Academic Skills for Higher and Degree Apprenticeships

How to Write Sentences and Paragraphs

Sentences

- Sentences are a basic unit of academic writing, the first word starts with a capital letter and the end of the sentence is indicated by a full stop.
- A common mistake when writing sentences in assignments is to leave out the main verb, so that the sentence is incomplete (sentence fragment). Make sure all of your sentences have a main verb.
- A main verb has an implied subject (such as an I, you, s/he, we, they, or it has a noun for example the bus, the pencil, etc.) and a tense (past, present, future).

Syntax - word order

- Syntax is the technical term for the rules governing the way words in any language are put together into sentences – word order.
- Be careful, a small change in word order can completely change the meaning of the sentence. Word order is crucial for clarity, accuracy and meaning.

Paragraph

- A paragraph is a collection of sentences that develop a single point or idea.
- All sentences in a paragraph should be related and develop the point you want to make in that particular paragraph. A typical paragraph consists of: a topic sentence (opening sentence), research (referenced), analysis and conclusions drawn in relation to the point or idea.
- Paragraphs are interlinked steps in academic writing, the content of the last sentence in a paragraph should link with the opening sentence of the next paragraph.
Common Mistakes

- Leaving sentences unfinished with words such as: to, with, or for, at the end. This reads as though some information has been left off the end.
- Writing long, wordy sentences. Be clear and concise, avoid using words that serve no purpose within the sentence because they say nothing or merely duplicate other words already being used.
- Run-on sentences e.g. The driver brought the train to a halt at the station, however the train was late so the guard immediately blew the whistle. This is made up of two sentences and should have a full stop after ‘the station’.
- Using colloquial English (normal everyday slang), you should use formal language unless told otherwise
- Using text speak e.g. txt spk. You must spell write out words fully

For information see: *How to: Grammar, Punctuation and Correct Spellings*