



Coherence

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When sentences, ideas, and details fit together clearly, readers can follow along easily, and the writing is coherent. The ideas tie together smoothly and clearly. To establish the links that readers need, you can use the methods listed here.

Repetition of a Key Term or Phrase

This helps to focus your ideas and to keep your reader on track.

Example: The problem with **contemporary art** is that it is not easily understood by most people. **Contemporary art** is deliberately abstract, and that means it leaves the viewer wondering what she is looking at.

Synonyms

Synonyms are words that have essentially the same meaning, and they provide some variety in your word choices, helping the reader to stay focused on the idea being discussed.

Example: **Myths** narrate sacred histories and explain sacred origins. **These traditional narratives** are, in short, a set of beliefs that are a very real force in the lives of the people who tell them.

Pronouns

This, that, these, those, he, she, it, they, and we are useful pronouns for referring back to something previously mentioned. Be sure, however, that what you are referring to is clear.

Example: When **scientific experiments** do not work out as expected, **they** are often considered failures until some other scientist tries **them** again. **Those** that work out better the second time around are the ones that promise the most rewards.

Transitional Words

There are many words in English that cue our readers to relationships between sentences, joining sentences together. See the handout on Transitional Devices (Connecting Words) at http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_transition.html. There you'll find lists of words such as *however, therefore, in addition, also, but, moreover,* etc.

Example: I like autumn, **and yet** autumn is a sad time of the year, too. The leaves turn bright shades of red and the weather is mild, **but** I can't help thinking ahead to the winter and the ice storms that will surely blow through here. **In addition**, that will be the season of chapped faces, too many layers of clothes to put on, and days when I'll have to shovel heaps of snow from my car's windshield.

Sentence Patterns

Sometimes, repeated or parallel sentence patterns can help the reader follow along and keep ideas tied together.

Example: (from a speech by President John F. Kennedy) And so, my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you--ask what you can do for your country.

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This page is located at http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/print/general/gl_cohere.html

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