

Task support: Structuring texts – making texts shorter

How to make texts shorter and clearer

In English there are several grammatical devices to link sentences. Use them to make your text shorter and clearer.

Subordinate clause

He left the house. Soon afterwards he got into his car.

Soon after he had left the house, he got into his car.

Present participle

He left the house. He was waving good-bye to his wife.

He left the house ***waving*** good-bye to his wife.

Past participle used as an adjective

She got lost in the crowd. She asked for help.

Lost in the crowd, she asked for help.

Past participle clause

He left the house. Soon afterwards he drove away.

Having left the house, he soon drove away.

To-infinitive

He went to the supermarket. He did so as he wanted to buy some milk.

He went to the supermarket ***to buy*** some milk.

Task support: Structuring texts using linking words

How to use linking words to connect ideas

When adding to your argument

additionally	zusätzlich
..., too	auch
in addition	außerdem
moreover	des Weiteren
besides	ferner, überdies
furthermore	außerdem, ferner

When emphasizing a statement

naturally	natürlich
evidently	offensichtlich
obviously	offensichtlich, klar
undoubtedly	zweifelloos
actually	tatsächlich
in fact	genaugenommen

When making comparisons

similarly	ähnlich
in the same way	ähnlich
likewise	ebenso, gleichfalls
equally	gleichermaßen
compared to/with	Im Vergleich zu
not only ... but also	nicht nur ..., sondern auch
... just like	... wie auch

When showing differences

although	obwohl
in contrast to	im Gegensatz zu
neither ... nor	weder ... noch
despite	trotz
nevertheless	nichtsdestotrotz
however	jedoch, dennoch
on the one hand	einerseits
on the other hand	andererseits

When giving reasons

because of	wegen
due to	infolge dessen/wegen
in this way	auf diese Weise
for this purpose	deswegen
for this reason	aus diesem Grund
so	deshalb, daher

When explaining results

accordingly	demgemäß
as a consequence	als Folge (dessen)
as a result	folglich
consequently	folglich
therefore	deshalb
thus	somit, deshalb

When giving examples

for example / e.g.	zum Beispiel / z.B.
... such as	wie
including	einschließlich
namely	nämlich
..., i.e.	..., d.h.

When showing a sequence (of events)

first/firstly	erstens
second/secondly	zweitens
another (point)	ein weiterer (Punkt)
finally	schließlich, zuletzt
next	als nächstes

When drawing conclusions / summing up

all in all	alles in allem
in brief	kurz gesagt
as a result	als Ergebnis
in other words	mit anderen Worten
therefore	daher
to conclude	abschließend
to sum up	zusammenfassend

Tips

Do not begin a sentence with *also, or, and, but*.
If you start a sentence with a linking word, use a comma, e.g.

*All in all, the youth hostel had very high standards.
Nevertheless, the students complained about ...;
Moreover, if we want to use our mobiles, we....*

Task support: Dealing with vocabulary problems when writing

How to find the right words when writing a text

When writing in English you will often be searching for words to express your ideas. Here are some tips that might help you:

1. Use words with a more general meaning (**generalize**).

e.g. *pineapple* → *fruit*
boots → *shoes*

2. Explain what you want to say (**paraphrase**).

e.g. *scarf* → *something warm to put around your neck*
neighbour → *the man who lives in the house next door*

3. **Look up the word** in a bilingual dictionary.

Bilingual dictionaries online:

<http://www.collinsdictionary.com/>

<http://de.pons.com/>

<http://dict.leo.org/>

<http://www.dict.cc/>

Make sure you have found the correct form for your sentence,
e.g. verb (v), noun (n), adjective (adj.), adverb (adv.).

Check the usage of a word by looking at sentences you find online.

Dictionaries with words in context:

<http://www.linguee.de/>

<http://www.wordreference.com>

4. **Avoid repetitions.** Use other words with a similar meaning (**synonyms**).

e.g. *nice* → *likeable, agreeable, pleasant, friendly*

Use a dictionary with synonyms to find these words.

Thesaurus:

<http://www.thesaurus.com/>

<http://www.collinsdictionary.com/english-thesaurus>

<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/thesaurus>

Task support: Dealing with vocabulary problems when reading a text

How to deal with words you do not know when reading a text

When answering an e-mail or writing a book review, you need to **understand the text** you are referring to. **Concentrate on what you can understand**. Usually you do not need to understand every single word. Often **it is enough to understand the overall idea or the most important points**.

Tips

Here are some tips that may help you to deal with difficult texts.

1. **Do not translate** the text into your mother tongue.
2. Try to **guess the meaning** of words you do not know.
 - a) Which meaning fits the **context**?
e.g. *He opened the door and came into the room.*
→ *What do you do with a door before you come into a room?*
 - b) What do **the parts of the word** mean?
e.g. *sidewalk*: *side* = Seite, *walk* = gehen → *sidewalk* = (die Seite zum Gehen) Fußweg/ Bürgersteig
 - c) Which **similar words** do you know **in English**?
e.g. *beautiful* (adjective) → *beauty* (noun)
 - d) Which similar words do you know **in German**?
e.g. *programme* (English) → *Programm* (German)
 - e) Which similar words do you know **in another language**?
e.g. *vacation* (English) → *vacaciones* (Spanish) / *vacances* (French)
3. **Only use a dictionary if you cannot guess** the meaning of a word from its context.
You can use a monolingual or a bilingual dictionary.

You can find these dictionaries online:

Bilingual dictionaries

<http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english-german>

<http://de.pons.com/>

<http://dict.leo.org/>

<http://www.dict.cc/>

Monolingual dictionaries

<http://www.merriam-webster.com/>

<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/>

Bilingual dictionaries with words in context

<http://www.linguee.de/>

<http://www.wordreference.com>

Task Support: Dealing with texts

How to deal with a text you have to write about

Before reading

- Read the **task** so that you know what you are asked to do.
- Look at the **heading(s)/picture(s)** and think about what the text could deal with.
- Think about what **text type** it is and what you expect from this kind of text and where you can find the information relevant to the task.

While reading

- Focus on **aspects important for completing the task**.
- First **skim** the text.
- Then carefully **read** the passages which are relevant to the task.
- From the context or words you know, try to **infer the meaning of words** you do not know.
- **Mark important key words** and **take notes** on ideas relevant to the task.

Task support: Dealing with mediation texts

How to deal with a German text in English

- First read the **task** so that you know which **aspects** you have to focus on.
- When you read the text, focus on **aspects important for completing the task**.
- **Mark the key words** that are important for completing the task.
- Make **English notes in the margin**.
- Afterwards **structure the information relevant to the task** in a mind map or table.
- If you do not know a word, use **umbrella words, synonyms, antonyms** or **paraphrases**.
- Carefully think about what your readers may not know and note down **explanations**.

Task support: Describing a person

How to describe a person in detail

1. Describe the outward appearance / looks.

- age → *baby / toddler / young person/girl/boy / middle-aged/old person/man/woman*
- size → *tall / short / stocky*
- built → *thin / slim / skinny / slender / muscular / broad/narrow shoulders*
large / overweight / obese / well-built
- eyes → *round / narrow / blue / grey / green / brown*
- nose → *straight / hooked*
- hair → *blonde / brown / long / short / curly / straight /*
redhead / braids / pony tail / bald
- clothes → *trousers /skirt / dress / T-shirt / blouse / pullover / uniform*
- shoes → *flip flops / slippers / high heels / loafers / boots / sneakers*
- jewelry → *necklace / earrings / ring / braces / tattoo / piercing*
- overall → *beautiful / attractive / handsome (only for men) / smart /*
ordinary / plain / scruffy

2. Describe the facial expression / posture.

- facial expression → *smiling / happy /crying / sad / angry / desperate / surprised / shocked*
- posture → *hunched over / very straight / upright*

3. Describe the personality.

- positive traits → *nice / kind / friendly / funny / open-minded / self-confident / helpful / clever /*
brave / hard-working / polite / lucky / popular
- negative traits → *aggressive/ mean / insecure / jealous / selfish / stupid / cowardly /*
lazy / rude / unlucky / unpopular

Task Support: Describing a place

How to describe a place in detail

EXAMPLE: *Describe your school for your exchange partner.*

1. Name the type of school:

- elementary/primary school / secondary/high school
- comprehensive/grammar/vocational school
- public/private school

2. Say where your school is situated:

- part of the city: city centre / suburb / green surroundings
- near a train station / bus stop
- address (name of the city, house number and street)

3. Describe the building:

- type of building: old / ancient / charming / new / modern
- special features: no/large/many windows / long hall ways / solar panels
- rooms: classroom / science / chemistry / computer / arts room / gym / assembly / school hall / canteen / cafeteria / recreation room/area / library / entrance hall / recording studio

4. Describe the yard:

- asphalt schoolyard / green schoolyard / playground
- sports facilities / soccer field / beach volleyball field

5. Describe the classrooms:

- furniture: tables for one/two students / comfortable chairs / blackboard / whiteboard / cupboard / shelves
- decorations: posters / pictures / clock / curtains / green/yellow walls
- text books / dictionaries
- technical devices: computers / notebooks / smart board

6. Explain what is special about your school:

- all-day school / lessons / breaks
- extracurricular activities / school clubs / excursions
- ecological projects
- bilingual classes / exchange programmes
- school magazine
- challenging / boring classes / positive learning environment
- students are good at / interested in

TASK SUPPORT: Argumentation – Discussing a problem, giving arguments, giving evidence and coming to a conclusion

How to structure an article/blog discussing a problem

<u>Parts of the text</u>	→	<u>Contents</u>
headline	→	eye-catching phrase with topic
introduction	→	interesting beginning with opinion on the topic
main part	→	arguments with explanations and evidence
conclusion	→	brief summary of your opinion and most important arguments

How to give an argument

An argument is a **reason for your opinion**. You use it to **convince** others of **your position**. Base your arguments on your knowledge or on your research of the topic. When **discussing a problem**, you give **arguments for** your position, but also show that **arguments against** it are wrong.

Examples of opinions supported with an argument

1. *Students need smartphones: They have to have access to the internet all the time.*
2. *Teenagers need a Facebook account to be part of their peer group: They need it to keep in touch.*

How to give evidence

If you argue for or against a position, you have to give evidence to **prove your arguments are right**. Giving evidence means giving **examples** or **facts** or **figures**. You can refer to your **personal experiences** or to **what you have learnt/read** about a topic.

Examples

1. *For example, if you want to look up a word in class, you can use online dictionaries.*
2. *If my friend has not been in school today, I can send him the homework we have got for tomorrow.*
3. *The statistics show that in Germany, the number of Facebook users has been rising steadily.*
(<http://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/70189/umfrage/nutzer-von-facebook-in-deutschland-seit-2009/>)

How to come to a conclusion

At the end of your text you have to come to a conclusion. You **sum up your position** and the **most important arguments**. However, do not copy the words you have used at the beginning of your text to express your opinion.

In your conclusion you may also **make suggestions** on what to do about a certain problem or **call** your readers **to action**.

Example

To put it in a nutshell, students need smartphones to get along well in many situations. They are necessary for communication and research at home and in class. Thus if schools do not allow their students to use smartphones when dealing with school work, they should change their rules.

Task support: Using rhetorical devices

How to use rhetorical devices to illustrate your points

When writing a speech, an article or a story, use rhetorical devices to **make** your **ideas clearer**. They can also help to **convince** your readers of what you want to say. The following table gives you **examples** you might want to use. At the bottom you can **add** your **own examples**.

Which device? (Technical term)	How do I use it? (Example)	Why do I use it? (Possible effect on the reader)
use of "we"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>We usually feel very unhappy when ...</i> <i>We must act to change this situation.</i> 	makes clear that you and your readers have similar problems/ opinions
facts and figures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>85 % of our students own a smartphone.</i> <i>Almost half of all German teenagers ...</i> 	makes clear that you know what you are talking about
quote / reference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>In the New York Times Magazine I have read an interesting interview ...</i> <i>The President made very clear that ...</i> 	shows that you have read a lot about your topic / know a lot about it
rhetorical question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Have you ever heard of ...?</i> <i>Wouldn't you also say that this is unfair?</i> 	invites readers to think about a question, suggests a possible answer
enumeration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>girls, boys, their parents and teachers</i> <i>water, wind and solar energy</i> 	a way to give several examples, helps to imagine a situation
contrast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>On the one hand many people believe ..., on the other hand they ...</i> <i>Some people believe ..., but I think ...</i> 	makes differences clearer, helps to understand a problem
repetition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>You know that ... You also know that ...</i> <i>I've heard that ... I've also heard that ...</i> 	makes points clearer / shows importance of something
alliteration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>beautiful book</i> <i>windy weather</i> 	sounds good, invites readers to pay attention to these words
imagery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>as bright as gold / like the sun</i> <i>all the world's a stage</i> 	illustrates your ideas / creates a vivid picture

Task support: Proofreading

How to proofread a text

Here are some ideas which might help you to improve your text.

- Take a **short break** before you proofread.
- Read your text **several times** focusing on different aspects.
- Read **backward** from right to left to check the spelling.
- Read your text **aloud**.
- Use a sheet of paper to **cover the text below the line you are reading**.

Use your **personal checklist with mistakes you commonly make** (My list of "favourite" mistakes) when proofreading your text.

<p>Focus on CONTENT</p>	<p>Check whether</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - all ideas are important for the task - there are no repetitions - your message is clear.
<p>Focus on TEXT STRUCTURE</p>	<p>Check whether</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the structure fits the text type - the ideas are in a logical order - the text has clear paragraphs - you have used linking words.
<p>Focus on VOCABULARY & SPELLING</p>	<p>Use a dictionary to check the way words are used or spelled. (Your computer cannot deal with misspellings like <i>dessert</i> for <i>desert</i>.)</p> <p>Check whether</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - you have used no short forms in a formal text (e.g. <i>won't</i> = <i>will not</i>) - your vocabulary is not too simple/repetitive (www.thesaurus.com) - sentences / names of people/places/languages begin with capital letters.
<p>Focus on GRAMMAR</p>	<p>Use the rules in your English book to check forms you are not sure about.</p> <p>Check whether</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the sentences are complete - the subjects and verbs fit together (3rd person "s") - the tenses and irregular verbs are correct - the relative pronouns are correct (<i>which</i> = thing, <i>who</i> = person) - the prepositions are correct - it is clear who/what the pronouns refer to.