
UNIT 12 THE WRITING SKILL: SOME BASIC GUIDELINES

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12.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we are going to discuss in detail the writing process. We will discuss the methods of writing which involve identifying the topic, gathering information on it and the purpose of writing. When we begin writing, it is important to start with a thesis statement, followed by an essay map, adequate paragraphing and effective introductions and conclusions. We also must be aware of the various discourse types involved in organising your writing: expository, descriptive, narrative or argumentative. Finally, we get into the process of writing the drafts, reviewing, editing and proof reading.

12.1 INTRODUCTION

If you are a librarian, one of the important tasks you will have to perform is writing. You may have to communicate internally by way of e-mails, memos, office orders, minutes of meetings and so on. You may also have to correspond externally to book suppliers. To fulfill your duties competently you need to be good at written communication.

Writing is a complex process and competent writing is a difficult skill to be acquired. There are many myths about the skill of writing. For example, people assume that good writers are born with an innate ability to write and are able to dash off a letter or a report without much effort. Research has, however, shown

that this is not true. All writers need to work at their writing, although some may be more successful at it than others. Moreover, keeping closely to word limits and formats is even more difficult while writing in formal contexts.

Therefore, it is clear that writing is not a gift but is a skill that anyone can pick up, by focusing not only on what you have to say and how to say it, but also by concentrating on those strategies that are most likely to help you write successfully. Now let's see what a few experienced writers have to say about what leads to good writing:

- Experienced writers spend a lot of their time planning before they attempt the first draft.
- They spend a considerable amount of their time thinking about their readers.
- They explore their subject/topic as thoroughly as possible.
- They consider their first draft to be a rough.
- They thoroughly revise their draft. Sometimes, completely rethinking and restructuring their first draft.

Of course, not all writers follow the same method and a particular writer may use different methods at different times. But the methods suggested here have been generally tried and tested by people who write competently. The steps you can follow are:

- planning.
- considering your reader.
- thoroughly investigating your subject/topic, yet recognising that new ideas will emerge as you write.
- organising.
- writing a full draft.
- revising and refining it which may often involve a complete restructuring and reorganising.

It is not necessary to go through these stages in the sequence in which they are listed. When you write, many things happen at the same time. As you plan, you may find that you are thinking of facts and ideas that you may want to include in your draft. As you organise, you may find that you are once again exploring your topic. The steps that we have suggested are guidelines, not rigid rules. Please feel free to adapt them to suit your situation.

Self Check Exercise

Note: i) Write your answers at the space given below the questions.

ii) Check your answers with the answers given at the end of this Unit.

1) How many drafts do you write? Or Is your first draft your final draft?

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- 2) How do you start writing? Do you wait till you find a suitable beginning and then proceed linearly or do you jump somewhere to the middle when a suitable idea strikes you?

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- 3) Do you keep referring back to what you have written and sometimes restructure and re-write it again?

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- 4) What do you do when you manage to complete the first draft?

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12.2 METHODS OF WRITING

Writing is commonly seen as a three way process, **pre-writing**, **writing** and **re-writing**. It may appear that writing may seem to progress in a linear, step-by-step fashion. But, in fact, it almost always progresses in a recursive manner. This simply means that writers return over and over again to their ideas, clarifying them, extending them or improving them. Most writers will plan and then revise their plans, write and rewrite parts or whole of their drafts, until literally the last moment when they need to submit or send to the reader concerned.

When we write it is a good idea to think about three key elements:

- 1) Purpose
- 2) Subject matter
- 3) Reader/audience

You need to ask yourself:

- Why am I writing this piece?
- Whom am I writing for?
- Where do I source the material for it?

12.2.1 Identifying Your Subject

Many of the topics you write about in the course of your job will be assigned to you probably by your seniors or are the requirements of the job. For example, you may send a letter reminding a student to return the library book or you may want to advertise/inform customers of a training programme on ‘Good Reading Habits’. You may also write to a service provider about books urgently required. Of course, some of you may want to write papers for a seminar.

It is also important to know why you are writing about a particular subject and who you are writing it for. Does the situation demand it or is it something that your senior has asked you to write or is it something you have a deep desire to write on?

You also need to know who your readers are and whether they are likely to be familiar about the contents of what you are writing – or is the subject totally new. Your explanation will be much less if the readers are familiar with the topic.

Knowing why you are writing will help you formulate a goal, do research and organise your material. You need to identify and state your purpose clearly, because only then:

- will your reader understand what you are writing about and why it is important to you and to them;
- can you gather the information that is most relevant to your readers and your goal; otherwise you are likely to collect any and all information that is available.

12.2.2 Gathering Information

As a librarian, you may wish to read a paper at a seminar. You must make sure that before you write it, you have all your matter in one place. While researching, read quickly through your material and use **highlighters** to indicate the material that you think you can use in your writing. You could use one colour highlighter for ideas, another for evidence and another for arguments. (Hamp-lyons and Heasley, 2006)

You could also **make notes** as you go along. Keeping notes will enable you to be specific and keep track of and manipulate what you have read. It is a good idea to concentrate on purely gathering information; wait until later to decide whether the information is valuable and important.

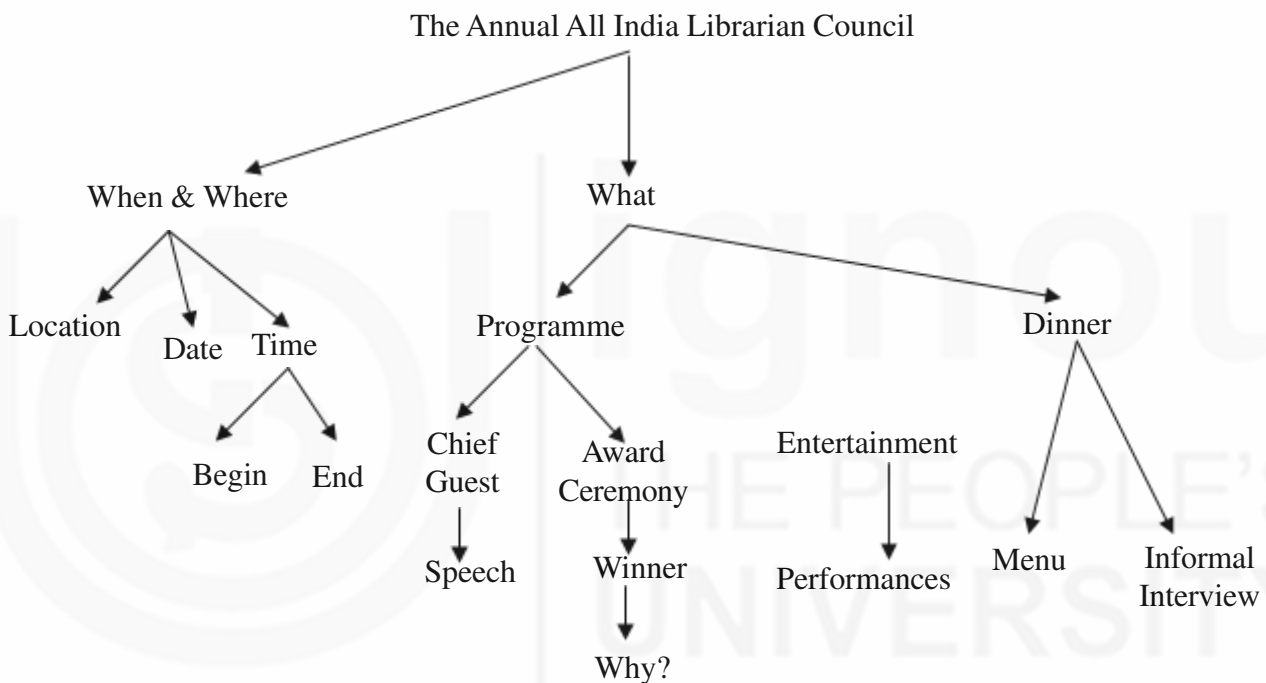
Brainstorming is also another well-known and productive method of generating ideas, facts and opinions very quickly. Again, not all the ideas will be of equal quality or usefulness, but you can evaluate that later. Of course, brainstorming need not always be with others; it can also be an activity which you perform by yourself.

Working by yourself is a little different from brainstorming in a group. You will need to motivate yourself to generate the same energy that usually accompanies a group activity. You can do this best by reviewing your materials and notes before you begin brainstorming. In fact, this session can be termed as a **planning**

session so it is important to keep track of ideas and information that you generate by yourself by making a list. You may even speak into a recorder. There is no need to write and speak in complete and connected sentences. Your goal is to generate as many ideas as you can through rapid thinking and free association. And you can evaluate the ideas at a later stage.

Another technique that you can use to help you recall ideas, information and arguments is to build an **issue tree** or a **mind map**. Brainstorming and note taking is a verbal technique that requires you to record your ideas in words. Issue trees and mind maps, however, are primarily visual. That is, as you think of ideas and information, you construct the visual display that arranges your information in a hierarchical structure. In this way, you can see each idea's relative importance and its relationship to other ideas.

The Issue Tree



12.2.3 Purpose

You must be very clear about what your text is going to be used for, for example, are you expected to write a report, a memo or a letter advertising a training session or a new book.

Having a clearly stated purpose is like having a destination when you take a trip. Once you have decided on a destination, you can make the arrangements how to reach it. An explicit purpose statement will help you to:

- identify the steps that you must take to reach your goal;
- concentrate your search for information/ideas on what is related to your purpose.

12.2.4 Knowing Your Reader

Once you know your subject/topic and the type of communication you want to make, the next most important question to ask yourself is who the reader is. The answer to this question will effect how and what you write. For example, if you

are writing for experts and specialists you could perhaps use some technical jargon and pitch your language and subject matter to a higher level. If you are sending a memo to the junior staff, the language would be quite different.

You also need to think about what the reader already knows and what s/he needs to know. You do not want to tell the writer what s/he already knows although you may refer to shared information from time to time. If you are giving information that is completely new, this information must be stated and explained with great clarity. It is a good idea to know the attitude of the readers as well. Are they likely to be provoked by the topic? If so, it is better to use more tactful language. In brief, you could ask yourself these questions about the reader:

- Is the reader an expert or a general reader?
- What does the reader already know about the topic?
- What background information might they need to know to understand the current situation?
- What does s/he need to know?
- What action do you want them to take?
- What is their attitude? Are they biased or do they have positive associations with your subject?

Self Check Exercise

Note: i) Write your answers at the space given below the questions.

ii) Check your answers with the answers given at the end of this Unit.

5) Make an issue tree or a mind map on the basis of the Issue Tree given in the Unit on any one of following topics:

- i) The new face of Library in the 21st century.
- ii) Is the reading habit dying out?
- iii) Story telling is an art which librarians in schools must have.
- iv) Multimedia and the library.

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12.3 BEGINNING TO WRITE

It is important to begin writing with more information than you think you will need. The greater your choice, the more likely it is that you will be able to select the ideas, facts and arguments that will help you accomplish your purpose. If you begin with only five or seven facts or examples to support your main idea, you are likely to use all of them regardless of their quality. But if you gather, say, ten to fifteen facts or examples, you have a choice that will effectively help you accomplish your job. As a result, there will be fewer gaps in your presentation

and your reader is less likely to raise questions and objections. However, at the same time do not take your research so seriously that you invest too much time and effort in it. Remember, you have deadlines to answer for.

12.3.1 Writing the Thesis Statement

Let us assume that at this point you have identified the topic you wish to write about. You may now find it useful to formulate a **thesis statement**. What is a thesis statement? And how does it help to have a thesis statement? *A thesis statement declares the main point or controlling idea of your writing task.* It is frequently located at the beginning of your writing. Your thesis statement may begin as a very simple sentence.

Example:

The library requires audio-visual equipment urgently since we have procured several audio books for the junior classes.

Such a “working” thesis states an opinion about the subject (the need for an audio-visual equipment) and suggests what the report /memos shall do (give arguments for building such a Centre).

Allow such a statement to work for you as you move from pre-writing stage through your various drafts and revisions. A “*working thesis statement*” can be your most valuable organisational tool. Once you have thought about your main point and purpose, you can begin to draft your article to accomplish your goal. Everything in your writing should support your thesis statement.

A working thesis statement in your early draft is to help you focus and organise your writing; don’t feel that it is carved in stone and cannot be changed. Let us remember some guidelines for writing a good thesis statement.

- A good thesis statement states the writer’s clearly defined opinion on a particular topic;
- It generally asserts one main idea;
- It is stated in specific terms.

Essay Map

Many thesis statements will benefit from the addition of an essay map *which is a brief statement in the introductory paragraph introducing the main points to be discussed in the essay.* In addition to suggesting the main points of writing, the essay map provides two other benefits: it will provide a set of guidelines for organising your writing and it will help you from wandering off into areas only vaguely related to your thesis statement. In other words, your thesis statement and essay map are a skeleton outline for the sequence of paragraphs in your writing.

Note that this essay map is different from the mind map, the crucial difference being that the essay map describes in a more concrete fashion the main point of each paragraph. A mind map, on the other hand, is a jotting down of ideas as they came to your mind.

12.3.2 Writing a Paragraph

Mastering the art of writing a paragraph is essential to success in any form of writing, whether it is a letter, a report, or a newspaper article, since all longer pieces contain a series of related paragraphs. In these longer pieces of writing, paragraphs generally introduce new ideas to develop the central theme.

What is a Paragraph? A paragraph is a piece of writing which is unified by a **central, controlling** idea or theme. This idea or theme is called the **topic** of the paragraph. It is sometimes expressed at some place in the paragraph by one sentence, which is usually called the **topic sentence**. This topic sentence may be a statement, a generalisation, or a problem. This sentence is most frequently found at the **beginning** of the paragraph, but can sometimes come at the **end** or even in the **middle** of the paragraph. Very often there may not be a topic sentence at all, but it may be implied within the paragraph.

Beginning a paragraph with a topic sentence helps both the writer and the reader. It is a useful device, especially in the early stages of your journalistic career. As a writer, you will have less difficulty in constructing a unified paragraph because you will relate every sentence to the topic sentence and the central idea it expresses. And your reader will know immediately what the paragraph is about, because the opening sentence states the central idea.

In order to develop the central theme of a paragraph, you have to expand the idea contained in the topic sentence. This can be done by adding more information, explanation, examples, illustrations, etc. to the idea expressed in the topic sentence.

Example:

Two main circumstances govern the relationship of living things in the sea: the unbelievably lavish fruitfulness of marine life forms, and the utter ruthlessness with which the larger creatures eat the smaller ones. Somebody has calculated, for instance, that if all the eggs laid by codfish were hatched and grew to maturity, the Atlantic would be packed solid with codfish within six years. But nature does not let this happen. Only an infinitesimal fraction of all codfish eggs ever become full-sized cod, and wastage among other fish is as great. One sea creature in about 10 million escapes the usual violent death inside another sea creature.

Analysis of the paragraph:

- 1) **Topic statement:** ‘Two main circumstances govern the relationship of living things in the sea’.
- 2) **Elaboration of the topic sentence:** the fruitlessness of marine life and the ruthlessness with which the larger creatures eat the smaller ones.
- 3) **Illustration:** The example of the codfish.
- 4) **Summing up:** only one sea creature in about ten million survives.

An effective paragraph requires more than a **topic sentence** and supporting details; it must also be coherent. In a coherent paragraph the writer takes the reader logically and smoothly from one idea to the next. The reader must also clearly recognise that one sentence logically leads to the next.

Another technique which brings about coherence in a paragraph is the use of **linkers** between sentences and within sentences. These are words/phrases that

help a writer move smoothly from one sentence to the next and show the logical relationship between sentences. We shall give you an example of what these linkers are and how they can be used.

Example:

*Man has been able to spread across the earth so widely for four main reasons. **First**, he is a terrestrial animal, not restricted to the forest. **Secondly**, he can cross any natural barriers, such as deserts, oceans and mountains. **Moreover**, he can live off a very wide variety of food. **Most important of all**, he has developed culture; he has learned to make clothes and build fires which allow him to live in climates where he would otherwise perish. **To a large extent**, he shares some of these advantages with the monkeys. They, **too**, can move over unforested land. They, **too**, can cross some natural barriers, as they have the ability to swim. **And** they, **too**, can digest many kinds of food. **Thus**, a single species of baboon has spread across Africa from Dakar in the west to Ethiopia in the east, and south all the way to the Cape of Good Hope. **Similarly**, macaques have done at least as well. One species, the rhesus macaque, is equally at home in forest, in open cultivated fields, and inside heavily populated cities.*

[From Eimerl, S. and De Vors, I. (eds.),
'The Monkey's Success in the Trees', in the Primates, Time-Life Books.]

These linkers are like signposts in a paragraph. They enable us to follow the writer's line of thought by showing us how one sentence relates to another. In the above example, the words/word phrases *First*, *Secondly*, *Moreover*, *Most important of all* indicate the four main reasons why man has been able to spread so widely across the earth. *Most important of all* also shows that some reasons are more important than others. *Too* indicate that monkeys also share these characteristics of human beings. *Similarly* shows the relationship between the macaques and the baboons.

The following list includes other words and phrases that function as linkers:

- To express result: *therefore, as a result, consequently, thus, hence*
- to give examples: *for example, for instance, specifically, as an illustration*
- To express comparison: *similarly, likewise*
- To express contrast: *but, yet, still, however, nevertheless, on the other hand*
- To express addition: *moreover, furthermore, also, too, besides, in addition, and*
- To indicate time: *now, later, meanwhile, since then, after that, before that time*
- To express sequence: *first, second, third, then, next, finally.*

The order in which you present your paragraphs is another decision that you have to make. In some pieces of writing, the subject matter itself will decide its own order. Other pieces of writing, may not suggest such a natural order, in which case you have to decide which order will most effectively hold the attention of your readers. Often, writers withhold their strongest point until they reach the end of their writing. As you already know, each paragraph usually signals a major point in your discussion. These paragraphs should not appear as isolated blocks of thought but rather as part of a unified, step-by-step progression. To bring

about continuity, you must link each paragraph to the one before it with linkers. Sometimes, instead of using linkers or repetition of key words, you can use what is known as *idea hook*. The last idea of the earlier paragraph will lead you smoothly into your next paragraph.

12.3.3 Introductions and Conclusions

The first few sentences of your writing are particularly important because they help to catch the readers' attention and make them want to keep on reading. Here are some suggestions for successful introductions. You could begin with:

- Statement of a problem or a popular misconception.
- An arresting statistics or shocking statement;
- A question;
- A quotation;
- A relevant story, joke or anecdote;
- An analogy or comparison;
- A contrast;
- A personal experience.

A good piece of writing must have a satisfactory conclusion, one that gives a reader a sense of completion on the subject. It is important that the concluding paragraph emphasises the validity and importance of your thinking. Here are some suggestions that might lead to some ideas for your conclusions:

- A restatement of the thesis statement;
- An evaluation of the importance of the subject;
- Statement of the broader implications of your piece of writing
- A call to action;
- A warning based on the thesis statement;
- A quotation from an authority;
- An anecdote; and
- A rhetorical question that makes the readers think about the writer's main points and so on.

12.4 ORGANISING YOUR WRITING

From a writer's point of view, organising involves searching for a pattern or a sequence that is appropriate to your information, your goals and your readers' needs. Your readers expect that you will create a pattern that will make what you say easy to read, understand, remember and be useful.

Once you have determined the relationship among the concepts and data you have gathered, you still have to decide how you will present these to your readers. There are four basic discourse strategies that you could use or adapt to your needs. Remember, while we are discussing them as separate types of discourse, in a single piece of writing you are likely to use more than one type.

12.4.1 Forms of Discourse

Generally **exposition**, **narration**, **description** and **argumentation** are considered to be the basic forms of discourse. When a writer is concerned with setting forth facts then the form is known as *exposition*, when s/he presents them in terms of temporal action then the form is *narration*, and in terms of space and giving details about it, it is *description*, and when s/he intends to resolve conflict of facts then it is known as *argumentation*. These forms do not exist as pure forms; they, in fact, are intermixed and one can only talk about a dominant form in a piece of writing. Let us look at the dominant forms separately.

i) Expository Discourse

Expository writing is probably the most common form of writing. Central to expository writing is grouping, classification, definition, illustration, giving instructions and directions, advice, processes and systems. While grouping involves selection, classification involves breaking down of a broad topic into parts. In contrast to these, definition points out the characteristics that distinguish a particular thing under discussion from others. Illustration involves exemplification of ideas under discussion, using examples.

Self Check Exercise

Note: i) Write your answers at the space given below the questions.

ii) Check your answers with the answers given at the end of this Unit.

6) Here is a beginning for a paragraph of definition. Complete the paragraph by explaining both the positive and negative sides of liberty as you perceive it.

In the dictionary, liberty is defined as freedom from external restraints or compulsion. The definition is not incorrect but is too narrow, because liberty means freedom from having to do something, as well as freedom to do something. In this sense, liberty may be said to possess two sides – a positive and a negative.

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ii) Narrative Discourse

Narration depends chiefly on temporal order, i.e., upon actions in a chronological order. The chronological order involves a sequencing of events or actions from beginning to end. A skilled narrator is able to arrange the details in such a way so that a reader's interest rises to a climax at some point in the narration. The narration, in turn, can range from story telling, as in novels and short stories, to anecdotes used for illustration, explanation or support.

Sometimes, for special effects, etc. an author may begin his/her narration from the end and then through a process of *flashback* may return to the beginning and

then give the full events till the end. The author may also begin in the middle of a chronological sequence, narrate events leading up to the point of narration and then proceed to complete the narration of events. Both the above kinds of presentation of events can generally be found in novels and films.

Where to look for ideas

You can only write about what you have experienced, observed, imagined, and thought about. Although we discuss the experiences and thoughts of others, they do not become our own. Borrowed ideas like borrowed clothes do not fit, and writing is not so much a matter of ideas or phrases as of how we present them. The most interesting story or narration is the one you have experienced and thought about in your own individual fashion. A narrative in order to be interesting must be original. The sources for your narratives are:

Your memories: What places or persons do you recall clearly? What days do you remember vividly? What was the happiest day you recall? What was the most painful time you remember?

Your friends and favourite places: Who is the most peaceful person you know? Who is the most amusing person you know? Which is the place you would like to go back to?

Events and Participants: What events in your life did you find most moving? What was the greatest satisfaction or disappointment that you experienced? What people in your life did you consider powerful, good or beautiful? Do you still admire them? What events would you like to wipe out from your memory? What events would you like to remember and relive?

Imagination and wishes: if you had your choice, which country would you like to live in? What persons would you like to meet? How would you like your own country to be?

You can devise your plan by asking the following four basic questions:

- i) What is special or typical about my narrative?
- ii) Why am I telling this story?
- iii) What kind of readers am I writing for?
- iv) How will my reader best understand my plan and purpose?

You may find you have three more questions:

- v) How long does my narrative have to be?
- vi) Do I know enough about what I am writing?
- vii) Where can I get more information about it?

In writing narrations one of the skills to be cultivated is style. The question that arises is how you can improve your narrative style. In the initial stages you can consider the following stylistic features:

- a) Simplicity
- b) Conversational style
- c) Individual turn of phrase
- d) Concrete and precise vocabulary

iii) Descriptive Discourse

Description also involves narration, but of a different kind. It is a kind of picture-making, indicating what someone, something, or some place, etc. looks like. All descriptions involve spatial dimensions.

Any description would involve one of the two possibilities: either the description would proceed from a particular to the general or, from the general to the particular. For example, a description of a scenery could either begin with a central focus on a particular detail and then proceed to other things that relate to it, giving us, thereby, a general picture. One could also describe the scenery in general terms and then focus on particular items within it which are of interest. However, what is common to any kind of description is the spatial arrangement, i.e., the way things appear and the way they are arranged. It is analogous to the long shot, with diminishing distance leading to close-ups from various angles, and vice-versa, by a film camera. Carefully study the passage below:

Punctually at midday he opened his bag and spread out his professional equipment, which consisted of a dozen cowrie shells, a square piece of cloth with obscure mystic charts on it, a notebook, and a bundle of palmyra writing. His forehead was resplendent with sacred ash and vermilion, and his eyes sparkled with a sharp abnormal gleam which was really an outcome of a continual searching look for customers, but which his clients took to be a prophetic look and felt comforted. The power of his eyes was considerably enhanced by their position – placed as they were between the painted forehead and the dark whiskers which streamed down his cheeks; even a half-wit’s eye would sparkle in such a setting. To crown the effect he wound a saffron coloured turban around his head. This colour scheme never failed. People were attracted to him as bees are attracted to dahlia stalks. He sat under the boughs of a spreading tamarind tree which flanked a path running through the Town Hall Park. It was a remarkable place in many ways: a surging crowd was always moving up and down this narrow road morning till night. A variety of trades and occupations was represented all along its way: medicine sellers, sellers of stolen hardware and junk, magicians, and above all, an auctioneer of cheap cloth, who created enough din all day to awake the whole town.

(R. K. Narayan: “An Astrologer’s Day”)

Here the narration begins with a close description of an astrologer and then goes on to describe the hustle and bustle of the place in general terms.

Now let’s look at the precise words/phrases that make this description hold the readers’ interest.

- **Being specific**

....a dozen cowrie shells

....a square piece of cloth

....a saffron coloured turban

- **Giving descriptive details**

His forehead was resplendent with sacred ash and vermilion, and his eyes sparkled with a sharp abnormal gleam....

- **Variation**

- ...his eyes sparkled...
- ...sharp abnormal gleam...
- ...prophetic look...
- ...power of his eyes...

Note that a description can be of people, places and processes.

Self Check Exercise

Note: i) Write your answers at the space given below the questions.

ii) Check your answers with the answers given at the end of this Unit.

7) You have been asked by a Tourist/Travel Magazine to introduce your City/Town/Village to foreign visitors. Write a physical description, including the location, layout, geographical and architectural features. Some reference to history may be appropriate. Your description must make your area sound interesting and attractive as a tourist destination. Write in 200 words.

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iv) **Argumentative Discourse**

In argumentative discourse the writer argues a case, or expresses an opinion, by looking at a problem from both the sides. Any structure representing argumentation must take into account the pro-and-con nature of the argument. Argumentation can be done in three different ways. First, one can give ones own arguments by taking an affirmative position. Second, one can give further evidence to counter-balance the arguments of an opponent. And, third, one can point out the fallacies in one’s opponents’ arguments in order to discredit them. Strong argumentation, therefore, demands perceptive reasoning and careful perusal of evidence in order to present one’s own arguments or in order to belittle the opponent’s arguments. However, this kind of writing becomes interesting when the writer has something to say. Your opinion will not be worth expressing until you have thought about the subject.

The structure of an argument is shaped by the nature of reasoning. Reasoning, here, simply means moving from the basic propositions, through evidence, to a

conclusion. There are two main directions of reasoning: *induction and deduction*. It should be noted that each of these approaches is usually used in combination with the strategies of narrating and explaining.

a) **Deductive Reasoning**

Deductive reasoning is a basic form of valid reasoning. Deductive reasoning, or deduction, starts out with a general statement, or hypothesis, and examines the possibilities to reach a specific, logical conclusion. The scientific method uses deduction to test hypotheses and theories.

In deductive reasoning, if something is true of a class of things in general, it is also true for all members of that class. For example, “All men are mortal. Harold is a man. Therefore, Harold is mortal.” For deductive reasoning to be sound, the hypothesis must be correct. It is assumed that the premises, “All men are mortal” and “Harold is a man” are true. Therefore, the conclusion is logical and true.

b) **Inductive Reasoning**

Inductive reasoning is the opposite of deductive reasoning. Inductive reasoning makes broad generalisations from specific observations. Even if all of the premises are true in a statement, inductive reasoning allows for the conclusion to be false. Here’s an example: “Harold is a grandfather. Harold is bald. Therefore, all grandfathers are bald.” The conclusion does not follow logically from the statements.

(<http://www.livescience.com/21569-deduction-vs-induction.html>)

It is rare that you will use one of these organising patterns to the exclusion of others. It is possible that you will combine them in your piece of writing.

Self Check Exercise

Note: i) Write your answers at the space given below the questions.

ii) Check your answers with the answers given at the end of this Unit.

8) Use your imagination and creativity to complete the sentences in the mini-compositions below. Note that ‘I’ and ‘ii’ look at both sides of the argument, whereas ‘iii’ is one-sided and simply lists reasons.

i) Students often wonder whether it’s worth going abroad to study.

It depends on a number of factors:

.....

Some students:

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Others, however

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All in all

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- ii) Many young people dream of becoming famous; but in reality fame has its drawbacks as well as attractions.

On the one hand

Also,

On the other hand,

No only that, but

Ultimately

- iii) There are many reasons why I love

One reason is

Another

What is more,

Above all

12.5 THE WRITING PROCESS

So far we have been discussing some of the ways to organise our ideas. But sitting down to write a first draft is much more formal and intimidating than the writing you did while you were planning. Drafts require that you write in complete sentences and paragraphs, and that you pay some attention to the format and the organisation you want the finished product to have. At this stage, you will be coping with questions of length, format, word choice, coherence, sentence structure, cohesion, paragraphing and format. The best way to tackle this is to understand how this process works.

1) Writing the First Draft

Your first draft is an experiment, a test, to find out what you have to say. It is an attempt to build a rough framework of content, meaning, and form which you will improve on later. It is provisional writing. It encourages you to write quickly in an attempt to delineate the general meaning, content, and organisation of your draft. When you finish you will not have spent so much time and effort that you will be unwilling to change or discard part or all of what you have written.

2) **Revising the First Draft**

Revising begins with the careful review of your first draft to find out if you have actually done what you set out to do. As a review, you will check how close you have to come to achieving your original intention and where and how far you have fallen short of it. You are therefore concerned with:

- what you left out
- what you have included that you do not need
- whether you can make this draft achieve your goals

Remember that revision is a ‘thinking process’ that occurs throughout the writing process. It means looking at your writing with a ‘fresh eye’ i.e. looking at your writing in ways that will make you make more effective choices. As you write, new ideas emerge prompting you to revise what you have planned or have just written. Sometimes, new ideas will encourage you to begin an entirely new draft with a different focus or approach. Remember that revision occurs throughout the writing process.

3) **Refining**

Once you have settled on the major concepts you wish to include in your first draft and the way you would organise them, you can shift your attention to the next level. Look at your examples, illustrations and evidence. Do these support the main ideas? Do the sub-sections follow up each other logically? Do your examples really exemplify and explain? This is a good time to look for gaps in your writing. Is there anything missing? Now is the time to add explanations and details without having to rewrite the whole draft.

4) **Editing**

Editing is a careful reading of the draft to ensure that everything is the way you wanted it to be and there are no mistakes that may later regret. Editing will be easier if you know how to go about it and what to look for. Let’s concentrate on what you should look for.

i) **Looking at Paragraphs:** This is the time we ask the following questions:

- Is the paragraphing logical and visually appropriate?
- Is there a topic sentence which states the main idea of the paragraph?
- Are the sentences related to each other?

By this time you have probably stopped adding new material. You are now trying to make your writing concise and clear, sentence by sentence.

ii) **Sentences:** You need to read your text sentence by sentence. Are the sentences related to each other? Are the tenses correct? Is the pronoun referencing correct? Are there any dangling modifiers?

iii) **Vocabulary:** It is a good idea to focus at this stage on the words that you used. Do the words mean what you want them to mean? Will your readers understand what you wish to state? Does your vocabulary have a vast range? For example do you use words precisely and is there variation in your word choice. Example:

Precise words: gaze, glance, stare, glare, and peep

Variation: car.... Maruti Zen.....Vehicle....

As well as also.... what is more....

- iv) **Format:** The headings should be consistent throughout the draft. That is, all main headings should have the same typography, spacing and placing. All sub-heading should also be alike.
- v) **Indentation** should be consistent throughout the draft.
- vi) **Visual Aids:** Take a close look at all the visual aids including: graphs, charts, tables and drawings. See that they are at the appropriate places in the text. Be sure each visual aid has a title that explains what it is.

5) Proofreading

Proofreading is more than re-reading. It is a careful word by word or line by line review of your first draft to make sure that everything is as it should be. We give you some tips and techniques to make your proofreading sessions more effective.

- i) When you proofread, you need to **concentrate**. This means getting rid of distraction and potential interruptions.
- ii) Don't rely entirely on spelling or grammar checkers on the computer. These programs work with a limited number of rules, so they cannot identify every error.
- iii) Read slowly and read every word.
- iv) Check the punctuation.
- v) Pay attention to capitalisation, missing or extra commas, colons and semi-colons used incorrectly.
- vi) If you are using numbers check them. We often make a mistake by omitting or adding a zero.
- vii) Finally get somebody else to proofread it once because after a few readings we become blind to our errors.

12.6 GRAMMAR: GERUNDS

Read the sentences given below from the Unit:

- 1) Writing is commonly seen as a three way process, pre-writing, writing and re-writing.
- 2) There are many myths about the skill of writing.

The underlined words are called gerunds.

Gerunds are the –ing form of a noun. They can be the subject or object in a sentence.

In sentence 1 the gerund *writing* is used as the subject as it comes before the verb *be* (is).

In sentence 2, *writing* is a gerund used as an object of the verb *be* (are).

Gerunds are always used after certain verbs. The most common of these verbs are given in the table.

avoid	can't stand	dislike/like	suggest
can't bear	don't mind	rise	keep on
can't help	avoid	enjoy	prefer
postpone	practice	finish	love/hate

Some verbs can be used with either a gerund or an infinitive without any change of meaning.

begin	continue	start	love
hate	like	intend	need

Tarun continued **working** late into the night.

Tarun continued **to work** late into the night.

I intend **going** on a long vacation

I intend **to go** on a long vacation.

Gerunds are also used after prepositions.

difficulty in	worry about	insist on	believe in
keen on	capable of	succeed in	amount of
bored with	apologize for	look forward to	serious about

I had a lot of difficulty **in finding** my way here.

She insisted **on paying** for the book.

We look forward **to meeting** you again.

Wasim is capable **of making** the presentation.

Self Check Exercise

Note: i) Write your answers at the space given below the questions.

ii) Check your answers with the answers given at the end of this Unit.

9) Complete these sentences using the gerund form of the verbs given in the box.

wonder	work	fly	read
resign	steal	service	walk
warn	deal		

- i) There is nothing wrong with the car. It just needs
- ii) Do you remember an article in the newspaper on corporate responsibility?
- iii) You're spending so much money on books! I can't help where you get all that money.
- iv) I will never forget into my office on my first day at work in the Heritage Library.

- v) Mr. Ramakrishanan couldn't get the next job easily and soon regretted from the job.
 - vi) The Heritage Library displays a 'No Smoking'.
 - vii) We have stopped..... with those books sellers as they don't provide the books on time.
 - viii) I like with my new librarian as he gives me a lot of space to grow professionally.
 - ix) He was afraid of, so he always took the train.
 - x) He strongly denied the data, although the evidence pointed otherwise.
- 10) Write about six things you love or hate doing. Make use of the -ing form of the verb. One is done for you.
- i) I love reading my email first thing in the morning.
 - ii)
 - iii)
 - iv)
 - v)
 - vi)

12.7 SUMMARY

In this Unit, we have introduced you to the techniques of good writing. We have discussed in some detail the methods of writing i.e. writing a thesis statement, elaborating on it and writing effective introductions and conclusions. We have also introduced you to the various discourse types: expository, descriptive, narrative and argumentative. Finally, we have taken you through the process of writing drafts, refining them, editing and finally proofreading them. We hope you find the unit useful and interesting.

12.8 ANSWER TO SELF CHECK EXERCISE

- 1) Completed sentences:
- i) There is nothing wrong with the car. It just needs **servicing**.
 - ii) Do you remember **reading** an article in the newspaper on corporate responsibility?
 - iii) You're spending so much money on books! I can't help **wondering** where you get all that money.
 - iv) I will never forget **walking** into my office on my first day at work in the Heritage Library.
 - v) Mr. Ramakrishanan couldn't get the next job easily and soon regretted **resigning** from the job.
 - vi) The Heritage Library displays a **warning**: 'No Smoking'.

- vii) We have stopped **dealing** with those books sellers as they don't provide the books on time.
- viii) I like **working** with my new librarian as he gives me a lot of space to grow professionally.
- ix) He was afraid of **flying**, so he always took the train.
- x) He strongly denied **stealing** the data, although the evidence pointed otherwise.

12.9 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

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