

Intra-paragraph Organization for ESL Writers

In “The Five Principles of Readability” handout, we saw how the given-new method improves the readability of sentences and paragraphs. Academic writing also becomes more readable when the writer uses the T-R-I method for sentence organization. **T-R-I** stands for topic, restriction, illustration.

Topic sentences establish the general idea of the paragraph.

Restrictive sentences limit the scope of the topic.

Illustrative sentences provide examples of the topic

Note how **T-R-I** functions in the following paragraph:

The time a person spends preparing for a project will never go wasted. What will be wasted is the time people spend correcting mistakes in a poorly-planned project. In her book, *Success Step-by-Step*, efficiency expert Caroline Jefferson says, “The old adage is true: most people who fail to plan plan to fail.” Poorly-planned projects leave people wondering how they should proceed, so they spend their time addressing small details instead of working on big issues. At the end of the project, they have no time, lots of stress, and, considering the hours they’ve spent on the project, little to show for it.

Topic Sentence

Restrictive Sentence

Illustrations

Notice the reciprocal relationship between the topic sentence and the rest of the paragraph. The first sentence forecasts the content of the proceeding sentences and the proceeding sentences develop the content of the topic sentence.

The example above uses a **T-R-I-I-I** model, but many paragraphs in academic or technical writing also use the **T-R-I-I-R** model. The following example has two restrictive sentences:

Illustrations

Never before had the world known a thinker like Sir Issac Newton. He prompted a revolution in mathematics that still influences the way scientists think about empirical world. In 1687, he published *Principia Mathematica*, which explains his laws of motion and his law of universal gravitation. As he developed these laws, he also developed calculus, a math system that is still taught to mathematics and science students. Although Newton’s ideas were similar to those of other mathematicians of his era, his writing is more elegant, so he is usually credited as a revolutionary genius.

Topic Sentence

Restrictive Sentences

Examples for Practice

Number the following sentences to create T-R-I paragraphs.

___ 1) The results showed that cohesive and easy-to-finish concrete can be produced using ternary binders.

___ 2) We produced 16 different concretes (including one control, cement-only mixture) in the laboratory and tested for fresh properties, compressive and flexural strength.

___ 3) The ANOVA statistical analysis of the results indicate that paste and fly ash content are the only variables, which significantly influence 7-day flexural strength.

___ 4) However, the increase in comprehensive strength of all ternary mixtures was significantly higher than that of control mixture, which clearly indicates the strength contribution from pozzolanic reaction.

___ 5) The influence of variables tested was less pronounced in the case of comprehensive strength data.

___ 1) As a first step, a full quadratic (or linear) model is assumed, and significance tests (t-tests) are performed on each model coefficient [7, 8, 9].

___ 2) We analyzed the data with factorial design methodology (including CCD method).

___ 3) Since a complete set of data needed for such analysis was not available at the time this paper was prepared, the presented analysis is limited to visual interpretation of observed trends and statistical analysis of variance (ANOVA).

___ 4) The method consists of iterative development of the model that best fits the measured responses.

___ 5) Although this analysis considered the effects of independent variables (namely fly ash, slag and paste content), it did not include the effects of interactions between variables on the measured responses.

After re-ordering the sentences, look at the relationship between Given Information and New Information. Has that relationship been improved? Should the sentences be changed to improve these transitions?