

giving every individual paragraph a heading will be counterproductive. The text will become too busy and it will be more difficult to see the broad lines. How can you bring about the right number of subdivisions?

1 Do not create more than three levels
A division into chapters and sections is necessary to make the text accessible, but introducing too many levels (5.3.4.1.2) will be counterproductive. The reader will lose track of the whole. This is why you should limit yourself to three levels in the table of contents (1.1.1). Within each section you can create a further subdivision by other means: for instance, by using unnumbered headings or simply paragraphing the text.

2 A subdivision should consist of at least two parts
Do not introduce a subdivision of one part to the table of contents. A subdivision implies a division into two or more parts. The same holds for subdivision into chapters and sections. Make either more sections or do not divide at all. Introductions, conclusions and summaries should never be part of a subsection. If they are (and if there is only a single subsection of content), it can be viewed as a disguised single subdivision.

INCORRECT SUBDIVISION

Division into one part
3 Tank cleaning
3.1 The Verbeek method
4 Economic feasibility

Disguised division into one part
3 Tank cleaning
3.1 Introduction
3.2 The Verbeek method
3.3 Summary

CORRECT SUBDIVISION

No subdivisions
3 Tank cleaning according to the Verbeek method
4 Economic feasibility

Subdivision in more parts
3 Tank cleaning
3.1 The Verbeek method
3.2 The Bristol method

5.2.4 Give chapters and sections clear titles

The table of contents will only give the reader a good idea of the content of the report if the titles of the chapters and sections are sufficiently clear. Take note of the following four instructions.

1 Make titles informative
Only use informative titles in business texts. On occasion you may have used "Other matters" or "General" as a section title. This seems a convenient solution for the things that you cannot include elsewhere in the report. But it is not. Such titles say nothing about the content and give the reader nothing to go on. Vague titles like these only become useful if you add informative elements: for example, "Other aspects of the trade in stocks and bonds."

You will aid readers with little time if you include the main conclusion of a chapter in that chapter's title. In the case of advisory reports in particular, it

is useful if the table of contents serves as a miniature summary. For you as a writer, the advantage is that you can be certain that the main message of the report will escape nobody, even if readers only open it for the first time during a meeting.

TITLE TOO VAGUE

2 Problems
3 Quality investigation
5 Conclusion

TITLE MORE INFORMATIVE

2 Problems associated with the re-use of milk bottles
3 Body scans by customs are below par
5 Conclusion: increasing the user-friendliness of the GP information system can save lives

2 Indicate the connection between chapters and sections

Vague titles not only have the disadvantage that it is difficult to predict the content of the section but they also obscure the connection between chapters and sections. Compare the following examples:

CONNECTION UNCLEAR

2 Measures
2.1 Material
2.2 Ramps

CONNECTION CLEAR

2 Speed reduction measures for Marconi Square
2.1 Replacing asphalt by cobble stones
2.2 Construction of speed ramps

In the first example, the reader has to really use his imagination to get an impression of what the chapter is about. The titles say nothing about the connection between the sections and the readers will be unable to determine whether the chapter is relevant to them or not. The second example leaves far less to the imagination and there is less chance of wrong expectations about the text.

Avoid chapter titles that consist only of a repeat of the section titles. The chapter title should indicate what binds the sections together, and consequently, why they fall within the same chapter.

CONNECTION UNCLEAR

4 Locks and bridges
4.1 Locks
4.2 Bridges

CONNECTION CLEAR

4 Water work activities
4.1 Renovation of locks
4.2 Widening of bridges

Finally, do **not** give a section the same title as that **used** for the whole chapter. It **could suggest** that the information in **the section is the same** as that in the **whole chapter** and might stop readers **from looking at the other** sections as well.

CONNECTION UNCLEAR

- 5 Computerizing administration
- 5.1 Administration: computerization
- 5.2 Systems management

CONNECTION CLEAR

- 5 Computerizing administration
- 5.1 Installing hardware and software
- 5.2 Systems management

3 Titles should be short and to the point

The main thing is that readers are able to obtain sufficient information from the titles: the comprehensibility of titles is more important than their length. It is an art to find titles that are at the same time informative and to the point.

Complicated sentences are not suitable as titles:

- 5.3 A description of the objections to the planned construction of the A4 Mid-Delfland lodged by pressure groups including the environment movement and citizens

Ideally, a title should not take up more than one line. The previous title can easily be made shorter by only mentioning the essential points:

- 5.3 Protests by pressure groups against the A4 Mid-Delfland

If you want to shorten it even more, a title in telegram style is also possible:

- 5.3 Pressure groups protest against A4 Mid-Delfland

Stylistically, the **last version** may be less elegant, but it has hardly lost any of its clarity. **However**, things can be carried too far:

- 5.3 Protests pressure groups A4 Mid-Delfland

This title can be read in a number of ways: it might refer to protests against the pressure groups themselves.

4 Formulate titles uniformly

Give chapters that are similar in content similarly worded titles. Even though dissimilar titles will not directly lead to lack of clarity, it is preferable to replace them by consistent and similar titles. For example:

NON-UNIFORM TITLES

- 5 Evaluation test Global Positioning System (GPS)
- 5.1 Positive aspects
- 5.2 What are the drawbacks of GPS?
- 5.3 Consideration leads to advice to implement GPS

UNIFORM TITLES

- 5 Evaluation test Global Positioning System (GPS)
- 5.1 Advantages of GPS: field workers satisfied
- 5.2 Disadvantages of GPS: sensitive to interference
- 5.3 Conclusion: install GPS

5.3 Division into paragraphs

Some writers automatically press the enter key at the end of each sentence. A text that originates in this way is like an IKEA chest to self-assemble: all the parts are there but they have to be put together in the right way. Unlike IKEA customers, the readers of the report have not asked for a semi-finished article but a problem-free and ready-to-use text.

Other writers suffer from an unwarranted fear of the enter key. Pages without lines of white are not conducive to further reading, however. You could compare it to a cupboard with locked doors: you cannot see at a glance what is in it. A locked cupboard may arouse curiosity about its contents but a business text without a division in paragraphs seldom has that effect on readers.

Making a good division into paragraphs that show at a glance what subjects are treated is essential to an effective text.

RULES OF THUMB FOR A GOOD DIVISION INTO PARAGRAPHS

- 1 Make a list of questions for each section and use this as a basis for the division into paragraphs.
- 2 Do not deal with more than one subject per paragraph.
- 3 Start each paragraph with an announcing or stating topic sentence.
- 4 Group your paragraphs if they are connected.

These general rules will be dealt with in the following subsections.

5.3.1 Make a list of questions for each section

You can derive your division into paragraphs from a list of questions that you have drawn up before writing each section. The provisional table of contents in the work schedule is a good point to start from. Put not only

the questions but also the answers (in catchword form) into your list of questions. This will make the transition from a question list to written out paragraphs a lot easier.

We will illustrate this with an example that will come up again in the next sections. Assume you have to write a report on noise pollution in the office where you work. You write a section about the noise coming into the office from outside, such as traffic noise. The list of questions looks like this:

- 1 What external sources of noise can cause noise pollution in office buildings?
 - traffic noise: cars, railways, planes
 - industrial noise
 - 2 What regulations are there regarding the amount of external noise that is permitted in an office?
 - Law on Sound Pollution
 - Building regulations
- [...]

5.3.2 Do not treat more than one subject per paragraph

If you use the question list as a basis you can be sure that you will not be dealing with more than one question (and therefore not more than one subject) per paragraph. For example:

CONNECTION QUESTION LIST – PARAGRAPH

Question

- 1 What external sources of noise can cause noise pollution in office buildings?
 - traffic noise: cars, railways, planes
 - industrial noise

Paragraph

The two main sources of external noise that cause noise pollution in offices are traffic noise and industrial noise. Traffic noise can be caused by road, rail or air traffic. Industrial noise is not only caused by industrial installations but also by road works or building projects.

Some questions may elicit such an elaborate answer that one paragraph is not sufficient. If a paragraph threatens to become too long (more than a third of a page, say) you should check whether more than one aspect of a subject has been discussed. If this is the case, you should divide the bigger paragraph into a number of smaller ones that each deal with an aspect of the topic. You can make clear that they are connected in terms of content by placing them in a paragraph group.

The length of a paragraph is also dependent on the layout of the text. Paragraphs in a text in columns should be shorter than when the text covers the whole width of the page.

PARAGRAPHS THAT ARE TOO LONG: MORE THAN ONE SUBJECT

At what stages of the product cycle is *Design for recycling* needed?

Environmental protection starts at the design table: attention to the way a product is manufactured is at least as important as making the product suitable for recycling. What can be achieved in the production phase? The production process should be such that there is little waste (scrap) remaining, or, if this is not possible, that the waste can be re-used. The recycling phase should start at the end of the product's life cycle. This is only possible if it is clear what materials have been used in the various parts: this should be marked on those parts. Finally, there is the waste phase. At the moment it is only possible to recover raw materials from bulk waste to a limited extent. There is some doubt about whether it is feasible to develop processes to recover all kinds of materials from waste. Design for recycling is, as yet, hardly ever applied in industry. The German manufacturer BMW...

PARAGRAPHS THAT ARE TOO SHORT: EACH SENTENCE IS A SEPARATE PARAGRAPH

At what stages of the product cycle is *Design for recycling* needed?

Environmental protection starts at the design table: attention to the way a product is manufactured is at least as important as making the product suitable for recycling. What can be achieved in the production phase?

The production process should be such that there is little waste (scrap) remaining, or, if this is not possible, that the waste can be re-used.

At the end of the life cycle of the product the recycling phase can start.

That is only possible if it is clear what materials have been used in the various parts; this should be marked on those parts.

Finally there is the waste phase.

At the moment it is only possible to recover raw materials from bulk waste to a limited extent.

There is some doubt about whether it is feasible to develop processes to recover all kinds of materials from waste.

Design for recycling is, as yet, hardly ever applied in industry. The German manufacturer BMW...

GOOD DIVISION OF PARAGRAPHS: PARAGRAPH GROUPING

At what stages of the product cycle is *Design for recycling* needed?

The design phase: environmental protection starts at the design table. Attention to the way a product is manufactured is at least as important as making the product suitable for recycling.

The production phase: what can be achieved in this phase? The production process should be such that there is little waste (scrap) remaining, or, if this is not possible, that the waste can be re-used.

The recycling phase: occurs at the end of the life cycle of the product. This is only possible if it is clear what materials have been used in the various parts. This should be marked on those parts.

The waste phase: the final phase. At the moment, it is only possible to recover raw materials from bulk waste to a limited extent. There is some doubt about whether it is feasible to develop processes to recover all kinds of materials from waste.

Design for recycling is, as yet, hardly ever applied in industry. The German manufacturer BMW...

5.3.3 Start each paragraph with a topic sentence

Readers who want to know quickly what a section deals with read the first sentences of each paragraph. Writers should therefore make sure that the main information of a paragraph is contained or indicated in the first sentence. Such an informative first sentence is called a *topic sentence*. In the next example, the topic sentence is in the middle of the paragraph, making both global and selective reading difficult.

TOPIC SENTENCE HIDDEN

Cause 1 — topic sentence (effect) — cause 2 — cause 3

A risk analyst has to base his findings on experiences from the past that might prove unreliable in future situations. As such, exact estimates are impossible to make, all the more because the technique is still so untested in many situations (in the case of nuclear reactors, for instance) that risk estimates in general can be regarded as tentative. In order to keep his study manageable, the risk analyst also has to disregard many contingencies that might lead to accidents. However, he can never be sure that his judgement in this regard is correct.

We can identify two types of topic sentences. Firstly, the *anticipatory topic sentence* that indicates what the paragraph will deal with:

ANTICIPATORY TOPIC SENTENCE

Topic sentence first

There are three reasons why a risk analyst cannot make accurate estimates. Firstly, he has to base his findings on experiences from the past that might prove unreliable in future situations. As well as this, the technique is still so untested in many situations (in the case of nuclear reactors, for instance) that risk estimates in general can be regarded as tentative. Finally, in order to keep his study manageable, the risk analyst also has to disregard many contingencies that might lead to accidents. However, he can never be sure that his judgement in this regard is correct.

The second type is the *postulating topic sentence* that contains the main information of the paragraph, with the rest of the paragraph consisting of an explanation or support for the statement:

POSTULATING TOPIC SENTENCE

Topic sentence first

Rooms that reverberate a lot have so-called "hard acoustics." In rooms like these, the reverberation time is a too long because of insufficient noise absorption. Sparsely furnished rooms with hard floor, wall and ceiling coverings (plaster, tiles, stone, brick, hard floor surfaces) create particularly hard acoustics.

The question list can form a good basis for producing topic sentences:

RELATIONSHIP QUESTION LIST - TOPIC SENTENCES

Questions list

1 What external sources of noise can cause noise pollution?

- traffic noise: cars, railways, planes
- industrial noise

2 What regulations are there regarding the amount of external noise that is permitted in an office?

- Law on Sound Pollution
- Building regulations

Postulating topic sentences

- 1 Traffic and industrial noise can be external causes of noise pollution in offices.
- 2 Regulations regarding the amount of external noise that is permitted inside an office are laid down in the Law on Noise Pollution and in building regulations.

Anticipatory topic sentences

- 1 There are two types of noise generators that can cause noise pollution in offices.
- 2 The following regulations deal with the amount of external noise that is permitted in an office.

You can also indicate the connection of a topic sentence with previous paragraphs by using *signalling formulations*. A few of these are listed in the next table.

TABLE 5.1 Signalling formulations indicating a connection between paragraphs

Connection	Signalling formulation	Example topic sentence
enumerative	firstly, secondly, lastly; first, then, subsequently	The second step in the production process is pouring the moulds.
contrary	on the one hand, on the other hand; as opposed to; nevertheless	Despite these problems, we have succeeded in developing a good simulation programme.
elucidating	because, for, as a consequence, since; this explains/means; as such	Consequently flotation techniques are unsuitable for this location.
explanatory	for example, for instance, such as, by way of explanation, characteristic of	The next example illustrates this well.

5.3.4 The paragraph group

Automatically inserting a line of white after each paragraph may mean that you are overlooking an important way of structuring: the paragraph group. This is a group of paragraphs that are closely related in terms of content and are separated by a new line, with or without indentation. Lines of white are used to separate paragraph groups. Please note: English writers hardly ever use this approach; normally they only use indented paragraphs.

If you have made a question list for the writing of a chapter and you need more than one paragraph to answer a question, then the obvious solution is to create a paragraph group. A paragraph group starts with a question that covers the whole of the paragraph group. You could also use a heading for this.

Say you are writing a report on recycling techniques and are working on a chapter about design for recycling (DFR). One of the questions on your question list is:

Which stages in the cycle of a product requires DFR?

- production stage: as little waste/scrap as possible
- product stage: recycling only possible if the compounds/materials used in the product are clearly recognizable
- waste stage: is separation from the waste products (as opposed to separate collection) still possible and feasible?

Possible ways of dealing with these points:

- The shortest way is answering the question in *one single paragraph*. The assumption here is that your readers know what is entailed by the different stages that you describe, maybe because they have been described in an earlier report.
- If you expect the readers to want more information about what happens at each stage, you could also deal with each question in *separate paragraphs*. This would mean four paragraphs: one in which you raise the question (in other words a paragraph that is at the core of the paragraphs) and one for each of the three stages.
- You could also choose to *group your paragraphs*. In this case, each stage will be dealt with in a separate paragraph group: in the first paragraph you could explain what the stage involves and in the next one the place of DFR at that stage. In this variant it is advisable to use an unnumbered heading to make sure the readers do not lose sight of the broad outline.

A division into paragraph groups makes it easier for the readers to read globally or selectively, more so than if only lines of white are used. Because the writer has already grouped the information the reader will get a picture of the broad outline more quickly and be able to find information more quickly too since large sections of text can be skipped.

We will illustrate this using two longer examples, one in which there is a line of white after each paragraph and one in which the paragraphs that belong together are grouped.

Read the topic sentences in the next example only. Look for those paragraphs that deal with ways of combating noise pollution.

TEXT WITHOUT PARAGRAPH GROUPING

Design for recycling

Two sources of external noise can cause noise pollution inside an office building: traffic noise and industrial noise. It is not possible to generalize about which source produces the most pollution because this will depend on the individual situation of the office building. This will become clear if we look at the two sources of noise more closely.

Firstly, road traffic can cause traffic noise. An office building that is situated beside a freeway will experience a lot of inconvenience, as will offices that are close to shopping malls, especially from trucks delivering supplies to the shops. Secondly, a railway line can cause noise pollution, although this is regarded as being less of an inconvenience than road traffic noise. Finally, aeroplane noise: for offices that are located near flight paths of aeroplanes this is often the worst type of noise pollution.

Industrial noise is not just noise created by industrial installations: it includes noise caused by building activities or road works. These are, however, only temporary, whereas industrial installations provide permanent inconvenience.

What measures can be taken to reduce the amount of noise that penetrates into the office? We shall deal with wall insulation, glass insulation and the insulation of movable parts such as doors and windows, in that order.

Walls can be insulated by filling the hollow wall with insulation material. Another way is to attach noise-reducing materials to the inside wall. The most suitable materials for this are listed in Appendix 2.

Glass constitutes a weak point in the facade. Double glass does not always provide better noise insulation than single glass. This has to do with the frequency of the pane: double glass sometimes conveys the vibrations from outside more strongly than single glass. For sound insulation, the thickness of the individual panes of glass is important. Only use glass that is more than 8mm thick or use special soundproofing glass.

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In the above example you have to peruse every paragraph before you find the right one. If paragraphs are grouped, things immediately become a lot easier and the text is less time-consuming to read. You only have to read the topic sentence of paragraph groups (always after a line of white) to find what you are looking for:

TEXT WITH PARAGRAPH GROUPS

Design for recycling

Two sources of external noise cause noise pollution inside an office building: traffic noise and industrial noise. It is not possible to generalize about which source produces the most pollution because this will depend on the individual situation of the office building. This will become clear if we look at the two sources of noise more closely.

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5.3.5 Enumerate your points

Enumeration is a very useful and orderly way of presenting information. It creates a break in the text which instantly attracts the reader's attention. But you will only achieve this if the enumerations are not too extensive.

When should you use enumeration for your points?

- When the information is important for the reader (for example, in order to elucidate steps within a process, or to list the main conclusions).

- To make the text more accessible (for example, by announcing the contents of a section, or to sum up elements that will be dealt with in greater detail).

For well-organized enumerations, observe the following:

1 Limit the number of items in an enumeration

It is difficult to get an overview of an enumeration that consists of more than about six elements. The reader will be unable to remember the steps of the procedure described below:

ENUMERATION WITH TOO MANY ELEMENTS

Standard procedure for indicative environmental research.

- Determine the date for carrying out the field work and the number of days needed for the field work.
- Collect further information about the terrain to be investigated if there is insufficient knowledge of that terrain.
- Determine where the drillings and the gauge tubes have to be located, when the ground water samples have to be taken and where the collected samples are to be examined.
- Fill in an "order environment fieldwork" form, make a site drawing and copy a map of the area for the field squad so that they know what has to be done and where.
- Have the field squad explore the terrain to see whether problems are likely to occur during the execution of the task. If necessary, make adjustments to the task in consultation.
- Perform the fieldwork: do the drillings, note down observations about the samples taken, place the gauging tubes, fit in the drilling locations and pump the gauging tubes dry.
- Take groundwater samples (usually a week later), measuring the pH, electrical conductivity and temperature at the same time. The samples should be sent to the laboratory for analysis.
- The drawing office draws soil profiles on the basis of observations.
- Draw a conclusion about the type and extent of pollution (if any) and provide recommendations about whether to treat the pollution and/or remove its source.

2 Grouped parts within an enumeration

If the enumeration threatens to become too long it is worthwhile trying to look for the related parts of the enumeration. This will give the readers more of an overview of the enumeration and hence they will be able to remember the information better.

WELL-ORGANIZED ENUMERATION: PARTS GROUPED

Standard procedure for indicative environmental research.

- 1 *Preparing the field work*
 - Determine the date for carrying out the field work and the number of days needed for the field work.
 - Collect further information about the terrain to be investigated if there is insufficient knowledge of that terrain.
 - Determine where the drillings and the gauge tubes have to be located, when the ground water samples have to be taken and where the collected samples are to be examined.
 - Fill in an "order environment fieldwork" form, make a site drawing and copy a map of the area for the field squad so that they know what has to be done and where.
- 2 *Execution of the field work*
 - Have the field squad explore the terrain to see whether problems are likely to occur during the execution of the task. If necessary, make adjustments to the task in consultation.
 - Perform the fieldwork: do the drillings, note down observations about the samples taken, place the gauging tubes, fit in the drilling locations and pump the gauging tubes dry.
 - Take groundwater samples (usually a week later), measuring the pH, electrical conductivity and temperature at the same time. The samples should be sent to the laboratory for analysis.
- 3 *Analysis of the observations*
 - The drawing office draws soil profiles on the basis of observations.
 - Draw a conclusion about the type and extent of pollution (if any) and provide recommendations about whether to treat the pollution and/or remove its source.

3 *Formulate the parts of an enumeration uniformly*

To maintain an overview of an enumeration, the points should be formulated and presented uniformly. Be consistent: for instance, your points should either all be complete sentences or all incomplete ones; all your sentences should follow the same sentence structure.

NOT UNIFORM

Relevant topographic details of Bangkok and surroundings:

- There is little difference in elevation in the area.
- Clayey soil.

UNIFORM

Relevant topographic details of Bangkok and surroundings:

- little difference in elevation
- clayey soil

If there is a part-sentence that introduces the enumeration, all of the enumerated parts should be formulated so as to connect grammatically with the sentence.

NOT UNIFORMLY FORMULATED

The General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD) has been assigned the new tasks of:

- gathering information about foreign countries. This task has been added because of the coming into operation of the Law on Intelligence and Security Services.
- It also has a role in the new system of Surveillance and Protection in the Netherlands. This deals with protecting people and institutions in the Netherlands.

PARTS UNIFORMLY FORMULATED

The General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD) has been assigned two new tasks:

- *Gathering information about foreign countries.* This task has been added because of the coming into operation of the Law on Intelligence and Security Services.
- *Protecting people and institutions in the Netherlands.* The AIVD has been assigned this task under the new system of Surveillance and Protection in the Netherlands.