

Learning from others' mistakes: Will David show up?

Before you plan your paragraph on whether or not David will keep his appointment, read this paragraph by a student from a previous class. Then answer the questions below it.

David will show up for the interview. There are three reasons for that. First, it's his job and responsibility. He wanted this job and he said that he used to have a lot of responsibilities and he likes having them. So this could not be an exception and he will get the job done. Second reason is that he made arrangements with Marsha to meet her at his office at the Goddard Center. And last, he sounded eager and enthusiastic about this responsibility. So all in all, he will keep the appointment and if he's a hardworking person, he will show up for the interview.

1. Does this paragraph have good organization? Is it easy to follow the author's central idea from beginning to end?
2. Does every idea in the paragraph focus on the central idea? Are there any irrelevant ideas?
3. What do you think of the topic sentence?
4. How about support?
5. Does the closing sentence do what a closing sentence is supposed to do?

Possibly one reason for the weak support is that the writer thought (subconsciously, at least), "The reader of my paragraph knows about the WNYN story, so I don't have to tell him any details." Even when you think that the reader knows the details, you should consider presenting the details anyway, because 1) the reader might not think of them if the writer doesn't remind him, or 2) the reader might be thinking about a contradicting detail, or 3) the existence of contradicting details requires discussion. (An example of contradicting details for this paragraph are David's strong sense of responsibility in college and his misdirected sense of responsibility when he set things up at the hospital by himself.) Even if the reader knows the details, he wants to know which details you used to form your opinion, and how these details worked together in the process of forming your opinion. For example, if there are 10 details related to one point, one writer might use 3 of these details to come to form one opinion and another writer might use 5 other details to form an opposite opinion. How you formed your opinion is just as important as your opinion itself.

Relevance

Explanation (support) is useless if the reader is unable to see its relevance to the point that it is intended to support. The link between the point and its support has to be clear to the reader. In many compositions it was difficult for the reader to see how some major supports (reasons that the writer thought David would or would not keep the appointment) were relevant to the main point (he will or won't keep the appointment). For example, "He likes having a lot of responsibility" was used as a reason for thinking that he will not keep the appointment. Ordinarily, a person would think that a person who likes to have a lot of responsibility would want to keep an appointment; in this case, therefore, the reader had to guess how liking a lot of responsibility would prevent a person from keeping an appointment. Never make the reader guess; explain clearly so that the reader can see your intentions easily.

There are two common causes of unclear relevance: 1) the link is not expressed, or 2) the explanation is presented before the point that it is intended to support.

Cause 1. The point-support link is not expressed.

One writer said that David won't keep the appointment because he's ambitious; and then the writer went on to support the idea that David is ambitious, but didn't explain how being ambitious would prevent him from keeping the appointment.

And the writer of this paragraph (below) gave good explanation to one reason for not keeping the appointment—"he isn't used to working with other people"—but did not clearly explain why this reason would prevent David from keeping the appointment with Prof. Daniels.

David will break the appointment for the interview with Professor Daniels. There are two reasons about thinking like this. First reason is that he is not reliable. He was late for the interview with Bob and missed the meeting. In these two behaviors, he lost trust. Also he already knew about the meeting. The fact that he didn't come to the meeting in spite of that shows he doesn't think the promise important. Another

is that **he isn't used to working with other people**. In college, he had to produce shows all by himself. So it's natural that habit works to his work now. And he said the doesn't mind working with other people in his first interview. But he set all thing up for Tuesday program by himself. This is because he feels comfortable when he works alone. That's his habit. Finally Marsh couldn't see David because of his low punctuality and usual habit.

REPAIRED: ...Another reason that he may not show up at the appointment is that he may want to do the interview by himself, without Marsha, because he isn't used to working with other people. He feels more comfortable when he works alone. In college...

Cause 2: Coherence problem: the point was not presented before the explanation.

David has full responsibility and enthusiasm so that he will keep his appointment for the interview with Prof. Daniels. **[Explanation:]** David was chief of the camera crew on campus for nearly two years. And he had to produce shows all by himself. So he had full responsibility for everything. And his position is responsible for the video. And **[Major point:]** he recognizes the point that his role is a necessity in the interview. So he will show up at the interview with Prof. Daniels. **[Explanation:]** David is a new employee. That is, he got the job for the first time. New employee usually has enthusiasm for the job. David stopped in at a hospital to set up a program instead attending the meeting for project in WNYN. And he came up with the story angle without Marsha. This happening prove that he has full enthusiasm for job. This **[Major point:]** enthusiasm will makes him keep his appointment. And David is getting used to working as an assistant. David's full responsibility and enthusiasm makes the special on space exploration in special features succeed.

REPAIRED

David has full responsibility and enthusiasm, so he will keep his appointment for the interview with Prof. Daniels. **[Major point:]** He recognizes the point that his role is a necessity in the interview. **[Explanation:]** David was chief of the camera crew on campus for nearly two years. And he had to produce shows all by himself. So he had full responsibility for everything. And his position is responsible for the video. So he will show up at the interview with Prof. Daniels. [In addition to his sense of responsibility,] **[Major point:]** his enthusiasm will make him keep his appointment. **[Explanation:]** David is a new employee. That is, he got the job for the first time. New employee usually has enthusiasm for the job. David stopped in at a hospital to set up a program instead attending the meeting for project in WNYN. And he came up with the story angle without Marsha. This happening prove that he has full enthusiasm for job. And David is getting used to working as an assistant. David's full responsibility and enthusiasm makes the special on space exploration in special features succeed.

Cause 2: Coherence problem: 1) the first point was not presented before the explanation, and 2) the second point was split by explanation.

He will keep the appointment for the interview in that this interview means a lot to him and he is a independently responsible person. Firstly, **[Explanation for Point 1:]** this interview is the very first assignment he is given after he started working at WNYN. David hasn't had any paid job before working here at WNYN. So he must have been very delighted when he finally got a real job. **[Major point 1:]** Hence, he would work diligently on this first assignment and later ones for the sake of acquiring good reputation and ultimately success at WNYN. At the same time, this interview is a good chance that he can make up for his thoughtless behavior of setting up the program for the hospital special without Marsha's permission. If he shows up for the interview on time, Marsha would probably overlook what he's done last time. Secondly, **[First part of point 2:]** David is a very responsible person. **[Explanation for Point 2:]** He used to have full responsibility as chief of the camera crew in college. Therefore, he knows very well what he is supposed to do on each assignment. **[Second part of point 2:]** In this case, he is responsible for the equipment and he will surely keep in mind that the interview cannot go on without him. The only problem is that he has extremely strong sense of responsibility due to his former leadership position in college. The importance of this interview and his sense of responsibility will lead David to the interview on time.

REPAIRED

David will keep the appointment for the interview because this interview means a lot to him and he is a independently responsible person. Firstly, **[Major point 1:]** he would work diligently on this first assignment and later ones for the sake of acquiring good reputation and ultimately success at WNYN. **[Explanation for Point 1:]** This interview is the very first assignment he is given after he started working at WNYN. David hasn't had any paid job before working here at WNYN. So he must have been very delighted when he finally got a real job. At the same time, this interview is a good chance that he can make up for his thoughtless behavior of setting up the program for the hospital special without Marsha's permission. If he shows up for the interview on time, Marsha would probably overlook what he's done last time. Secondly, **[First part of point 2:]** David is a very responsible person, **[Second part of point 2:]** and in this case he is responsible for the equipment and he will surely keep in mind that the interview cannot go on without him. **[Explanation for Point 2:]** He used to have full responsibility as chief of the camera crew in college. Therefore, he knows very well what he is supposed to do on each assignment. The only problem is that he has extremely strong sense of responsibility due to his former leadership position in college. The importance of this interview and his sense of responsibility will lead David to the interview on time.

Topic and closing sentences

In several of the compositions topic sentences and closing sentences were not as informative as they could be, because they did not present the general nature of the major reasons.

	Unhelpful	Helpful
Topic sentence	David will break the appointment for the interview with Professor Daniels. There are two reasons about thinking like this.	David will keep the appointment for the interview with Professor Daniels because this interview means a lot to him and because he is a responsible person.
Closing sentence	For these reasons, David will not keep the appointment with Prof. Daniels.	The importance of this interview and David's sense of responsibility will lead him to the interview on time.

Weak support

- "David Denton will keep the interview with Daniels according to the fact that there's the promise he made last time and he feels responsible for his work. Above all, he promised that he won't let it happen again when he missed the meeting..." [Which meeting? What did he say? Was what he said convincing?]
- "David was late for the interview with Bob." [In addition, explain that David told Bob that he "usually" tries to be "pretty" punctual, which actually means that he doesn't try very hard to be punctual.]
- "David missed the meeting with Grace." [In addition, tell the reader that this meeting was a responsibility that David had, and that he didn't even tell anyone that he wasn't going to be there.]