



STUDENT NOTES FOR SUCCESS

No 4

Developing cohesion and balance in academic writing

Academic writing is connected, cohesive writing. Each sentence should link smoothly to the next and each paragraph to the next. Ideas also need to flow smoothly. One way to help improve your writing skills is to read widely and therefore see how other writers express their ideas.

Incorrect grammar, sentence fragments and wordy sentences often confuse readers, forcing them to re-read. Lynne Truss, author of *Eats, Shoots & Leaves* (2003) values grammatical correctness and the balance that good grammar and punctuation bring. Understanding and applying these writing principles will help make your writing clearer and therefore more easily understood by your reader.

Flow of Language

In academic writing in particular, language flow is important. It:

- keeps the essay balanced and focused
- uses clear, well-written, concise sentences
- omits wordy phrases
- repeats key words to keep the writing (and the reader) connected; and
- focusses on specific information, supported by clear and accurately quoted or paraphrased evidence.

The following are helpful strategies to ensure clarity and keep your writing cohesive, balanced and rhythmical.

Cohesion

Cohesion between paragraphs and between sentences is important for information flow and clarity. Cohesion is about making connections. These connections or 'links' keep the writing moving forward and keep the reader clearly

informed about what is happening next in the text.

Cohesion between paragraphs and between sentences is done in two ways:

- by repeating keywords, often nouns; and
- by using appropriate connecting phrases that lead the reader towards a particular argument or point of view.

Using key words to link sentences within a paragraph helps to provide consistency in your essay. In this way, the new information presented is clearly connected or linked to previous information. Just like links in a chain, these links keep your writing strong and secure, which in turn, helps to create a stronger and more effective argument.

Indeed
In fact
Therefore

In addition
Furthermore

In contrast
However
Nevertheless

As a result
Accordingly
Hence
Thus

For example
For instance

Keyword repetition

In brief
In summary
In short





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Good connecting words and phrases that ensure cohesion include those listed below. Please note the lists are not complete, but merely offer some suggestions.



Examples:

- To introduce an additional idea:
In addition, furthermore, moreover, besides, also;
- To introduce an opposing idea: On the other hand, in contrast, however, nevertheless, instead, although, whereas, in spite of, while;
- To introduce a restatement or explanation: That is, in fact, indeed, therefore;
- To introduce an example: For example, for instance;
- To introduce a conclusion or summary: In conclusion, in brief, in summary, in short, indeed;
- To introduce a result: As a result, accordingly, as a consequence, consequently, therefore, hence, thus.

Without the appropriate linking words, the writing falls apart; flow, direction and meaning are lost, and the reader is left guessing what you are trying to say. The use of appropriate, cohesive or connecting words can repair the damage.

Creating effective paragraphs

You should aim to have only one main idea in each paragraph. This can be supported by other

ideas and examples. For each paragraph, your main idea should be clearly expressed in your topic sentence.

Staying connected to the essay topic

Paragraph topic sentences, often written at the beginning of the paragraph, should also be linked to the overall essay topic. These topic sentences must reflect or add to the essay argument in some way and are paramount to a well-structured essay. These reflections or additions become the cohesive threads running through the writing to ensure the essay, as a whole, is tight, well-structured, focused and logical in its argument.



Hot tips!

- Make notes of good connecting words when you read and use them when you next write! This will make a huge difference to your overall mark.
- Do not use abbreviations.
- Do not use: things, etc., basically, and so on.
- Be specific and logical at all times.
- Once you've finished your first draft, note down the main idea of each paragraph in the margins. Move any sentences that aren't relevant to the main idea to a paragraph where they fit better. Make sure your topic sentence matches the main idea.

Find out more at the CBS Academic Communication Development website:

<https://businesslaw.curtin.edu.au/study/student-experience/academic-communication-development/>

You might also be interested in *Handy Handout 8. Qualities of good academic writing.*

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