

Coherence



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Coherence is achieved when sentences and ideas are connected and flow together smoothly. An essay without coherence can inhibit a reader's ability to understand the ideas and main points of the essay. Coherence allows the reader to move easily throughout the essay from one idea to the next, from one sentence to the next, and from one paragraph to the next. Following are several methods that can be used to achieve coherence in writing:

Use Repetition to Link Ideas, Sentences, and Paragraphs

Repeating key words or phrases helps connect and focus idea(s) throughout the essay. Repetition also helps the reader remain focused and headed in the right direction.

Example: Most students are intimidated by the works of **William Shakespeare**. They believe **Shakespeare's** sonnets and plays are far too complicated to read and understand.

Use Transitional Expressions to Link Ideas, Sentences, and Paragraphs

Transitional expressions, such as *however*, *because*, *therefore*, and *in addition*, are used to establish relationships between ideas, sentences, and paragraphs. They serve as signals to let the reader know the previous idea, sentence, or paragraph is connected to what follows. For a list of the most commonly used transitional expressions, refer to the Southeastern Writing Center's handout *Useful Transitional Words and Phrases*.

Example: Many students believe they cannot write a good essay **because** they are not writers. **However**, as they practice writing and work on developing their writing skills, most students are able to gain the needed confidence to start thinking of themselves as writers.

Use Pronouns to Link Sentences

Pronouns are used to link or connect sentences by referring to preceding nouns and pronouns. Pronouns can also help create paragraphs that are easy to read by eliminating wordiness and unnecessary repetition.

Example: Mr. Thompson agreed to meet with members of the worker's union before **he** signed the contract. **He** was interested in hearing **their** concerns about the new insurance plan.

Use Synonyms to Link Ideas and Create Variety

Synonyms are words that have the same or nearly the same meaning as another word. They provide alternative word choices that can add variety to an essay and can help eliminate unnecessary repetition.

Example: **Teenagers** face an enormous amount of peer pressure from friends and schoolmates. As a result, many **young adults** are exhibiting signs of severe stress or depression at an early age.

Use Parallel Structures to Link Ideas, Sentences, and Paragraphs

Parallelism is the use of matching words, phrases, clauses, or sentence structures to express similar ideas. Parallel structures allow the reader to flow smoothly from one idea, sentence, or paragraph to the next and to understand the relationships and connections between ideas.

Example: Usually, the children spend the summer weekends **playing** ball in park, **swimming** in the neighbor's pool, **eating** ice cream under the tree, or **camping** in the backyard.

At the museum, the class **attended a lecture where the speaker demonstrated** how the Native Americans made bows and arrows. They also **attended a lecture where a sword smith demonstrated** how the Vikings crafted swords.