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1. Adverbial Phrase

An adverbial phrase is a group of words that functions as an adverb. You can use it to elaborate on your formal letter.

Adverbial phrase of time

An adverbial phrase of time states when something happens or how often. For example:

- I'll do it in a minute.
- After the game, the king and pawn go into the same box. (Italian Proverb)
- Do not wait for the last judgment. It takes place every day. (Albert Camus)

Adverbial Phrase of place

An adverbial phrase of place states where something happens. For example:

- I used to work in a fire-hydrant factory. You couldn't park anywhere near the place. (Steven Wright)
- Opera is when a guy gets stabbed in the back and, instead of bleeding, he sings. (Ed Gardner)

Adverbial Phrase of reason

An adverbial phrase of reason states why something is done. For example:

- He went to the island to find gold.
- He plays up to impress his class mates.
- We tell ourselves stories in order to live. (Author Joan Didion)

The format of Adverbial Phrase

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Here are three common formats for adverbial phrases:

- **Prepositional phrase.** A prepositional phrase is headed by a preposition. (e.g., "in," "on," "near," "by," "with"). For example:
 - He was standing in the corner.
 - She is winning without trying.
- **Infinitive phrase.** An infinitive phrase is headed by an infinitive verb. (e.g., "to play," "to jump"). For example:
 - She went to Florence to paint.
 - Fill in this form to join our club.
- **An adverb with an intensifier.** An adverb with an intensifier. (e.g., "very," "extremely," "really") is also an adverbial phrase. For example:
 - He answered you very quickly.
 - She danced extremely beautifully.

There are, of course, other formats. For example:

- We arrived a day later than expected.
- I paid him every week.

If you have a group of words that is functioning as an adverb and that doesn't feature a subject and a verb (meaning it's not an adverbial clause), then you're looking at an adverbial phrase.

Why Should I Care about Adverbial Phrases?

Here are four good reasons to think more carefully about adverbial phrases.

(Reason 1) Be careful not to create a misplaced modifier.

A misplaced modifier is a word (or group of words) that does not link clearly to what it is intended to modify. A misplaced modifier makes the meaning of a sentence ambiguous or wrong. Look at this example:

- Jack, coax the monkey with the banana. ❌

(The shaded text is a misplaced modifier. It is meant to be an adverbial phrase modifying the verb "coax." It is supposed to tell Jack **how** to coax the monkey. However, the shaded text could feasibly be an adjective phrase describing the monkey, telling Jack which monkey to coax.)

- Jack, use the banana to coax the monkey. ✔️

(Often, rewording is best. This corrected example does not feature an adverbial phrase.)

Here is an example from the film "Hot Fuzz":

- "He was a hero at his last police station. He once shot a robber with a Kalashnikov."

"Great, where did he get that?"

"No, the robber had the Kalashnikov."

(The shaded text is a misplaced modifier. It is meant to be an adverbial phrase modifying the verb "shot." However, it was taken to be an adjective phrase describing the robber.)

(Reason 2) Use commas correctly with your adverbial clauses.

When your adverbial phrase (or clause for that matter) is at the front of your sentence, it is known as a "fronted adverbial." Fronted adverbials are offset with a comma. For example:

- At 4 o'clock, open the gates. ✔️
- In the middle of New York, temperatures reached 106 degrees Fahrenheit. ✔️

When your adverbial clause is at the back, the tendency is to omit the comma. For example:

- Open the gates at 4 o'clock. ✔️
- Temperatures reached 106 degrees Fahrenheit in the middle of New York. ✔️

Here are examples with adverbial phrases at both ends:

- In July 1936, temperatures reached 106 degrees Fahrenheit in the middle of New York. ✔️
- In the middle of New York, temperatures reached 106 degrees Fahrenheit In July 1936. ✔️

(Reason 3) Save two words by writing "to" instead of "in order to."

To reduce your word count, you can usually replace "in order to" with "to" without any loss of meaning.

- The mountaineers spent two months with the air-sea rescue team in order to gain experience.

Even though it adds to your word count, you should not delete "in order" every time. Using "in order to" makes it clear that the text that follows is the reason for performing the action. (It's like using "so as to.") Using just "to" runs the risk of creating a misplaced modifier. Look at this example:

- Jack designed a device in order to find underground water.

(With "in order" deleted, we're now unsure whether Jack designed an underwater-water finder (i.e., "to find underground water" is an adjective describing "device") or whether he designed a device that can be used to detect underground water as per his intention (i.e., "to find underground water" is an adverb modifying "designed"). With "in order to," that ambiguity disappears. It can only be the latter. Get it?)

There's another advantage to using "in order to." It puts a little more emphasis on the reason for the action. So, save two words if you need to, but be careful not to create a misplaced modifier.

(Reason 4) Delete your intensifier, unless you really need it.

When writing formally, the level of intensity should be achieved through word choice (e.g., by using strong adjectives instead of intensifiers). Using intensifiers is widely considered as lazy writing.

- She was very angry.

(This is considered as lazy writing.)

- She was livid.

(There is no need for an intensifier with a strong adjective like "livid.")

This quotation captures why you should use intensifiers sparingly.

1. If everything is very important, then nothing is important. (Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney)

2. Reading article (Home based learning can be an opportunity to rethink parenting)

Identify the adverbial phrases (**reason, place and time**) and submit to your EL teacher.

Parents can reclaim their roles as the main purveyor and steward of our child's education and well-being, instead of outsourcing it to schools and teachers as many have done, says Cherie Tseng. We saw the writing on the wall, or we should have, when several weeks into DORSCON Orange, centre-based tuition and enrichment classes had to be suspended in order to reduce intermingling of students from different schools. (reason)

This wave of precautionary measures was met with relief and praise from some and slight panic from others as enrichment centres had to make a quick transition from classroom-based lessons to online ones: Music lessons over FaceTime, ballet coaching over Zoom. Despite these efforts, the situation didn't bate and the Ministry of Education announced that they were going to institute home-based learning (HBL) for all students. In the weekend that followed, (Time) all hell would break loose. Crazy queues formed all over the place. A mad scramble to stock up on assessment books at Popular Bookstore to board game buying sprees at Toys R Us. Over at Challenger stores nationwide (Place), tablets became the new toilet paper and laptops the new rice.

That first day (Time), social media was rife with photos of children at laptops and tablets; small, eager, earnest faces, each working on a liturgy of tasks vis-a-vis their Student Learning Space (SLS) and on pre-assigned worksheets. Invariably, along with the pat-on-the-back posts, came the rants on how HBL was too disruptive, too exhausting for parents who have their own work to do. Some even mused that teachers must be having a relaxing day off now that parents have taken over for the day. As the national COVID-19 numbers continued to rise, parents and educators clamoured for the government to do more, to close the schools. And so, that came to pass.

TIME TO CHANGE OUR APPROACH TO PARENTING

We who were envious of friends who got to work from home because they seemingly get the best of both worlds, are starting to realise that the grass is always greener on the other side. Or is it, perhaps, that modern Singapore parenting makes it easy for us to simply outsource our children to school, to teachers, to the next better enrichment lesson, or even our helpers. We assuage our parenting guilt of needing our own space and personal time by convincing ourselves that our children are duly entertained and engaged (Reason).

The thing is this, the grass is greener on the side that one tends to and waters regularly. For all the crazy curveballs that COVID-19 has thrown at us, perhaps this is the one silver lining: We get to reset the clock. Not just on the ruthless rampage that is this insolent illness, but also on the relentlessness of modern parenting. A psychiatrist friend shared a case he had of a school-going boy on the verge of a breakdown who tearfully lamented that his parents get weekends off but he has to spend much of his weekends shuttling between tuition centres with a tight 30-minute window to wolf down his lunch in the car (Time).

A survey done by the Straits Times and Nexus Link showed that seven out of 10 families enrolled their children in tuition classes, with nearly half starting at pre-school levels. A separate Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) study showed that Singaporean students experienced much higher levels of anxiety over their school grades and tests compared to their international peers.

In a country where 70 per cent of all students go for supplementary lessons, where the tuition industry is worth S\$1.4Billion and the pressure to excel in sports and school is high; we have always lamented about the need to re-evaluate this pressure-cooker environment on students. Now is the chance - but how?

COVID-19 says, well, hold my beer.

Still, this difficult season unwittingly gives us an opportunity to rethink how we want and should parent. **It makes us re-engage our children, re-jig our lives to better suit our version of work-life balance (Reason).**

RETHINKING OUR ROLES AS PARENTS

It forces us to unpack our over-scheduled lives and re-examine the walls between work life and family life. It means that parents get to reclaim their role as the main purveyor and steward of our child's education and well-being, instead of outsourcing it to schools and teachers as many of us have done. I don't mean that you now need to be able to decipher how many marbles Ali has left after giving two-thirds of his original stash to Samuel and dropping another 15 per cent down the drain. It means that your children get to take lessons with and from you in the school of life; and you get to craft the syllabus. In this special term, the usual rules don't apply and the points don't matter.

So, teach them how to cook, that's home economics right there. Show them how you balance the monthly grocery budget — hello maths! Exchange Spotify lists for music lessons. (**Rule of 3/Parallel structure**)

And after "school time", let them be bored, let them play without feeling the need to police, govern or facilitate learning through play. If it helps you feel better, there's strong research that shows that boredom is good for kids, it **builds creativity and allows the brain to fallow new ideas (Reason)**. A piece in Psychology Today encourages what they call a Boredomutiny, a rewriting of the rulebook where bored children should not be seen as problems that need fixing, but considered a starting point to **encourage unstructured exploration, contemplation and daydreaming that often spurs creativity (Reason)**. The same is true for adults.

And, really, if you are a WFH person and thus have to be around your HBL children, be grateful. My neighbour is a doctor and she leaves her four children daily to battle on the frontline, leaving her helper the primary caregiver and chief supervisor in this time of HBL. Add to that, the anxiety and worry she carries almost perpetually of bringing the virus home to her family. Other parents are home because they have lost their jobs or face reduced volumes of work. It's hard to keep a brave face when the uncertainty bubbles from within and without.

So, the quick and dirty take-home is this: stop whining, stop nit-picking (especially at the teachers) and suck it up. There are ways for you to still be productive at work from home while your kids are on HBL. It is a rare time where all the pithy life values we espouse is visible up close and personal: adaptability, flexibility, empathy, resilience, gratitude, the importance of being part of the solution and the power of vulnerability. Our children learn what they live.

You see, we are enrolled in school with our children — welcome to a new term in the school of hard knocks, where we lead by example.

3. Elaborating on the situation

In situational writing, you have to come up with your own details to elaborate on the situation given in the question. For example, the activities of a school club or the reasons for recommending a student for a post. When expanding the details, you would make a stronger point if you provide specific details instead of using generalized ideas.

For example, when stating the benefits of the setting up of a rock-climbing club, don't generalize and say

'Students would grow to be better individuals.' Instead, be more specific" 'Through the training for rock climbing, students would grow in discipline and perseverance and would gain self-esteem as they see themselves succeeding in overcoming the wall.'

Example 1: Propose a new club for your school. Give reasons for your proposal.

After much deliberation, we would like to propose a reading club. It will benefit the students by improving their reading and language skills. Moreover, it brings students together to discuss novels and characters, and provides a meaningful platform for students to interact.

