

# How to Make Yourself Understood

English I Online Materials

## Tips for Writing Sensible Paragraphs

### Unit 9

### Notes on Essay Construction



キーワード (key words)

つなぎ表現 (transitional signals)    パラグラフの分析 (anatomy of paragraphs)

## Tips for Writing Sensible Paragraphs

### Unit 9 Notes on Essay Construction

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## Scripts and Annotations (スクリプトと解説)

(... so expensive. Yeah, well, that's a good point...Ah)

Hello everyone. I'm Chuck Brown. Welcome to the "How to Make Yourself Understood" video series, Unit 9. In the previous video, we learned the basics of essay structure.

In this video, we are going to add some notes on ways an essay can be composed, using the sample essay presented in Unit 8. Let's first look at the following sentence.

### *Analyzing the First Paragraph*

**When I was admitted to college last year, I started something new:  
the digitization of most of my reading activities.**

Remember? This is a part of the thesis statement of the essay. Although the default position of a topic sentence is the first sentence of a paragraph as we learned in Unit 7, sometimes it may not be a good idea to put your readers suddenly in the middle of a topic which may be quite new to them. In such a case, you can provide some preparatory statements which gradually ease the reader into the topic.

< Paragraph 1 >

[1] These days, in many aspects of our daily life, computers, especially small mobile devices, are changing the traditional way of doing things. [2] For example, mobile devices with a camera installed have almost replaced film cameras at least for casual use. [3] Travelers now depend on maps displayed on their mobile phone screen instead of paper maps. [4] Using an online calendar for scheduling is now quite a normal procedure. [5] **As for me, when I was admitted to college last year, I started something new to follow this trend: the digitization of most of my reading activities.** [6] Let me show you how I read books now and how I evaluate this new method of reading.

The sample paragraph starts with a very general mention of the fact that small mobile devices are changing the traditional way of doing things. Sentences [2] to [4] list three examples of this change. Only after these general introductory statements does the topic sentence [5] appear. This sentence is also the thesis statement of the whole essay. "When I was admitted to college last year, I started something new to follow this trend: the digitization of most of my reading activities." The last sentence [6] follows the thesis statement to announce the supporting ideas to be discussed below: how the author reads books now, and how the author evaluates this method of reading. This announcement gives a brief preview of the essay's logical progression to the reader. In this way, when you read an essay, you should pay special attention to the first paragraph. The thesis statement may be somewhere toward the end of the paragraph and followed by a preview of how the thesis will be supported in the body of the essay.

## Points

### ⇒ エッセイ冒頭のパラグラフに関する注意事項

1. Unit 7 で、topic sentence の定位置はパラグラフの冒頭であると述べました。しかし、これには例外があります。そしてこの例外が最も高頻度で発生するのが、エッセイの冒頭部分なのです。なぜならエッセイの冒頭には、先行する文章が何もないからです。何も前置きがない状況でいきなり “the digitization of most of my reading activities” と書かれても、読者はとまどうかもしれません。そこで、**読者を議論の中に引き込むために、一般的な話題から始めて、次第に話題を狭めていき、最終的に topic (エッセイですから同時に thesis でもある) へと導く**、という手口がよく用いられます。

本格的な学術論文では、執筆者の論点を読者に理解させるために、その研究分野において、これまでにどのような研究が行われ、何がわかってきて、何がまだわかっていないかということ等を、過去の研究論文から引用しながら説明し、その後、自分の問題意識と論点を提示するという手順を踏むことがよくあります。そのようにして自分がこれから展開しようとする議論を、これまでの研究の流れの中に位置づけるわけです。このような論述を行う場合は、エッセイ冒頭の1パラグラフだけでは足りず、数パラグラフを費やして、その終わりの方に thesis statement を置くという introduction 構成が取られることがあります。

sample essay ではそこまで壮大な構成は取っていませんが、**前置きをしてから topic sentence (兼 thesis statement) を置くという方法**を採っています。落語に、「枕」という導入部分がありますね。それと似ています。

2. **エッセイ冒頭のパラグラフの最後の文は、エッセイ全体の議論の進め方を予告する役割**を担っています。これもエッセイ冒頭パラグラフではよく用いられる手法です。これによって、読者は自分がこの先どのような流れの議論を読むことになるのか、見当をつけることができます。読みやすく、誤読されにくい論文を書くには、読者に手の内を明かしておいて、見通しのよい論理展開をしていくことが重要です。それも冒頭パラグラフ (introduction) の重要な役割なのです。何についてどのように論じるのかを早めに読者に伝えず、読者を宙ぶらりんの状態にしたまま論文の末尾まで引きずり回すような書き方をしているのは、おしまいまで読んでもらえません。

## *Paragraph without a Topic Sentence*

Next, let's proceed to the second paragraph: the beginning of the body of this essay. Which sentence is the topic sentence here?

### < Paragraph 2: No topic sentence >

[7] In order to convert the books I buy into a digital format, first I use a desktop paper cutter to cut off the spines and separate all the sheets from each other. [8] Then I scan dozens of the sheets at a time, using a very fast document scanner. [9] The scanned data are automatically stored as PDF files in my tablet PC. [10] The tablet PC containing these PDF files serves as a kind of book for me: I can read and turn pages on the screen with my forefinger.

Well, you may notice that there is no topic sentence in this second paragraph! Why is this so? This paragraph explains the process of converting paper books to digital data. Therefore, no sentence is more important than any other. In principle, a paragraph should contain a topic sentence, but there are some exceptions to this rule. Just as in this second paragraph, with a recipe or instruction, each step is equally important: therefore, in essays of this kind, paragraphs may lack a topic sentence. Another possible exception is, for example, when the paragraph is a continuation of the previous paragraph's content.

**A paragraph may lack the topic sentence if the essay is:**

1. a recipe or instruction
2. a continuation of the previous paragraph's content

Note, however, that except for these very limited cases, you must write a topic sentence for every paragraph. OK?

### Points

#### ⇒ topic sentence のないパラグラフ

パラグラフには（多くの場合その冒頭に）topic sentence が置かれるというルールをすでに説明しましたが、これにも例外があります。それを示すため、あえて sample essay に topic sentence のないパラグラフを1つ入れておきました。例外が起きる事例として、

1. レシピや作業手順
2. 直前のパラグラフの内容の続き

があります。このほかに、時系列にしたがって出来事（物語）を述べるという場合も topic sentence なしとなることがよくあります。

しかし、みなさんがパラグラフを書くときに「自分はこのパラグラフで何を述べるのか」を明確に意識して、それを topic sentence という形でパラグラフ冒頭に書くという癖をつける必要があるので、例外は例外であり、非常に少ないのだとお考えください。sample essay でも第3パラグラフ以降は例外なく topic sentence が、しかも冒頭に置かれています。

## *Anatomy of the Body Paragraphs*

Now, let's go on to paragraph 3.

### < Paragraph 3 >

[11] **One year after having changed my reading method in this way, I have become sure that digitized reading has several advantages.** [12] **First of all, I no longer have to carry along bulky textbooks**

from home to college, because everything I need in the classroom is stored in my light-weight, handy tablet. [13] Not only the textbooks but also my whole library is now accessible wherever I go. [14] For example, when a passage displayed on the screen happens to remind me of another related title, I can immediately search for and open it. [15] That was impossible when I was totally dependent on paper books, because there was a limit to the number of books I could carry with me.

Sentence [11] is the topic sentence, announcing that the author is going to explain several advantages of digitized reading. “One year after having changed my reading method in this way, I have become sure that digitized reading has several advantages.”

The next sentence [12] is also an important sentence in the paragraph because it starts introducing the first advantage: “First of all, I no longer have to carry along bulky textbooks from home to college, because everything I need in the classroom is stored in my light-weight, handy tablet.”

The second advantage is covered by paragraph 4,

< Paragraph 4 >

[16] In addition to this excellent portability, **digital reading gives me more freedom in taking notes.** [17] Everybody knows you can jot down your memos in a paper book, if it is your own, of course. [18] With digital reading, you can likewise annotate on the screen using your finger or a stylus pen. [19] What is more, you can delete or modify your notes at your will, which is impossible with paper books.

and the third advantage of digitized reading is covered by paragraph 5.

< Paragraph 5 >

[20] **Although someone might mention the danger of losing your whole library by losing your tablet PC, actually, here again digitized books beat their paper-based equivalents.** [21] Because digital files are so easy to copy, I have the backups of my whole library in my laptop PC and in two portable hard-disk drives so that if my tablet is lost or broken, I still have my library data at hand. [22] This three-fold backup is impracticable with paper books. [23] Just imagine how time-consuming and tedious it might be to make just one Xerox copy of a 200 page paper book! [24] Even if you manage to make it, where do you put those paper copies? [25] In contrast, with digital book data, backup can be so simply and quickly done. [26] Therefore, you can say that my books are far more securely protected than paper books.

The structure of the body part in this essay is pretty straightforward.

### ***Concluding Paragraph: How to Finish your Essay***

Finally, after these supporting paragraphs, the essay is concluded by paragraph 6.

< Paragraph 6 >

[27] Portability, flexibility in annotation, and ease of backup: these are some of the reasons why I am very much satisfied with my present reading environment. [28] It may be that my reading method works because I am a sophomore and have less than a hundred books of my own. [29] A professor who owns thousands of books would find the idea of converting them into PDF from scratch totally unrealistic. [30] I am wondering what will happen as my library gradually increases in the future. [31] For the time being, however, I cannot imagine my daily life without my whole library in my tablet.

Notice that all of these paragraphs have a topic sentence at their very beginning, which makes the point of each very clear to the reader.

OK? From this, we can see that it is clear that the location of the topic sentence is very important. Next let's focus on some of the cohesive devices employed and see how they glue the whole essay together.

### ***Cohesive Devices: Transition Signals***

First of all, in English writing, some words and phrases are designated “transition signals” or “transition words”. These are some of the typical transition signals employed in this sample essay.

< paragraph 1 > For example

< paragraph 2 > first, Then

< paragraph 3 > First of all, because, For example

< paragraph 4 > In addition to, likewise, What is more

< paragraph 5 > again, Because, In contrast, Therefore

< paragraph 6 > however

Their main function is to make clear how parts of the text are connected and to help the reader follow the thread of the argument.

In paragraph 1, the phrase *For example* signifies that what follows are examples of small mobile devices mentioned in the first sentence.

In paragraph 2, the words *first* and *then* clearly indicate the sequential order of the process of converting books into a digital format. These transition words are very straightforward, aren't they? They clarify the transition within a paragraph.

**Points**

→ **transition signals (つなぎ語、つなぎ表現)** について

連続する文と文、パラグラフとパラグラフがどのような論理的なつながりを持っているかを表す接続表現を **transition signals** と呼びます。これらは例えば、「例示」(for example など)、「因果関係」(because, therefore など)、「逆接」(however, although など)、「列挙」(first of all, then, likewise など)などのカテゴリーに分類されます。

**transition signals の使用について意識的になることは、cohesion によってつながった文章を書くために重要なこと**です。たしかに紋切り型の transition signals を使い過ぎると、幼稚な感じを与えることもあります。どのように論理的につながるのかが不明な文を連ねるよりはるかにましです。最初は型にはまったつなぎ方しかできなくても、上手な書き手の文章をたくさん読み、自分でも書く練習を重ねていくうちに、紋切り型ではないつなぎ方もできるようになっていくでしょう(その例は、この後のほうで紹介されています)。まずは型を覚えることが先決です。

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Another thing you should know about how paragraphs are connected is that they often start with a transition from the previous paragraph, or end with a transition to the next paragraph. For example, paragraph 3 starts with sentence [11].

[11] **One year after having changed my reading method in this way, I have become sure that digitized reading has several advantages.**

In this sentence, the phrase *having changed my reading method in this way* refers to the overall content of paragraph 2. Sentence [11] first sums up the previous paragraph and then starts a new topic: “several advantages”.

Sometimes connecting devices can be more sophisticated. For example, sentence [12] starts the list of advantages of digitized books by using the transitional signal, *First of all*.

[12] **First of all, I no longer have to carry along bulky textbooks from home to college, because everything I need in the classroom is stored in my light-weight, handy tablet.**

Here, the simplest procedure for starting paragraph 4 would seem to be to use the transitional signal *secondly*, and for paragraph 5, another transitional signal *thirdly*, which would introduce the second and the third advantages.

[ Potential Paragraph 4 ]

**Secondly**, digital reading gives me more freedom in taking notes.



## &lt; Actual Paragraph 4 &gt;

[16] **In addition to this excellent portability**, digital reading gives me more freedom in taking notes.

In actuality, however, paragraph 4 starts with the phrase, *In addition to this excellent portability*, which serves in this situation as a transition from paragraph 3. Here, the phrase *this excellent portability* functions to summarize the topic of the previous paragraph and, combined with *in addition to*, announces to the reader that another advantage is to be presented.

Meanwhile, paragraph 5 could begin with:

## [ Potential Paragraph 5 ]

**Thirdly**, digitized books beat their paper equivalents because digital files are so easy to copy that I can have the backups of my whole library in my laptop PC and in two portable hard-disk drives ....

In actuality, however, the author cites a possible opposing view to the digital reading method explained in paragraphs 3 and 4, and then presents the third advantage as a counterargument to that possible criticism.

## &lt; Actual Paragraph 5 &gt;

[20] **Although someone might mention the danger of losing your whole library by losing your tablet PC, actually**, here again digitized books beat their paper-based equivalents. ...

Let us consider paragraph 6, the concluding paragraph. Notice that the author starts the paragraph by recapitulating the three advantages, rather than just using a very simple transition signal such as *in conclusion*.

## &lt; Paragraph 6 &gt;

[27] **Portability, flexibility in annotation, and ease of backup**: these are some of the reasons why I am very much satisfied with my present reading environment. ...

*Portability* refers to paragraph 3, *flexibility in annotation* to paragraph 4, and *ease of backup* to paragraph 5. This is a very nice way to remind the reader of what was stated in the body of this essay.

Finally, after summarizing these three supporting paragraphs in this way, the author introduces a conclusive statement: *I am very much satisfied with my present reading environment*. The author's conclusion in this essay is very clearly stated in this fashion. Further, the very last sentence in the conclusion paragraph is: *I cannot imagine my daily life without my whole library in my tablet*. This leaves the reader a strong impression of how the author is fascinated by the digitized library, and is therefore a very nice way of concluding the essay.

OK. We have just seen how normal vocabulary is used to do more than what simple transition words can do: it can be very helpful to the reader, in the course of reading a particular paragraph, at points in which we might forget where we are in the logical development of the entire essay, and some kind of reminder is necessary. In such cases, cohesive devices using normal vocabulary serve both as a **text-glue** and as a **reminder** to help the reader keep track of the flow of the essay's argument.

## Points

### → transition signals 以外の手段

たとえば第3パラグラフの冒頭の文[11]は、副詞句の中の *having changed my reading method in this way* が第2パラグラフの内容を簡潔にまとめており、その後の *I have become sure that digitized reading has several advantages* が第3パラグラフの *topic* を示すという働きをしています。これによって、第2と第3パラグラフのつながりができると同時に、読者はすでに読んだ第2パラグラフの内容を確認することができます。

[11] **One year after having changed my reading method in this way, I have become sure that digitized reading has several advantages.** (このように自分の読書の仕方を変えてから1年たった今、私は読書のデジタル化にはいくつかの利点があると確信している。)

第4パラグラフ冒頭[16]の *In addition to this excellent portability* も、*this excellent portability* によって第3パラグラフの内容を簡潔にまとめると同時に第4パラグラフにつなぐという役割を持っています。*Secondly* という型どおりの *transition signal* を用いる場合と比較すると、単調さを回避するだけでなく、読者に対して親切な書き方となっています。第3パラグラフできちんと書いた内容をわざわざ別な言葉でまとめて挙げる必要があるのかと思われるかもしれませんが、人間はどんどん忘れていく生き物です。要所要所でそこまでのまとめをしてあげることで、記憶を新たにして論理の流れを再確認することができますし、万一誤読していたときに修正のチャンスを読者に与えることにもなります。

第6パラグラフ冒頭の[27]も、*Portability* によって第3パラグラフを、*flexibility in annotation* によって第4パラグラフを、*ease of backup* によって第5パラグラフをまとめながら、エッセイ全体の結論を導入する役割を果たしています。これによって、読者は、もう忘れてしまっているかもしれないエッセイ全体の論理の流れを把握し直すことができます。

ここで注意していただきたいのは、**transition signal 専用の表現だけでなく、それ以外の普通の語彙をうまく使うことによっても、文章をつないで cohesion をもたらすことができる**ということ、そして同時に、読者に論理の流れを思い出させることができるということです。面倒だと思わないで、読者を親切に導いていく技術を身につけるよう努力してください。

In these units, we have learned the basics of constructing an essay; the minimum requirements for writing an essay which communicates your meaning clearly. From this starting point, you can learn to be a better writer by acquiring advanced strategies like the ones we learned today, such as manipulating normal vocabulary instead of simple transition words, or writing your conclusions by using impressive statements.

That may seem to be a distant goal. However, you are going to have plenty of opportunities to read many other well-written essays. If you keep paying attention to their organizing strategies, hopefully you will be able to acquire a wide and flexible repertoire of tactics to improve your writing skills.

## Summary

Now, let's wrap up today's points.

1. In the first paragraph of an essay,
  - (1) the topic sentence often appears after introductory statements, and
  - (2) a brief preview of the supporting ideas can follow this delayed thesis statement.
  
2. The following kinds of paragraphs often have no topic sentence:
  - (1) recipes or instructions, or
  - (2) paragraphs which are a continuation of the previous paragraph's content.
  
3. You can use transition signals or other vocabulary to connect the sentences or paragraphs in an essay with one another.

Well, that's all for today. I hope you enjoyed the lecture. Good luck, keep working hard, and see you next time!



## Further Tips (1)

### 適切な transition signals を選ぼう

transition signals を使えば文と文のつながりが明確になるのですが、どんな transition signals を選んでもよいというわけではなく、適切なものを考えながら選ぶということが大事です。たとえば、第4パラグラフを以下のように書き換えてみましたが、どう思いますか？

[16] **And** digital reading gives me more freedom in taking notes. [17] Everybody knows you can jot down your memos in a paper book, if it is your own, of course. [18] **And** with digital reading, you can annotate on the screen using your finger or a stylus pen. [19] **And** you can delete or modify your notes at your will, which is impossible with paper books.

And という transition signal が多用されていますね。実は and は追加、前後関係、因果関係など、さまざまな

つながりを表すことができる万能的表現なので、このように **and** だけを多用して文をつないでいくと、論理的な関係がかえって不明瞭になる危険があります。それよりは、その箇所で最も適切な、単機能の **transition signal** を選ぶほうが望ましいのです。たとえば[16]の **And** は、**digital reading** の利点を追加する表現を導くので、**In addition** の方が適切です。[18]の **And** は惰性的にいいかげんに使われている例です。ここは、「紙の読書と同様に **digital reading** でも」というつながりを表すべきところなので、**And** は使わず、代わりに **likewise** を使って **With digital reading, you can likewise annotate...** としたほうがよいでしょう。[19]は、**digital reading** では「さらに」こんなこともできる、というつながりを表すので、**And** の代わりに **What is more** や **Moreover** を使うほうが意味がはっきりします。

このように **transition signals** を上手に使い分けるには、慣れと経験が必要です。他の人たちが書いた上手なエッセイをたくさん読んで手本として、勘所をつかんでください。

## Further Tips (2)

### 注意！似て非なる **first** と **at first**

Transition signal の用法で、**北大生に非常に多くみられる誤り**を1つ紹介しましょう。それは、**at first** の誤用です。何となくぼんやりと意味を知っている気になっていると大きな失敗をします。列挙を示す場合、最初に、**first** あるいは **first of all** などを使います。これらは、いくつか順番に出てくるもの最初のものを示す合図としてとても有用です。しかし、**at first** はこれとは全く意味が違います。列挙をする最初のをただ順番に示すだけの場合に **at first** を用いると大変不自然になります。**at first** の意味機能を2つの辞書で確認してみましょう。

**COBUILD<sup>7</sup>の説明** : You use **at first** when you are talking about what happens in the early stages of an event or experience, ..., **in contrast to what happens later**.

『ジーニアス英和辞典』の説明 : 最初は、初めは《**「しかし後にはそうではなかった」の意を含み、** but 節、then, later, afterward などが続くのが普通》

したがって、友達の良さを列挙して紹介しようとして、

**First of all, she was very nice, ....**

とすれば、その人の良い点の例が次つぎに挙がってくるのが自然と予測されますが、もしこれを

**At first, she was very nice, ...**

としてしまうと、「最初は一見とてもいい人だったんだけど、実は後からそうでもないということが分かった」という意味を示唆することになってしまいます。大きく印象が変わってしまう、あるいは思わぬ誤解を与えてしまう可能性もあるので、十分に注意しましょう。このような **at first** の意味はどの辞書にも必ず書いてあります。丁寧に確かめる癖をつけておくとよいでしょう。