

Unity and Coherence

Lesson 13

Unity

- Unity is the idea that all parts of the writing work to achieve the same goal: proving the thesis. Just as the content of a paragraph should focus on a topic sentence, the content of an essay must focus on the thesis. The introduction paragraph introduces the thesis, the body paragraphs each have a proof point (topic sentence) with content that proves the thesis, and the concluding paragraph sums up the proof and restates the thesis. Extraneous information in any part of the essay which is not related to the thesis is distracting and takes away from the strength of proving the thesis.

Unity and Coherence

- **A unified paragraph** must follow the idea mentioned in the topic sentence and must not deviate from it. For a further explanation on topic sentences, see the Write Right on [Topic Sentences](#).
- **A coherent paragraph** has sentences that all logically follow each other; they are not isolated thoughts. Coherence can be achieved in several ways. First, using transitions helps connect ideas from one sentence to the next. For more on transitions, see the Write Right on [Transitions](#). Second, ordering thoughts in numerical sequence helps to direct the reader from one point to the next. Third, structuring each paragraph according to one of the following patterns helps to organize sentences: general to particular; particular to general; whole to parts; question to answer; or effect to cause.
- Remember that a paragraph should have enough sentences so that the main idea of the topic sentence is completely developed. Generalizations should be supported with examples or illustrations. Also, details and descriptions help the reader to understand what you mean. Don't ever assume that the reader can read your mind: be specific enough to develop your ideas thoroughly, but avoid repetition

- **Coherence**

- An essay must have coherence. The sentences must flow smoothly and logically from one to the next as they support the purpose of each paragraph in proving the thesis. .
- Just as the last sentence in a paragraph must connect back to the topic sentence of the paragraph, the last paragraph of the essay should connect back to the thesis by reviewing the proof and restating the thesis.

Example of Essay with Problems of Unity and Coherence

- Here is an example of a brief essay that includes a paragraph that **does not** support the thesis “Many people are changing their diets to be healthier.”
- People are concerned about pesticides, steroids, and antibiotics in the food they eat. Many now shop for organic foods since they don’t have the pesticides used in conventionally grown food. Meat from chicken and cows that are not given steroids or antibiotics are gaining in popularity even though they are much more expensive. More and more, people are eliminating pesticides, steroids, and antibiotics from their diets.
- Eating healthier also is beneficial to the environment since there are less pesticides poisoning the earth. Pesticides getting into the waterways is creating a problem with drinking water. Historically, safe drinking water has been a problem. It is believed the Ancient Egyptians drank beer since the water was not safe to drink. Brewing beer killed the harmful organisms and bacteria in the water from the Nile.
- There is a growing concern about eating genetically modified foods, and people are opting for non-GMO diets. Some people say there are more allergic reactions and other health problems resulting from these foods. Others are concerned because there are no long-term studies which clearly show no adverse health effects such as cancers or other illnesses. Avoiding GMO food is another way people are eating healthier food.
- See how just one paragraph can take away from the effectiveness of the essay in showing how people are changing to healthier food since the unity and coherence are affected. There is no longer unity among all the paragraphs. The thought pattern is disjointed and the essay loses its coherence.

Transitions and Logical Flow of Ideas

- *Transitions* are words, groups of words, or sentences that connect one sentence to another or one paragraph to another.
- They promote a logical flow from one idea to the next and overall unity and coherence.
- While transitions are not needed in every sentence or at the end of every paragraph, they are missed when they are omitted since the flow of thoughts becomes disjointed or even confusing.
- There are different types of transitions:
 - Time – before, after, during, in the meantime, nowadays
 - Space – over, around, under
 - Examples – for instance, one example is
 - Comparison – on the other hand, the opposing view
 - Consequence – as a result, subsequently
- These are just a few examples. The idea is to paint a clear, logical connection between sentences and between paragraphs.