Does this make sense? Flow well?
Creating Coherent and Cohesive Texts

10 October 2019
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Academic Support Centre
Analyze assignment
Subject to topic to RQ
Organize thoughts
Focused reading & note-taking

Draft 1

Outline 2

Feedback

Revise & draft 2

Feedback

Revise & draft 3

Edit & polish

Turn in!
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Constructive Feedback

1. Gives information, not necessarily a grade
2. Is actionable
3. Is well-meaning
4. Meets the text where it currently is in the process; only points out the most important issues for the time being
5. Is explicitly reader-focused and/or criteria-focused
Reader-focused feedback

1. **Summarize the text** as you understood it so that the author understands which information sticks out the most to a reader.

   *The main idea in X section seemed to be that... I understand X & Y in your introduction to be connected in ____ way....*

2. **Respond with I-messages** from your experience of the text, not about how the text is or about what the author did or did not do.

   *I had a hard time following this paragraph when... By the end, I felt like I understood the opening sections much better...*

3. **Emphasize** what kind of **expectations** the text built up for you and whether or not your expectations were fulfilled.

   *When I read X, I expected the next part to be about Y, but actually A was introduced.***
4. Avoid empty adjectives. Judgments like “good,” “interesting,” “bad,” “dense,” or “unclear” do not give information to the writer unless they are accompanied by a concrete explanation. What is good or bad as it relates to the criteria at hand?

• The introduction is excellent because....
• You explained your literature review especially clearly...X paragraphs were the easiest to follow...
• The problem in the introduction isn’t yet clearly motivated. Why exactly should the field care about this issue? What’s the bigger picture that this problem fits into?
• The strongest evidence was.....
• When the text jumped from X to Z, I lost the red thread—how are these pieces connected?
Criteria-focused feedback

5. Look forward with concrete advice or suggestions for how the text can develop.
   • You could present the results in a different order to better prepare your reader for what you focus on in the discussion section...
   • What if you started with your concluding paragraph as the introduction...?

6. Ask questions! Both about what you didn’t understand and what you would like to know more about. Treat the text as the result of choices the writer has made and ask him/her about more effective alternatives.
   • What effect do you want X to have on your readers? It made me....
   • How should I understand these results? They could either be.or....
   • Why are these data surprising? From whose perspective?
Which criteria?
Specific to the assignment, of course, but also:
Coherence: the text makes sense

“...is an experience we create for ourselves as we make our own sense of what we read” (Williams 2007).

Reader’s have:

- **Genre expectations** (e.g., IMRaD, contains references)
- **Field & department expectations** (e.g., assignment description)
- **Explicit expectations the text sets up** (e.g., aim to be achieved)
- **Implicit expectations about how texts work** (e.g., how information placement shapes what readers expect from the text)
Coherence: the text makes sense

**Global level**: a sense of the whole; understanding of what all sentences/paragraphs/sections add up to.

**Local level**: a clear sense of what an individual paragraph or an individual sentence communicates.

Cohesion: the text “flows”
well-connected paragraphs and sentences, largely dependent on how one ends and the next one begins.
Coherence (the pieces)
Make sense as a whole

Cohesion (two pieces fit together)
Degree to which errors bother readers

- Word choice
- Word location
- Sentence structure
- Sentence location
- Paragraph structure
- Paragraph location
- Section structure
- Section location

Bothers less

Bothers more

Modified from *Scientific Writing and Communication* (Hofmann)
Global Coherence

1. There’s a point
2. Everything is relevant
3. There’s an order

See Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace (Williams 2007)
Global Coherence

1. There’s a point
   A. Short introductory segment for sections, sub-sections, and paragraphs
   B. The end of the intro segment is *the point/topic*
   C. The end of the point sentence contains words/concepts that you develop in that section

2. Everything is relevant

3. There’s an order
INTRODUCTION

- Context
- Problem
- Why we should care
- What other people have said about the problem
- **Point of this text**
  (formulated as an aim & RQ or a main claim)

First body section

Introduction segment to the section including appropriate context and **the “point” of the section**

For middle paragraphs, most readers look for **the “point” in the 1st or 2nd sentence.**
Thirty sixth-grade students wrote essays that were analyzed to determine the effectiveness of eight weeks of training to distinguish fact from opinion. That ability is an important aspect of making sound arguments of any kind. In an essay written before instruction began, the writers failed almost completely to distinguish fact from opinion. In an essay written after four weeks of instruction, the students visibly attempted to distinguish fact from opinion, but did so inconsistently. In three more essays, they distinguished fact from opinion more consistently, but never achieved the predicted level of performance. In a final essay written six months after instruction ended, they did no better than they did in their pre-instruction essay. Their training had some effect on their writing during the instruction period, but it was inconsistent, and six months after instruction it had no measurable effect.

Example from Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace (Williams & Bizup 2017)
Thirty sixth-grade students wrote essays that were analyzed to determine the effectiveness of eight weeks of training to distinguish fact from opinion. That ability is an important aspect of making sound arguments of any kind.

In an essay written before instruction began, the writers failed almost completely to distinguish fact from opinion. In an essay written after four weeks of instruction, the students visibly attempted to distinguish fact from opinion, but did so inconsistently. In three more essays, they distinguished fact from opinion more consistently, but never achieved the predicted level of performance.

In a final essay written six months after instruction ended, they did no better than they did in their pre-instruction essay. Their training had some effect on their writing during the instruction period, but it was inconsistent, and six months after instruction it had no measurable effect.
In this study, thirty sixth-grade students were taught to distinguish fact from opinion. They did so successfully during the instruction period, but the effect was inconsistent and less than predicted, and six months after instruction ended, the instruction had no measurable effect.

In an essay written before instruction began, the writers failed almost completely to distinguish fact from opinion. In an essay written after four weeks of instruction, the students visibly attempted to distinguish fact from opinion, but did so inconsistently. In three more essays, they distinguished fact from opinion more consistently, but never achieved the predicted level of performance. In a final essay written six months after instruction ended, they did no better than they did in their pre-instruction essay.

These results suggest that short-term training to distinguish fact from opinion has no consistent or long-term effect.

Slightly modified from Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace (Williams & Bizup 2017)
In Russia, the Siberian silk moth is an important disturbance factor and since it is migrating into new areas further west and north it may become a larger problem. Insects in the European Russia do not seem to be such of a problem as in Siberia (Shorohova et al., 2009). In North America, insects are an important disturbance factor but there are regional differences. The only province experiencing severe attack from mountain pine beetle is British Columbia, but its range is projected to expand. Spruce budworm is present over all of Canada. In Fennoscandia the European spruce bark beetle is the most important insect, but it has so far not shown the same severe damage to large regions as the outbreaks of mountain pine beetle in Canada.

Note: grammar errors not fixed.
From A. Lindegren’s Bsc thesis (2011)
In the case of insects, the differences between the regions that are most evident are the insect species present. In Russia, the Siberian silk moth is an important disturbance factor and since it is migrating into new areas further west and north it may become a larger problem. Insects in the European Russia do not seem to be such of a problem as in Siberia (Shorohova et al., 2009). In North America, insects are an important disturbance factor but there are regional differences. The only province experiencing severe attack from mountain pine beetle is British Columbia, but its range is projected to expand. Spruce budworm is present over all of Canada. In Fennoscandia the European spruce bark beetle is the most important insect, but it has so far not shown the same severe damage to large regions as the outbreaks of mountain pine beetle in Canada.

From A. Lindegren’s Bsc thesis (2011)

Note: grammar errors not fixed.
1. In addition to providing habitats and the possibility for species to migrate in the landscape, green infrastructure has the role of providing ecosystem services.

1a. In addition to providing ecosystem services, green infrastructure provides habitats and the possibility for species to migrate in the landscape.

2. In order to create a habitat for certain species or achieve a certain ecosystem service, a minimum biotope area may be required within the landscape.
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Turn in!
See the big picture

Start big-picture revision work by printing out the text. Crucial when revising in groups!
Revision strategy to target global coherence → “there’s a point”

Focus on the introductions

to the whole text
to the major sections
to the subsections
to long paragraphs

1. Underline the point/topic
2. Circle keywords/concepts in the point sentence
3. Trace the development of those concepts
Compare intro & conclusion

**Introduction**

Blah blah blah blah Blah blah blah blah Blah blah blah blah Blah blah blah Blah blah blah Blah blah blah

Blah blah blah blah Blah blah blah blah Blah blah blah Blah blah blah Blah blah blah Blah blah

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**Conclusion**

Blah blah blah blah Blah blah blah blah Blah blah blah Blah blah blah Blah blah blah Blah blah blah

Blah blah blah blah Blah blah blah blah Blah blah blah Blah blah blah Blah blah blah Blah blah

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Are the expectations you set up in your introduction mirrored in your conclusion?
Global Coherence

1. There’s a point
2. Everything is relevant
   A. Anything *can* be relevant
   B. Not everything that seems relevant to you will be relevant to your readers
3. There’s an order
We analyzed essays written by sixth-grade students to determine the effectiveness of training in distinguishing fact from opinion. In an essay written before training, the students failed almost completely to distinguish fact and opinion. These essays were also badly organized in several ways. In the first two essays after training began, the students attempted to distinguish fact from opinion, but did so inconsistently. They also produced fewer spelling and punctuation errors. In the essays four through seven, they distinguished fact from opinion more consistently, but in their final essay, written six months after completion of instruction, they did no better than they did on their first essay. Their last essay was significantly longer than their first one, however. Their training thus had some effect on their writing during the training period, but it was inconsistent and transient.
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Global Coherence

3. There’s an order
(of the whole, of sections, of paragraphs)

A. Chronological (time)
   A. As a narrative
   B. Cause and effect
   C. Earlier to later or later to earlier

B. Coordinate (pillars)
   A. Simple to complex
   B. More familiar to less familiar
   C. Less contestable to more contestable
   D. More important to less important (or vice versa)

C. Logical
   A. General analysis to specific applications
   B. Example to generalization
   C. Assertion to contradiction
   D. Argument-focused: claim-reasons-evidence

Remember! The finished product’s order might not be the order your encountered the information or the order you wrote the information (a narrative of your thinking isn’t always the best for the finished product.
Reverse outline

1. Number your paragraphs.
2. Identify the topic of each paragraph.
   a. Is there a recognizable topic sentence?
   b. How long is the paragraph?
      i. Does the topic seem sufficiently developed?
      ii. Is there more than one topic in the paragraph?
3. Arrange these topics in an outline.
4. Analyze this outline, assessing the logic/order (where elements have been placed in relation to one another), relevance to overall aim and point of section, and the proportion (how much space is being devoted to each element).
5. Use this analysis to create a revised outline.
6. Use this revised outline to reorganize your text.
7. Go back to your answers in 2a and 2b to help you create topic sentences and coherence in your paragraphs.

See Explorations of style

Good flow in a single paragraph can sometimes mask problems in global coherence.
Create a topic sentence paragraph

1. Identify every paragraph’s topic/point sentence.
2. Copy and paste these sentences into a separate document to create a “pseudo-paragraph.”
3. This paragraph won’t flow very well, and will be really long, but it should be globally coherent.
4. Often works best as a confirmation that you have a coherent text and are ready to move on to local level revision.

See Explorations of style
Cohesion: the text “flows”

well-connected sentences, largely dependent on how one ends and the next one begins.

1. Often uses old-to-new information structure.
2. Shouldn’t be faked with connection words.

Williams, Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace & Booth, et al, The Craft of Research
A. The quality of our air and even the climate of the world depend on healthy rain forests in Asia, Africa, and South America. However, these rain forests are currently threatened with destruction by the increasing demand for more land for agricultural use and for wood products used in construction worldwide. The demand for land is strongest in...

B. The quality of our air and even the climate of the world depend on healthy rain forests in Asia, Africa, and South America. However, the increasing demand for more land for agricultural use and for wood products for construction worldwide now threatens these forests with destruction. The demand for land is strongest in...
A. Some astonishing questions about the nature of the universe have been raised by scientists studying black holes in space. A black hole is created by the collapse of a dead star into a point perhaps no larger than a marble. So much matter compressed into so little volume changes the fabric of space around it in puzzling ways.

B. Some astonishing questions about the nature of the universe have been raised by scientists studying black holes in space. The collapse of a dead star into a point perhaps no larger than a marble creates a black hole. So much matter compressed into so little volume changes the fabric of space around it in puzzling ways.
Old-new structure

• Creates “flow” in a paragraph

• Some try to use logical connectors like “moreover” and “however” to establish flow, but these don’t work on their own.

• Instead, follow a progression from old information (in the subject position or toward the end of the previous sentence) to new information (toward the end of the next sentence).
According to a recent survey, 26% of all American adults, down from 38% 30 years ago, now smoke. This _________ can be partly attributed to the mounting evidence linking smoking and fatal diseases, such as cancer.

Swales & Feak, Academic Writing for Graduate Students

The increased temperature favors decomposition and the ecosystem is more likely to become a carbon source. This ____________ may prevail for 20-30 years after the disturbance event in areas with underlying permafrost.

*From A. Lindegren’s Bsc thesis (2011)*
Sayner, Wisconsin, is the snowmobile capital of the world. The buzzing of snowmobile engines fills the air, and their tank-like tracks crisscross the snow. The snow reminds me of Mom’s mashed potatoes, covered with furrows I would draw with my fork. Her mashed potatoes usually make me sick—that’s why I play with them. I like to make a hole in the middle of the potatoes and fill it with melted butter. This behavior has been the subject of long chats between me and my psychologist.
Paragraphs need balance between:

- Old-new structure
- Clear main “character” in the passage, often in the subject position of the sentence.
“Moral climate” is created when an objectivized moral standard for treating people is accepted by others. **Moral climate** results from norms of behavior that are accepted by society whereby if people conform they are socially approved of, or if they don’t they are shunned. **Moral climate** acts as a reason to refrain from saying or doing things that their community does not support. **A moral climate** encourages individuals to conform to a moral standard and apply that standard to their own circumstances.

Modified from Williams & Bizup, *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace*
Paragraphs need balance between:

- Old-new structure
- Clear main “character” in the passage, often in the subject position of the sentence.
- Linking words
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>USE</th>
<th>TRANSITION WORDS</th>
<th>TRANSITION PHRASE</th>
<th>TRANSITION SENTENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Addition</td>
<td>again, also, further, furthermore, in addition, moreover</td>
<td>In addition to X, we...</td>
<td>Further experiments showed that...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Besides X,...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversion</td>
<td>clearly, evidently, obviously, unambiguously</td>
<td></td>
<td>Granted that X is...</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison</td>
<td>also, likewise, similarly, etc.</td>
<td>As seen in... In the same way</td>
<td>When A is compared with B... As reported by... When compared to...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Contrast                | but, however, nevertheless, nonetheless, still, yet | In contrast to A... On one hand, on the other hand... Despite X... Unlike X... On the contrary... | One difference is that... Although X differs... |}

From Hofmann’s *Scientific Writing and Communication* (p. 110)
Cohesion with linking words

The biological clock functions regardless of the normal 24-hour cycle of light and darkness. Light is involved in resetting and regulating the clock.

Which linking word or phrase would you add and where?
Nikita’s experience had several aspects. The respondent perceived the city in a way that he imagined it. **Moreover**, the respondent went through some unexpected happenings that were initiated by traveler’s CS hosts. CS hosts spent their time with Nikita, showed him around and, **consequently** increased his overall trip experience. **However**, another aspect that the traveler learned – his dependence on CS hosts as, **for example**, he did not experience night life of Gothenburg because his CS hosts were in a different age range than him. The respondent said that he would do more couchsurfing trips, **however** he admitted that one has to have time for it, as CS experience is spontaneous and unpredictable. **Thus**, Nikita’s trip carries both **Reinforcing** and **Punishing** feedback as the traveler will continue couchsurfing, **however** he will alter his preparations and expectations about trips (Martin & Morich, 2011).
Diagnose & Revise Paragraphs

1. Underline the first 6 or 7 words of sentence.
2. Is there something in those words that connects to the previous sentence?
3. If not, is it because the main character is repeated instead? (often you will refer to the previous sentence and repeat a character simultaneously)
4. Do you rely on a linking word to fake a transition?
5. Revise so that the first 6 or 7 words refer to familiar information, either an idea from the previous sentence and/or a character.

Modified slightly from Williams, Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace & Booth, et al, The Craft of Research
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Turn in!
Tackle each section, e.g.:

Discussion: is this section **coherent** and **cohesive**?

1. Is there a “point” or central claim about the results?
   
   • **How are the findings contextualized**? More sources might corroborate, complicate, challenge, or contradict the results. They might explain why the results are what they are and build an argument for the central claim.

2. Is all information relevant to this point and overall aim?
   
   • Do the authors offer educated speculations to explain the results?

3. What is the ordering principle used and does it fit the content?

4. Are the paragraphs coherent and cohesive?
Remember!

Degree to which errors bother readers

- Word choice
- Word location
- Sentence structure
- Sentence location
- Paragraph structure
- Paragraph location
- Section structure
- Section location

Bothers little

Bothers a lot

From Scientific Writing and Communication (Hofmann)
In groups, discuss:

1. Does everyone read and comment on all drafts? Who is allowed to make changes directly in the text? Everyone? The person who drafted that particular section?
2. What’s our strategy for big-picture revisions?
3. How many editors will we have (responsible for cohering transitions, verb tenses, basic grammar corrections, etc)?
4. How many publishers (responsible for formatting and layout)?
5. Who is responsible for checking all referencing details?

6. What’s our next step? Get started!
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Open and free for all!

Academic writing
Presenting
Study skills

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