

Basics

In sentences, we often give reasons to support our points. The reasons give more information. Compare the two sentences below:

They are building a new Town Hall.
They are building a new Town Hall because the old one is unsafe.

We can do the same thing in paragraphs. The writer makes a point in the topic sentence – usually the first sentence of each paragraph. Other sentences can then give reasons, as in this example:

I believe we need to have more science lessons in our schools. One reason is that it will give students more choice. But the main reason is that we need more scientists, and if we don't teach science in schools, people are not going to study it at university.

The academic context

In academic writing, you have to support your points or arguments with appropriate material. A big part of this is using reasons to support ideas, opinions and statements.

Key features

We usually use link words and phrases to introduce reasons.

Linking sentences

To link sentences, the link word/phrase usually joins two simple sentences into one complex sentence. Some link words/phrases which can be used in this way include:

- *because (of) / as / since*
- *for the simple reason that*
- *as a result of / thanks to / due to / owing to*

The reason can come after the main point, or it can begin the sentence:

They are ideal for the job because they have more experience.
Because they have more experience, they are ideal for the job.

Linking paragraphs

At paragraph level, the link word/phrase usually starts a new sentence:

- *This is because (of) ... / Thanks to ... / Due to ... / Owing to ...*
- *One/Another/The (main) reason (for this) is ...*
- *Research has shown that ... / Statistics/Studies indicate that ...*

Challenges / difficulties

You need to select good explanations to support your points, and it can be hard to think of them. There is a danger that you will include unimportant reasons. It's also worth considering how you order your reasons. You could start with the most important reason or the least important – either is valid – but you need to make it clear in your writing.

How can I develop this skill?

Planning helps you choose the most relevant points and supporting sentences. Before you write, make a paragraph plan. Note down the main points and supporting reasons you plan to use. This will make sure you don't leave anything out or go off topic.

Learning outcome

By supporting your points with good reasons, you will make a good impression on the reader. Your writing will stay on topic, and your argument will be easy to follow.

Theory to practice

Imagine you have written the main points below. Try to write at least one reason to support each point. Use words and phrases from the Key features section.

| | | |
|---|-------------------|---|
| 1 | Main point | School students should have the chance to learn practical skills. |
| | Reason(s) | |
| 2 | Main point | All companies should offer their staff the opportunity to work from home. |
| | Reason(s) | |
| 3 | Main point | We need to stop using fossil fuels as soon as possible. |
| | Reason(s) | |
| 4 | Main point | Too much screen time is harmful for everyone. |
| | Reason(s) | |
| 5 | Main point | We should encourage young people to take a year off before university. |
| | Reason(s) | |

Ways to get more practice

Look at the way writers support their main points. The best writing contains good reasons. Get into the habit of thinking of reasons as you think of your main points. Then, each time you do a piece of academic writing, plan your main points and supporting reasons before you start.