

FLOW: A UNIFIED PAPER



Huh? Coherence?

- A COHERENT paper is fully connected. One sentence flows to the next and each idea develops from the last. Coherent papers are easy for readers to follow and understand.
- A UNIFIED paper is narrowed down to a main idea. Each paragraph contains a single focus and every sentence relates back to it.
- CLEAR RELATIONSHIPS between concepts in the body of the paper lead to successful papers. Introductions and conclusions reinforce the topics in the body.

Topic Sentences

- Every paragraph should contain a topic sentence to state its main idea and to comment on that idea.
- Think of your topic sentence as a “mini thesis,” the anchor that keeps the paragraph on course.
- Topic sentences are often the first in a paragraph but DON'T have to be. Wherever yours are in the paragraph, they should be like magnets around which all of your sentences cluster.
- A topic sentence makes an assertion that needs to be elaborated.



Make Unity Happen in Your Paper

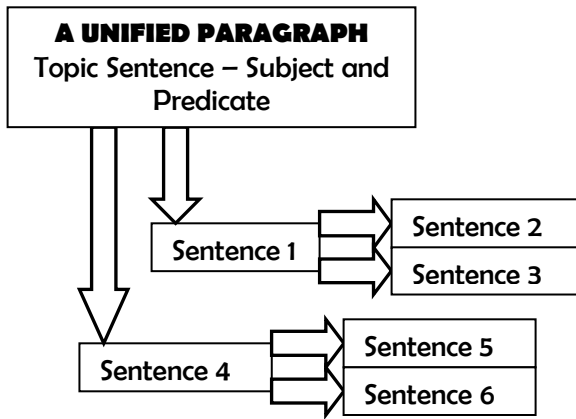
- Identify the topic sentence in your paragraphs and then decide if every sentence reinforces the topic.
- Eliminate any sentence that breaks up the paragraph's unity or use it elsewhere.
- Revise sentences that *nearly* relate to the topic by adding a transition or detail.
- In paragraphs with two topics, recast the topic sentence to connect both or make another paragraph.

Organization Patterns

- CHRONOLOGICAL arranges ideas in the order in which they happened (especially for narrations or processes).
- QUESTION AND ANSWER begins by posing a question and develops a response.
- COMPARISON AND CONTRAST uses a comparison as your topic and follows it with alternating similarities and differences.
- CAUSE AND EFFECT starts with one point and then describes the counter point.
- EMPHATIC usually arranges information from least to most important (especially for persuasion).
- LOGICAL works from specific to general or general to specific: begin with a series of details and conclude the paragraph with a summarizing statement, or vice versa.
- ILLUSTRATION follows a general statement with supporting details, evidence, examples, or personal description.

What About *Connecting* Those Pesky Paragraphs?

- What do all of your paragraphs have in common? - They relate back to the same thesis or main topic.
- If two paragraphs are situated in the same paper there must be *some* link between them.
- Express the relationship between two paragraphs at the beginning or end of a paragraph. Try a topic sentence that compares the current paragraph to the previous one, or perhaps try a “clincher” sentence to conclude a paragraph and introduce the next.



Notice how every sentence in the diagram on the left traces back to the topic or focus?

Other ways to improve the flow of your paper repeating or restating key words or phrases, using parallel sentence structure, using transitions (see the transition handout), and by building each sentence either on the subject or predicate of the previous one.

(The predicate is the part of the sentence that expresses something about the subject.)

Check out the difference between paragraph one's confusion and paragraph two's coherence.

1. The tragic INCOHERENT paragraph:

Creation and evolution have been debated for decades. Fossilized dinosaur skeletons prove that the earth is not as old as scientists claim. Radiometric dating is unreliable at best, and meticulous genealogies of people like the Hebrews show that humans have lived about 6,000 years since creation. Scientists using radiometric dating assume that materials decay at constant rates even though this process is so unreliable that it dates recent lava flows as millions of years old. The world was actually fully formed and working at creation. A law of nature states that living matter only comes from other living matter and that creatures never materialize spontaneously. Since no people were around to witness the beginning of the world, how can scientists assume that radiometric dating works or that life began from nonliving swamp materials? This shows that evolution cannot be regarded as fact.

2. The rescued FLOWING paragraph:

An understanding of the earth's age affirms the credibility of creation. To begin, historic records affirm that the world is less than 10,000 years old. Meticulous genealogies of people like the Hebrews show that humans have lived about 6,000 years since creation. Additionally, to determine factual age requires a firsthand, reliable witness. Equally important is that evolutionary scientists use a process called radiometric dating to determine the earth's age. Scientists assume that materials decay at constant rates even though this process is so unreliable that it dates recent lava flows as millions of years old. Of course they do not consider that the world was fully formed and working at creation. In short, radiometric dating does nothing to prove that the world is billions of years old, and the lack of records and witnesses means that evolution cannot be regarded as fact.



- So what happened? Notice that paragraph two contains a topic sentence (italicized). The paragraph moves from general to specific and is focused on ONE IDEA. It makes use of transitions (underlined) and repeats key words such as "age" and "creation." Like the diagram at the top, every sentence echoes the topic. On the other hand, paragraph one jumped around and brought up topics (such as fossils and laws of nature) for other paragraphs and papers.

-- Kory Janneke (2005)

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