities. Granted, a paragraph ideally should deal with one main idea; the idea should be articulated in such a way that the reader is not left in doubt as regards what the paragraph is all about. The main idea could be foregrounded through the use of repetition or expression such as mainly, in the main, especially, most important, chiefly, etc.

### 7.5.4 TYPES OF PARAGRAPH:

1. **Loose Paragraph:** A paragraph is said to be a loose one if the topic sentence is positioned at the beginning of the paragraph. Consider the following:

#### Paragraph 1 :

Times are really hard. The cost of living has tremendously gone beyond the reach of an average man. There is no employment. Even those who are working hardly receive their salaries as at when due. Where the salaries are paid, the money hardly buys anything because of high rate of inflation. It is a sorry situation which has subjected the masses to severe hardship. Something should be done and urgently too to save the situation.

**Comment:** The above paragraph is a good example of a loose paragraph. The paragraph is made up of six sentences with the first sentence as the topic sentence. The topic sentence sums up the message of the paragraph while other sentences merely serve as elaborating devices.

2 **Mixed Paragraph:** A mixed paragraph is one that has its topic sentence contained in the middle of the paragraph. Examine the following:

#### Paragraph II:-

Earthquake is a natural phenomenon, which is contrasted

with success. While everybody wants to be associated with success, nobody wants failure to come his way. Yet, some people succeed while others fail. The question then is why have people continued to be victim of failure even though nobody wants to be associated with it? The answer is obvious. First, one may be a failure in life because he has been pre-destined to be so. Second, failure may be self inflicted. The latter view appears to be more tenable because many who are victims of failure are people who have all it takes to succeed but could not because of their ineptitude. .

**Comment:** The above paragraph is undoubtedly a mixed one because the topic sentence is neither at the beginning nor the end. The topic sentence of the paragraph is the sentence that begins: "The question then is why have people continued..." which is found in the middle of the paragraph.

3. **Periodic Paragraph:** A periodic paragraph has its topic sentence at the end. A periodic paragraph usually begins with elaborating sentences which culminate into the summary of the main idea of the paragraph. Consider the following:

### **Paragraph III**

I have always watched Emi with keen interest. He keeps to his lecture timetable religiously and never misses any lecture. He does his assignments when necessary

and ensures that they are submitted in time. In all departmental activities he is always found in the forefront. Apart from academic exercise, he participates actively in other extra-curricular activities such as Christian fellowship, clubbing and, of course, games. Emi is no doubt an epitome of diligence.

### **Comment:**

In the above paragraph, the last sentence is the topic sentence which summarizes the main idea of the paragraph. Periodic paragraphing is a useful device to create suspense.

It should be pointed out that none of the three types of paragraphs, loose, mixed and periodic discussed above is superior to the other. The one to be adopted depends on one's style and purpose. However, students should be advised to vary their paragraph types in a given write up instead of sticking to only one paragraph type as that would make their writing monotonous.

The three model paragraphs stated above should be a reference point to students. In developing the paragraphs, attempts have been made to keep to the standards and also ensure that the three qualities of paragraph – unity, coherence and emphasis – are maintained. Notice that each of the paragraphs has only one main idea which is capable of being summarized in one sentence.



## EXERCISES

With each of the following topic sentences, develop a paragraph of not less than four sentences and not more than six sentences.

- i. It was really a day everything went wrong.
- ii. Health, they say, is wealth.
- iii. Thank God, I have finally made it.
- iv. It was a bitter experience but I really learnt my lessons.
- v. She is everything but honest.

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