**Paragraph Structure, Topic Sentences and Transitions**

**Post-Class Activities**

These post-class activities have been designed to give you further practice in spotting paragraphs with a good structure, that feature appropriate topic sentences, and which are bound together by effective transition words and phrases.

**Question 1 (5 marks)**

Below are five paragraphs that all feature **one different** basic error. These errors relate to paragraph structure and/or the logical development of ideas in a piece of writing. You must match the main problem to the paragraph in which it is present.

**Paragraph 1:** An adult red squirrel weighs approximately 300 g, whereas the much heavier eastern grey squirrel weighs nearer 600 g when mature. Red squirrels are also much smaller in terms of length, measuring approximately 20 cm as opposed to the 30 cm that is typical of a grey squirrel. Grey squirrels tend to be more competitive and bully red squirrels away from suitable habitats when the two species co-exist because of their greater size.

**Paragraph 2:** Competition tends to be more intense between individuals of the same species than between members of different species. The main reason for this is that members of the same species have more similar resource requirements, whereas different species typically evolve to exploit slightly different resources. For example, finches on the Galapagos Islands have evolved different beak sizes so as to make use of a variety of different seed sizes as food resources. Although different bird species will eat more than one type of seed, and thus compete with each other, each one has evolved to specialize in eating one seed type. Thus, when that particular size of seed is very scarce, competition will be higher between members of the same species. Evolution of beak sizes takes a considerable amount of time and occurs constantly over thousands of generations. Natural variation in the beak sizes of individuals leads to certain birds being more competitive than others. Over time, these birds are more likely to pass on their genes to the next generation, which in turn means it is more likely that birds with similar beak sizes will populate each species.

**Paragraph 3:** Children born from the same parents can have very different physical characteristics, such as eye and hair colour, height, and muscle definition. Similarly, fish that hatch from eggs produced and fertilized by the same breeding pair will differ in the shape of their fins and the patterns on their scales. Dogs, too, despite being part of the same litter, will have different body shapes and sizes.

**Paragraph 4:** It can be argued that statistical tests of data should only be used to provide support for certain hypotheses if they are simple enough to be understood by the person that designed the initial experiment. Tests that compare differences in averages seen in different treatment groups are straightforward enough but others, such as Principal Components Analyses, are very complex. Many published journal articles rely on very complicated statistical tests to garner support for the conclusions drawn by the author(s).

**Paragraph 5:** If you ask someone which animals they like least, this person will probably provide a list of non-pet species that they come into contact with on a regular basis. For example, rats are one of the most disliked animals on the planet, but I argue this is just because they are successful and so numerous that their habits bring them into material conflict with people, and not because there is anything inherently dislikeable about them. For example, rats have conquered a wide range of habitats and regularly damage buildings where people live as they make their own homes in limited space. They can also carry agents of disease that affect people, and they have an unwarranted reputation for being dirty animals as a result. Yet they are actually very clean, intelligent and friendly; these attributes are usually present in other animals that people describe as being among their favourites (such as monkeys). Also, cats are very popular animals but they are typically known as pets. In comparison to rats, monkeys are considerably more dangerous to be around, also carry agents of disease, and can be destructive due to their size. However, because they do not co-exist with people in many societies, these potential conflicts are overlooked when people assess how well liked they are.

**Problem A:** This paragraph is lacking a topic sentence (and transition).

**Problem B:** This paragraph includes information that is unrelated to the topic.

**Problem C:** Paragraph begins with very specific information before turning more general.

**Problem D:** This paragraph addresses more than one main point (and has two topic sentences).

**Problem E:** No evidence is given to support the claim made in the topic sentence.

**Question 2 (5 marks)**

Study the five paragraphs from Question 1 again. You have just matched the problems with the paragraphs. Now you must alter the paragraphs to remove the different problem affecting each one. **To save time, simply cut and paste the original paragraphs into your answer before making the alterations to each one.**

As a hint, you will need to make **one** of the following five **'Alterations'** to each paragraph (**and make sure you say which of these you have done to each paragraph, e.g. Paragraph 1 = Alteration B**):

**Alteration A:** Divide the text into separate paragraphs.

**Alteration B:** Add some evidence (you can make it up for this activity, rather than having to research the topic).

**Alteration C:** Swap the order of the sentences around.

**Alteration D:** Add a topic sentence and a transition word/phrase.

**Alteration E:** Remove unnecessary and unrelated information.

**Questions 3, 4 and 5 (3 marks each, 9 marks total)**

For each of the following topics, choose the suitable topic sentence and **match** the reasons that make the others unsuitable to the unsuitable topic sentences. In all cases, when choosing your suitable topic sentence, imagine that you are just beginning to write an essay on the topic.

**Question 3 (3 marks)**

**Topic 1: Antibiotic resistance in bacteria.**

**Topic Sentence 1:** One of the main causes of bacteria developing resistance to antibiotics is the over-prescription of drugs.

**Topic Sentence 2:** Bacteria can develop resistance to specific antibiotics for a variety of reasons.

**Topic Sentence 3:** In less than 20 years the percentage of *S. pneumoniae* strains that developed resistance to Penicillin-based drugs rose from 4% to 33%.

**Option A:** Information is too specific for a topic sentence.

**Option B:** The focus is too narrow for the information that will follow about this topic.

**Option C:** Suitable topic sentence.

**Question 4 (3 marks)**

**Topic 2: Plagiarism in science**

**Topic Sentence 1:** Many people believe that plagiarism in science is a simple case of quoting someone else’s published work and passing it off as their own.

**Topic Sentence 2:** What does – and does not – constitute plagiarism in science is a multi-faceted issue that many scholars will debate and debate and still disagree about.

**Topic Sentence 3:** Plagiarism in science is a complex topic and includes many different types of academic fraud.

**Option A:** Too difficult to interpret.

**Option B:** Suitable topic sentence.

**Option C:** Too narrow in focus for the information that should follow about this topic.

**Question 5 (3 marks)**

**Topic 3: Catchy headlines in science articles.**

**Topic Sentence 1:** A recent study suggested members of the general public would be 36% more likely to read a science article if the headline was catchy and non-specific.

**Topic Sentence 2:** Do you think that scientists should write in a more engaging style if it would result in more people reading their articles?

**Topic Sentence 3:** When polling a total of 1135 New York citizens, it was discovered that these people would be 36% more likely to read a science article if the headline was written in a more catchy, accessible style than is typical for such articles.

**Option A:** Suitable topic sentence.

**Option B:** Information is too specific for a topic sentence.

**Option C:** Suitable topic sentence, but there is a catchier, more attention-grabbing option.

**Questions 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 (1 mark each, 5 marks total)**

In this complete set of questions (questions 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10), you must consider the transition words/phrases in the paragraph below (**the transition word to focus on for each question is underlined and bolded**). For each transition, you must **agree (or disagree)** as to whether it is effective.

**Question 6 (1 mark)**

*The global population is estimated to have doubled in the last 50 years, which has placed an extra strain on the planet’s natural resources and led to governments adopting greener policies and investing in innovative energy technologies.***Moreover,***renewable energy sources, such as solar and tidal power have been used to power appliances and homes in parts of Europe.*As a result,*schools in these regions have developed workshops to educate their pupils about the importance of saving energy from an early age.*Thus,*it is hoped kids will learn not to leave lights on when they are not using them,*but *instead they will know to instinctively switch them off.*Nevertheless, *purchasing energy saving light bulbs can help reduce losses even more.*

**Question 7 (1 mark)**

*The global population is estimated to have doubled in the last 50 years, which has placed an extra strain on the planet’s natural resources and led to governments adopting greener policies and investing in innovative energy technologies. Moreover, renewable energy sources, such as solar and tidal power have been used to power appliances and homes in parts of Europe.***As a result,***schools in these regions have developed workshops to educate their pupils about the importance of saving energy from an early age.*Thus,*it is hoped kids will learn not to leave lights on when they are not using them,*but *instead they will know to instinctively switch them off.*Nevertheless, *purchasing energy saving light bulbs can help reduce losses even more.*

**Question 8 (1 mark)**

*The global population is estimated to have doubled in the last 50 years, which has placed an extra strain on the planet’s natural resources and led to governments adopting greener policies and investing in innovative energy technologies. Moreover, renewable energy sources, such as solar and tidal power have been used to power appliances and homes in parts of Europe.*As a result,*schools in these regions have developed workshops to educate their pupils about the importance of saving energy from an early age.***Thus,***it is hoped kids will learn not to leave lights on when they are not using them,*but *instead they will know to instinctively switch them off.*Nevertheless, *purchasing energy saving light bulbs can help reduce losses even more.*

**Question 9 (1 mark)**

*The global population is estimated to have doubled in the last 50 years, which has placed an extra strain on the planet’s natural resources and led to governments adopting greener policies and investing in innovative energy technologies. Moreover, renewable energy sources, such as solar and tidal power have been used to power appliances and homes in parts of Europe.*As a result,*schools in these regions have developed workshops to educate their pupils about the importance of saving energy from an early age.*Thus,*it is hoped kids will learn not to leave lights on when they are not using them,***but** *instead they will know to instinctively switch them off.*Nevertheless, *purchasing energy saving light bulbs can help reduce losses even more.*

**Question 10 (1 mark)**

*The global population is estimated to have doubled in the last 50 years, which has placed an extra strain on the planet’s natural resources and led to governments adopting greener policies and investing in innovative energy technologies. Moreover, renewable energy sources, such as solar and tidal power have been used to power appliances and homes in parts of Europe.*As a result,*schools in these regions have developed workshops to educate their pupils about the importance of saving energy from an early age.*Thus,*it is hoped kids will learn not to leave lights on when they are not using them,*but *instead they will know to instinctively switch them off.***Nevertheless,** *purchasing energy saving light bulbs can help reduce losses even more.*

**Question 11 (5 marks)**

In this question you must correctly match the suitable transition words/phrases to the blank spaces in the paragraph below (each transition must be matched to the specific number, **in bold**, that corresponds to a specific blank in the text).

*The global population is estimated to have doubled in the last 50 years, which has placed an extra strain on the planet’s natural resources and led to governments adopting greener policies and investing in innovative energy technologies.***1 ,***renewable energy sources, such as solar and tidal power have been used to power appliances and homes in parts of Europe.***2** ,*schools in these regions have developed workshops to educate their pupils about the importance of saving energy from an early age.* **3**,*it is hoped kids will learn not to leave lights on when they are not using them,***4** *instead they will know to instinctively switch them off.***5**, *purchasing energy saving light bulbs can help reduce losses even more.*

Match to:

**Option A:** In addition/also

**Option B:** Yet

**Option C:** In addition/also

**Option D:** As a result

**Option E:** For example

**Question 12 (5 marks)**

Fill in the gaps [numbered] in the paragraph below with transition words/phrases that make each sentence flow into the next one and aid a smooth development of the argument.

*Because phobias are illogical it is hard to reason with people that are scared of spiders, heights, or needles. [1] it can help to discuss things in great detail with counsellors or hypnotherapists as this can enable patients to better understand how or why the fear first originated, while giving them the opportunity to develop a long-term plan to beat it. [2], facing the respective fear head-on has often proved to be the most efficient way of permanently curing it; [3] conquering something on your own is extremely empowering, this is often the prescribed advice of friends and family members who have beaten their own phobias in the past. Forcing someone to do something they do not want to do is often the worst option, [4] such a tactic can be successful in certain circumstances, [5] if the patient with the phobia has a real desire to conquer it with the head-on approach.*

**Question 13 (6 marks)**

Combine all the skills you have learned to write a very well structured paragraph. To get you in the habit of editing your work to improve it, revisit the paragraph you wrote for the pre-class activities (Question 8/Activity 5) to complete this task.

You should have made a copy of this paragraph when you completed the pre-class activities, so simply copy and paste it here. Your task in this exercise is to improve this piece of writing by editing it. You **should add more detail and/or change some of the wording of what you have already written to improve it**, but you must ensure the final piece still has **six different sentences**.

Your aim is to improve your work by (**1**) editing the content of the writing, (**2**) using more effective transitions to make it flow more smoothly from sentence to sentence, and (**3**) improving the order in which you present pieces of information.

**Note: If you did not make a copy of your original paragraph, you should write a new one (about a science subject that interests you) to attempt this question. It should be 100-150 words in length and feature 6 sentences.  Please note, however, that to obtain maximum possible credit, you must copy and paste your original paragraph before editing it so that you can show how your skills have improved.**