

# UNIT 1 WRITING PARAGRAPHS-1

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## 1.0 OBJECTIVES

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The aim of this unit is to help you in a systematic manner to write good paragraphs. We shall introduce you to the elements that go into the organization of a good paragraph, such as

- i) the topic sentence,
- ii) the development of the topic,
- iii) connection between the sentences, and
- iv) the use of transitional devices.

We shall also set exercises in reading comprehension and the use of the full stop.

After you have completed this unit, you will be able to write well-organized paragraphs of your own.

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## STUDY GUIDE

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To help you understand the paragraphs given as examples, we have provided a glossary at the end of each paragraph, as well as questions on reading comprehension and vocabulary. You should try to answer all these questions, as they will help you understand the paragraphs better.

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## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

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Most pieces of writing require more than one paragraph. Mastering the art of writing a paragraph is essential to success in any form of writing, whether it is a letter, a report, or a newspaper article, since all longer pieces contain a series of related paragraphs. In these longer pieces of writing, paragraphs generally introduce new ideas to develop the central theme. The division into paragraphs also prevents boredom as it provides a physical break on the page.

In Units 1 and 2 we shall offer you some guidance in writing single paragraphs. In Unit 1 we shall discuss the organization of paragraphs and the elements that make a good paragraph. After you have developed your skills in paragraph writing, you will be able to use paragraphs successfully in order to write a longer composition.

## 1.2 THE TOPIC SENTENCE

You already know that any longer piece of writing is divided into a number of paragraphs. Have you ever considered what a paragraph is?

A paragraph is a piece of writing which is unified by a **central, controlling** idea or theme. This idea or theme is called the **topic** of the paragraph. It is sometimes expressed at some place in the paragraph by one sentence, which is usually called the **topic sentence**. This topic sentence may be a statement, a generalization, or a problem. This sentence is most frequently found at the **beginning** of the paragraph, but can sometimes come at the **end** or even in the **middle** of the paragraph. Very often there may not be a topic sentence at all, but it may be implied within the paragraph. However, at this stage, it may be useful for you to develop your paragraphs by writing out your topic sentence.

*Example 1* (Topic sentence at the beginning)

*The vast majority of people, wherever they live and whatever their occupation, come in contact with animals in one way or another and have to deal with them. It is obvious that the hunter has to know the ways of his quarry, that the farmer must be aware of the habits of his farmyard animals and of creatures that damage his crops; that the fisherman must know when and where to find his fish and how to outwit them. Even the modern city dweller meets animals. He may want to ward off the roaches in his kitchen or he may keep a dog or a bird and grow familiar with the way his pet behaves. All over the world, among primitive tribes as well as in modern society, there are those who delight in the observation of animals, and there is a growing awareness of the fact that sharing our world with our fellow creatures is like travelling together — we enjoy being surrounded by other beings who, like ourselves, are deeply absorbed in the adventure of living. There is a growing sense of marvel and also of affinity.*

(from Niko Tinbergen (ed.) 'An infant science' in *Animal Behaviour*, Time-Life Books)

### Glossary

- 'contact** (n.) : the condition of meeting or coming together  
**'quarry** (n.) /'kwɔːri/: an animal or bird which is being hunted  
**out'wit** : win by being cleverer  
**'city dweller** : one who lives in the city  
**'roaches** : informal word for 'cockroaches'  
**ab'sorbed** : interested  
**'marvel** (n.) : wonder  
**af'finity** : close connection

*Notes:* 1 In English words of two or more syllables, at least one syllable stands out from the rest and we say it has greater stress. The mark ' is placed before the syllable that carries the main stress in the word.

2 n. = noun; v. = verb; adj. = adjective.

3 The pronunciation of some of the words is indicated by the use of phonetic symbols between slanted bars / /. The symbols used are the same as in *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, and the form of pronunciation indicated is known as British Received Pronunciation.

Beginning a paragraph with a topic sentence helps both the writer and the reader. As a writer, you will have less difficulty in constructing a unified paragraph because you will relate every sentence to the topic sentence and the central idea it expresses. And your reader will know immediately what the paragraph is about because the opening sentence states the central idea.

**Self-check Exercise 1**

*Reading Comprehension*

Read Example 1 again and answer the following questions :

- 1 What title would you like to give this paragraph?  
.....
- 2 Why does the hunter need to know 'the ways of his quarry' ?  
.....  
.....
- 3 a) Give two examples of how a modern city-dweller comes in contact with animals.  
.....  
.....
- b) Are animals always a source of pleasure for him? Which words tell you that sometimes they are not?  
.....  
.....

**Self-check Exercise 2**

*Vocabulary*

Read Example 1 again and answer the following questions :

- 1 Find two verbs meaning more or less the same as 'take pleasure (in)'.  
.....  
.....
- 2 Find an adjective which is equivalent to 'belonging to the earliest stage of development'.  
.....
- 3 Find equivalents of the nouns  
*wonder*  
.....  
*relationship*  
.....

**Example 2 (Topic sentence at the end)**

In the year 1830 a French official unearthed, in the valley of the Somme, strange implements of flint now recognized as weapons with which the men of the old Stone Age made war. With these modest tools of death, it seems, Neanderthal men from what is now Germany, and Cro-Magnon men from what is now France, fought fifty thousand years ago for the mastery of the continent, and, after a day of lusty battle, left perhaps a score of dead on the field. Twenty years ago modern Germans and modern Frenchmen fought again, in that same valley, for that same prize, with magnificent tools of death that killed ten thousand men in a day. *One art alone has made indisputable progress in history and that is the art of war.*

(Adapted from Will Durant : 'Why Men Fight')

*Glossary*

**un'earthed** : dug up

**'implements** : tools

**flint** : very hard grey stone

**'Stone Age** : the earliest known time in the history of man, when only stone was used for making tools, weapons, etc.

**'modest** : simple

**Ne'anderthal** /ni'ændəθɔ:l/ **man** : a type of early human creature who lived in Europe during the early Stone Age

**Cro-'Magnon man** : prehistoric man, who lived in South-western Europe and used bone and stone implements

**the'continent** : (here) Europe

**'lusty'battle** : energetic fighting

**score** : twenty

**mag'nificent** : grand and powerful

**indi'sputable** (adj.) : which is too certain to be questioned

(The mark, is placed before a syllable that has secondary stress, which is weaker than the main stress.)

Placing the topic sentence at the end or in the middle is a more difficult skill. The advantage in having it at the end is that all the sentences build up to this topic sentence and the conclusion becomes more effective.

**Self-check Exercise 3**

1 a) In the context of Example 2, what are the points of similarity between the events that took place in ancient and modern times? Give two instances.

.....  
.....

b) What are the points of difference? Give two instances.

	<b>Ancient</b>	<b>Modern</b>
i)	.....	.....
ii)	.....	.....

2 a) Was ancient man less violent than modern man?

.....  
.....

b) Why is a modern battle more dangerous?

.....  
.....

3 a) What does the phrase 'for that same prize' refer to?

.....  
.....

b) Give some examples of what you think are 'modest tools of death' and 'magnificent tools of death'.

.....  
.....  
.....

#### Self-check Exercise 4

The topic sentence of the paragraph below is hidden somewhere within the paragraph. Find it and place it in the correct position. After you have completed the exercise, you should check your answer with that given by us at the end of the unit.

#### In Mother's Shadow

During its early weeks, it depends almost completely upon her, and she, in turn, fastens her attentions upon it, although from time to time she will allow the other females to hold and fondle it. Sheltered by its mother, the growing infant gradually widens its contact with the outside world. Though its first week is spent sleeping and nursing, by its second it is already stumbling about and being restrained by a yank of the tail or leg. Nothing could be more important to the development of an infant Indian langur than its relationship with its mother. At four weeks, on unsteady feet, it ventures forth and discovers the world or at least that part of it within a safe three or four feet of its mother.

[Adapted from Eimerl, S. and De Vors, I. (eds.) 'The Monkey's Success in the Trees' in *The Primates*, Time-Life Books.]

#### Glossary

'fastens her at'tentions upon it : fixes her mind on it by watching it or listening to it

'fondle (v.) : stroke lovingly

'nursing : sucking milk from the mother's breast

'stumbling : walking on unsteady feet

re'strained : held back

yank (n.) : a sudden, sharp pull

'infant : a very young creature

'ventures'forth : takes the risk of going forward

.....

.....

.....

.....

#### Self-check Exercise 5

Is there a topic sentence in the following paragraph? Underline it, if it is there. If you don't find a topic sentence, state the main idea of the paragraph in your own words.

Men have cleared away forests to make fields for growing crops. They have moved mountains to make room for roads and cities. They have built huge dams across rivers to turn valleys into lakes, and they have built dykes to push back the sea and create more dry land to live on. Once everyone cheered at the progress that man made in changing his environment like this, but now many people are worried by the problems that such changes can bring. When the Aswan Dam was built across the River Nile in Egypt, it was meant to help the farmers by giving them water when they needed it. Unfortunately, people did not realise that much of the nourishing food for plants in the river would be trapped by the dam, so the farmers' crops would suffer. Also, hundreds of kilometers away at the mouth of the River Nile, less fresh water pours into the Mediterranean Sea. This means that the sea will become more salty and fewer fish will be able to live in it. When this happens, people who catch fish for their living will suffer.

[From Govil, M. and Subramaniam V. (eds.) *Explorations*, Madhuban Educational Books.]

#### Glossary

dykes (n.) : thick banks or walls built to control water

'nourishing : causing to stay alive or grow

trapped/træpt/: held back, blocked

## 1.3 DEVELOPING THE TOPIC

In order to develop the central theme of a paragraph, you have to expand the idea contained in the topic sentence. This can be done by adding more information, explanation, examples, illustrations, etc. to the idea expressed in the topic sentence. (We shall discuss different ways of developing a paragraph in greater detail in Unit 2.)

If you read the paragraph given under Example 1 again, you will notice that this paragraph is developed mainly by adding examples.

Analysis of the paragraph :

- 1 **Topic sentence** : "The vast majority of people, wherever they live and whatever their occupation, come in contact with animals in one way or another and have to deal with them."
- 2 **Examples given to develop the paragraph** :
  - i) the hunter
  - ii) the farmer
  - iii) the fisherman
  - iv) the city-dweller
- 3 **Summing up** : This is done by stating that there is a common bond between man and other creatures.

Now read Example 3 below. You will notice that this paragraph is developed slightly differently.

### Example 3

Two main circumstances govern the relationship of living things in the sea : the unbelievably lavish fruitfulness of marine life forms, and the utter ruthlessness with which the larger creatures eat the smaller ones. Somebody has calculated, for instance, that if all the eggs laid by codfish were hatched and grew to maturity, the Atlantic would be packed solid with codfish within six years. But nature does not let this happen. Only an infinitesimal fraction of all codfish eggs ever become full-sized cod, and wastage among other fish is as great. One sea creature in about 10 million escapes the usual violent death inside another sea creature.

[from Leonard Engels (ed.) 'The Great Pyramid of Life' in *The Sea*, Time-Life Books.]

### Glossary

- '**circumstances** : conditions; the state of affairs  
'**govern** (v.) : control or guide  
'**lavish** : plentiful  
'**fruitful** : very productive; producing many young ones  
**ma**'rine : of the sea  
'**ruthlessness** : cruelty, absence of pity  
'**codfish** : a large sea fish found in the North Atlantic Sea  
**hatched**/hætʃt/ : broken, letting the young ones out  
**ma**'turity : the state of being fully grown or developed  
,**infini**'tesimal : very small

Analysis of the paragraph :

- 1 **Topic Statement** : 'Two main circumstances govern the relationship of living things in the sea.'
- 2 **Elaboration** of the topic sentence : the fruitfulness of marine life and the ruthlessness with which the larger creatures eat the smaller ones.
- 3 **Illustration** : The example of the codfish.
- 4 **Summing Up** : Only one sea creature in about ten million survives.

When you write a paragraph of your own, choose the topic and write down all that you know about the topic. As you make your list, don't stop to question whether a detail fits or not; any that don't can be left out later. This will help you generate new ideas, and also give you something concrete to work on.

However, when you start writing, see that every sentence contributes to the central idea, which may be contained in the topic sentence. Only then will your paragraph have unity.

### Self-check Exercise 6

#### Reading Comprehension

Read Example 3 again and answer the following questions. This exercise will help you understand the paragraph better.

1 What are the two circumstances that govern the relationship of living things in the sea?

.....  
.....

2 a) Under what circumstances would the Atlantic be packed with codfish within six years?

.....  
.....

b) How does nature prevent this from happening?

.....  
.....

3 Suggest a title for this paragraph.

.....  
.....

4 Find the opposites of

*barrenness* .....

*terrestrial* .....

*very large* .....

### Self-check Exercise 7

In the following exercise we have given you a topic sentence, the title, as well as some notes which might help you develop a paragraph. As you develop your paragraph, use only those points which will support the topic sentence and leave out the rest. Your paragraph should not be more than 100 words.

#### The Secret of the Cockroach's Survival

Topic Sentence : The cockroach is one of the earth's oldest creatures, older than even the dinosaurs.

- survived because it can live anywhere .....  
from coldest to warmest climate .....  
city as well as forest .....
- cockroach is a clean insect
- can eat anything, including flowerbuds, paint, soap, wood .....
- some species are large, others are small
- can even live without food and water for months

- usually black or brown in colour
- keeps off predatory animals because of dirty smell from scent glands

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## 1.4 COHERENCE

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An effective paragraph requires more than a **topic sentence** and **supporting details**; it must also be coherent. In a coherent paragraph the writer takes the reader logically and smoothly from one idea to the next.

The reader must clearly recognize that one sentence logically leads to the next.

### Self-check Exercise 8

The following sentences go together to form a complete paragraph, but they are in the wrong order. Keeping in mind the idea of **coherence**, put them in the right order. After you have done the exercise, you may check your answer with that given by us at the end of the unit.

- When the box is removed, the ant will not continue on its former course, but will start off rapidly in a new direction.
- This can easily be demonstrated by a simple experiment.
- Place a light-tight box over an ant carrying food back to its nest, and keep it imprisoned for a few hours.
- This new route will differ from the old by exactly the angle that the sun has shifted across the sky during the time the ant was imprisoned.
- Many insects rely upon the direction of the sun's rays as a sort of compass.

### Glossary

'former : earlier; previous

'rapidly : very quickly

'light-tight : where light cannot enter

im'prison : shut up in prison

re'ly : depend

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### 1.4.1. Transitional Devices

Another technique which brings about coherence in a paragraph is the use of **transitional devices** between sentences. These are words/phrases that help a writer move smoothly from one sentence to the next and show the logical relationship between sentences. We shall give you an example of what these transitional devices are and how they can be used. The transitional devices in Example 4 are printed in bold type.



### Example 4

Man has been able to spread across the earth so widely for four main reasons. **First**, he is a terrestrial animal, not restricted to the forest. **Secondly**, he can cross any natural barriers, such as deserts, oceans and mountains. **Moreover**, he can live off a very wide variety of food. **Most important of all**, he has developed culture; he has learned to make clothes and build fires which allow him to live in climates where he would otherwise perish. **To a large extent**, he shares some of these advantages with the monkeys. They, **too**, can move over unforested land. They, **too**, can cross some natural barriers, as they have the ability to swim. **And they, too**, can digest many kinds of food. **Thus**, a single species of baboon has spread across Africa from Dakar in the west to Ethiopia in the east, and south all the way to the Cape of Good Hope. **Similarly**, Macaques have done at least as well. **One** species, the rhesus macaque, is equally at home in forest, in open cultivated fields, and inside heavily populated cities.

[from Eimerl, S. and De Vors, I. (eds.), 'The Monkey's Success in the Trees', in *The Primates*, Time-Life Books.]

### Glossary

- terrestrial : living on land
- 'barrier : something placed in the way to prevent further movement
- 'perish : die; be completely destroyed
- species/'spi:ʃi:z/ : a group of plants or animals that are of the same kind
- ba'boon : a large dog-like monkey found in Africa and South Asia
- Macaque/mə'kɑ:k/ : a monkey of African origin found mainly in Asia.

As you have seen, transitional devices are like signposts in a paragraph. They enable us to follow the writer's line of thought by showing us how one sentence relates to another. In Example 4, the words/word phrases *First*, *Secondly*, *Moreover*, *Most important of all* indicate the four main reasons why man has been able to spread so widely across the earth. *Most important of all* also shows that some reasons are more important than others. *Too* indicates that monkeys also share man's characteristics. *Similarly* shows the relationship between the Macaques and the baboons.

The following list includes other words and phrases that function as transitional devices :

- To express result : *therefore, as a result, consequently, thus, hence*
- To give examples : *for example, for instance, specifically, as an illustration*
- To express comparison : *similarly, likewise*
- To express contrast : *but, yet, still, however, nevertheless, on the other hand*
- To express addition : *moreover, furthermore, also, too, besides, in addition*
- To indicate time : *now, later, meanwhile, since then, after that, before that time*
- To express sequence : *first, second, third, then, next, finally.*

### Self-check Exercise 9

Read Example 4 again and answer the following questions :

- 1 What is the most important reason that man has been able to range so widely across the earth?

.....  
.....

- 2 What are the three characteristics that the monkey shares with man?

.....  
.....

3 Monkeys cross natural barriers like rivers by swimming. What are some of the devices that man uses to cross natural barriers?

4 In the context of this passage, find a word

- i) with the same meaning as 'limited'; .....
- ii) which is the opposite of 'thrive'. .....

**Self-check Exercise 10**

In the following paragraph the transitional words and phrases are missing. Fill in the gaps by choosing the most appropriate words/phrases from the list given below :

- |         |      |               |
|---------|------|---------------|
| despite | also | but           |
| however | yet  | in the future |

Of all the sea's possibilities for man's future, the greatest may be its promise of an important increase in the world's food supply. Square mile for square mile, the sea is estimated to be more productive than the land. ...*(i)*... at present the oceans supply only one or two per cent of man's food. ...*(ii)*... all that he is learning about the sea, man's relationship to it is still primitive; he is a hunter rather than a harvester. ...*(iii)*..., along some coasts oyster growers set out beds of oysters and fence out the oyster's enemies to increase the yield. ...*(iv)*..., in the Philippines, Indonesia, Japan and China people already grow fish and prawns in freshwater ponds. ...*(v)*... this is just a beginning...*(vi)*..., to meet the great needs of a rapidly expanding world population, man will have to farm the sea as he has for so long farmed the land.

*Glossary*

- pro'ductive** (*adj.*) : that produces much
- 'primitive** : at the earliest stage of development
- 'harvester** : a person who gathers the crops
- 'oyster**/'ɔɪstə/: a type of shell-fish
- 'fence out** : keep out by putting a fence
- prawn** : any of various types of small 10-legged sea animals
- 'rapidly ex'panding** : fast increasing

Transitional devices used to link sentences can also be effective for transition from one paragraph to another. You will study that in detail in later units.

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## 1.5 PUNCTUATION : THE FULL STOP

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### Full Stop

You already know about the use of the full stop (.). As you read the paragraphs in this unit or elsewhere, you will find that the full stop is used to mark the end of a sentence, as is the question mark (?) or the exclamation mark (!). Now we shall take up another use of the full stop.

You will find that a full stop is also used at the end of the shortened form of a word.

For example,

R. Venkataraman, e.g. (*exempli gratia* = for example), p. (*page*), no. (*number*), vol. (*volume*), a.m. (*ante meridiem* = before midday), p.m. (*post meridiem* = after midday).

*Note*

It is quite common to omit full stops from capital initials such as BBC, UK, USA, TV.

Full stops are now generally omitted from contractions like Dr and Mrs.  
(However, if you prefer to use the full stop, it is still perfectly acceptable.)

### Self-check Exercise 11

Insert full stops in these sentences and use capital letters where necessary.

- 1 Mr and Mrs R N Khan, who live at A-79 Defence Colony, told P C Sahgal that they had been woken up at 5 a m by the sound of glass breaking, and had seen a man with a monkey running out of the house opposite, no 58
- 2 In april 1987, IGNOU premises were the venue of a meeting on Wild Life Preservation it was organized by Prof V K Kumar, Prof V R Gupta, and Dr S R Kapur the topics discussed were anti-poaching laws, cruelty towards animals, opening of sanctuaries, etc

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## 1.6 LET US SUM UP

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In this unit we have discussed the elements that go into the organization of a good paragraph — the topic sentence, the development of the topic, connection between the sentences, and the use of transitional or linking devices.

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## 1.7 KEY WORDS

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co'herence : connection in thoughts or words

e,labo'ration : giving details

'full'stop (also called a period) : a point (.) marking the end of a sentence or a shortened form of a word

,illu'stration : giving examples

ob'jective : purpose

,punctu'ation : the system of dividing written matter into sentences, phrases, etc. by using certain marks

'topic : a subject for talk, writing, etc.

tran'sitional : relating to the movement from one sentence to another.

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## 1.8 BOOKS SUGGESTED

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- 1 *Animal Behaviour*, Time-Life Books.
- 2 *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*.

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## 1.9 ANSWERS TO SELF-CHECK EXERCISES

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### Exercise 1

- 1 Man's Contact with Animals. (You may think of any other title.)
- 2 So that he is better able to catch or kill the animal he is hunting.
- 3 a) He wants to keep cockroaches away from his kitchen, and he may like to keep a dog or a bird as a pet.  
b) No. 'He may want to ward off the roaches in his kitchen.'

### Exercise 2

- 1 delight; enjoy
- 2 primitive
- 3 marvel; affinity.

### Exercise 3

- 1 a) Both the battles took place in the valley of the Somme, and both groups fought to gain mastery over Europe.  
b) 

<b>Ancient</b>	<b>Modern</b>
simple weapons	deadly weapons
twenty people killed in a day	ten thousand people killed in a day
- 2 a) No; both are equally violent.  
b) because their weapons today are more deadly.
- 3 a) mastery over Europe.  
b) 'modest' tools : tools made of stone and bone, as were used by primitive men.  
'magnificent' tools : modern weapons such as guns, tanks, bombers, etc.

### Exercise 4

Nothing could be more important to the development of an infant Indian langur than its relationship with its mother. The correct position : at the beginning of the paragraph.

### Exercise 5

There appears to be no topic sentence as such.

Main idea : By tampering with nature, man has created new problems for himself.

### Exercise 6

- 1 The fruitfulness of marine life forms and the utter ruthlessness with which larger creatures eat smaller ones.
- 2 a) If all the eggs laid by the codfish were hatched and grew to maturity.  
b) Very few eggs become full-sized cod; the others get destroyed or eaten up by other sea creatures.
- 3 Nature Maintains a Balance among Sea Creatures.
- 4 fruitfulness  
marine  
infinitesimal

### Exercise 7

When you write your paragraph, omit the following points :

- cockroach is a clean insect
- some species are large, others are small
- usually black or brown in colour

Here is a specimen paragraph. Compare it with yours.

#### **The Secret of the Cockroach's Survival**

The Cockroach is one of the oldest creatures, older than even the dinosaurs. It has survived because it can live anywhere and in any climate, from the coldest to the warmest. It is found in cities as well as forests. Moreover, it can eat anything — flowerbuds, paint, soap, wood, and even shoe polish. When there is nothing available, it can live without food and water for months. Predatory animals keep away from it because its scent glands give out a dirty smell. Everything seems to favour the cockroach.

### Exercise 8

e, b, c, a, d

### Exercise 9

- 1 Man has developed culture and learned to make clothes and build fires. This allows him to live in all kinds of climates.
- 2 i) can move and live in unforested land  
ii) can cross natural barriers  
iii) can digest all kinds of food
- 3 cars, boats, ships, aeroplanes, etc.
- 4 restricted  
perish

### Exercise 10

- i) Yet
- ii) Despite
- iii) However
- iv) Also
- v) But
- vi) In the future

### Exercise 11

- 1 Mr and Mrs R.N. Khan ..... P.C. Sahgal ..... 5 a.m.  
..... no. 58.
- 2 In April 1987, ..... Preservation. It was organized by Prof. V.K. Kumar, Prof. V.R. Gupta, and Dr S.R. Kapur. The topics discussed were ..... opening of sanctuaries, etc.