A narrative paragraph ‘tells a story’, that is, it tells about a series of events that happened to the narrator. It is usually told in time sequence with a definite beginning, middle and end.

Any student writing a narrative paragraph for the first time must use *transitions*. These special words help the writer develop a logical, unified paragraph. The most common kind of transition used in narrative writing is the time relationship transition.

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| **Time Relationship**  **Transitions** | eventually  first  in the meantime  later  meanwhile  after  afterwards | next  now  once  second  soon  earlier  before | sooner  then  today  until  when  during |

**Using Transitions in Narrative Writing**

**Exercise**

The following narrative paragraph lacks time transitions. Fill in the blanks with the appropriate transitions to give the paragraph coherence. (*glues* the structure together)

Let me tell you the story about a woman named Jyll and a friend of hers called Jack. – The 1.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ thing that happened was that Jyll was running out of fresh water at her cabin. She decided she would have to walk into town to pick up some fresh spring water. 2.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ she left she wanted to contact her neighbour, Jack, to let him know she would be out of the area for the day. 3.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ she left the cabin, she grabbed the old wooden pail. 4.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ she would use it as a signal to Jack that she was absent from the cabin. She tied a rope around the handle of the pail and 5.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ was able to toss the pail up into the air and over the giant arbutus tree next to the cabin.

High up there it could be seen by Jack while he stood on the porch of his cabin down the road. He would know she was away from the cabin. This was a safety measure. Jyll 6.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ went off to town for the spring water not knowing that Jack had gone tumbling down. 7.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ that day, it was discovered what had happened. 8.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Jyll had gone to fetch the pail for water, she hadn’t noticed Jack coming around the bend in the forest path. 9.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the doctor and police were able to reconstruct the scene of the crime. It seems that when Jyll threw the pail up in the tree, it hit Jack’s crown on its way down. 10.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Jack has had his nob patched, but he hasn’t seemed the same fellow. 11.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Jyll has been known to giggle at Jack’s disaster which sometimes gets her in trouble with his mother. 12.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Jack and Jyll still play at being neighbours, but Jack won’t go near the water pail.

**Unity in the Narrative Paragraph**

The order in which the events are presented in the narrative paragraph is very important to the overall unity of a paragraph. If your ideas are not presented in time sequence, then the paragraph will be scrambled. We may like our eggs scrambled, but scrambled ideas create a lack of understanding.

**Exercise**

Try to unscramble the following paragraph by numbering the sentences in the order they should appear.

|  |  |
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|  | Finally I was able to calm down long enough to understand what the man was saying. |
|  | In downtown Calgary it can sometimes seem quite dangerous when the sun goes down. |
|  | This danger became very real to me one summer evening. |
|  | Next he leaned ominously into the car blowing toxic liquor fumes across my face. |
|  | During the rush hour one evening after work, I was driving down Centre Street, and was stopped by the red light across from the York Hotel. |
|  | Before I knew what had happened an old man had grabbed my door handle. |
|  | Later I realised how foolish I had been to drive with the doors unlocked. |
|  | Now I started to panic as his hands fumbled on the car seat because I thought he was grabbing for my purse. |
|  | After this experience, my sense of safety in Calgary was destroyed. |
|  | Then I realized all he wanted was a cigarette, and gingerly I extended the pack to him. |
|  | When he started muttering, I drew back even further against the driver’s door. |
|  | After snarling, "Darn light stuff," he took two smokes and my lighter, and backed out of the car. |