

Hints for Writing Coherent Sentences

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1. Consistency - This involves using the same pronoun person and number, verb tense, tone, voice, and indirect or direct form of discourse.
 - 1.1. Pronoun shifts - When using first, second, or third person, do not shift to another person. Do not switch from singular to plural or vice versa.
 - 1.2. Verb tense shifts - Verb tenses indicate time, so keep writing in the same time unless the logic of what you are writing about requires a switch.
 - 1.3. Tone shifts - Chose either a formal or informal tone and maintain that tone throughout your paper.
 - 1.4. Voice shifts - Within a given sentence, do not switch between active and passive voice.
 - 1.5. Discourse shifts - Do not mix direct and indirect discourse. In addition to being confusing for your readers, this also causes a lack of parallel structure.

2. Faulty Predication - This occurs when the subject and the rest of the clause (the predicate) don't make sense together. Faulty predication often occurs with forms of the verb *to be* because this verb sets up an equation in which the terms on either side of the verb should be equivalent. Avoid such constructions as *is when... is why... is where...* and *is because....*

3. Coordination and Subordination - When an independent clause is added to another independent clause to form a compound sentence, both clauses are described as coordinate because they are equally important and have the same emphasis.
 - 3.1. Coordination
 - 3.1.1. Appropriate Coordination
 - 3.1.1.1. Coordinating conjunctions - *and, but, for, or, nor, so, yet* - these words are used after a comma when they join independent clauses.
 - 3.1.1.2. Conjunctive adverbs (coordinating words used after a semicolon) - *consequently, furthermore, otherwise, therefore, however, moreover, thus, nevertheless* - a comma follows these words.
 - 3.1.2. Inappropriate Coordination - This occurs when two clauses that are either unequal in importance or have little or no connection with each other are joined together as independent clauses. Inappropriate coordination is corrected by making one clause dependent on the other. However, if there is little connection between the clauses, they may not belong in the same sentence or paragraph.
 - 3.1.3. Excessive Coordination - This occurs when too many equal clauses are strung together with coordinators. As a result, a sentence can ramble on and become tiresome. Excessive coordination can be corrected by breaking the sentence into smaller ones or by making the appropriate clauses into dependent ones.

- 3.2. Subordination - This occurs when one clause has less emphasis or is less important in a sentence, it is subordinate to or dependent on the other clause.
 - 3.2.1. Appropriate Subordination The relationship of a dependent or subordinate clause to a main clause is shown by the marker word that begins the subordinate clause. Some common marker words are the following:
After, although, as, as though, because, before, if, once, since, though, unless, until, when, whether, while.
 - 3.2.2. Inappropriate Subordination - This occurs when the more important clause is placed in the subordinate or dependent position and has less emphasis.
 - 3.2.3. Excessive Subordination - This occurs when a sentence has a string of clauses subordinate to each other. As a result, readers have difficulty following the confusing chain of ideas dependent on each other. To revise excessive subordination, place the string of dependent clauses in separate sentences with independent clauses.

4. Sentence Clarity
 - 4.1. Moving from Known to Unknown Information
 - 4.2. Using the Positive instead of the Negative
 - 4.3. Avoiding Double Negatives - Use only one negative at a time in your sentences. Watch out for contractions with negatives in them.
 - 4.4. Using Verbs instead of Nouns - Try to use verbs if possible rather than noun forms. Actions expressed as verbs are more easily understood than actions named as nouns.
 - 4.5. Making the Intended Subject the Sentence Subject - Be certain that the real subject or the doer of the action in the verb is the grammatical subject of the sentence. Sometimes the real subject of a sentence can get buried in a prepositional phrase or other less noticeable place.
 - 4.6. Using Active Voice instead of Passive Voice - The active verb is often easier to understand than the passive because the active voice explains who is doing the action.

5. Transitions - These are words and phrases that build bridges between sentences, parts of sentences, and paragraphs. These bridges show relationships and help to blend sentences together smoothly.
 - 5.1. Repetition of a Key Term or Phrase
 - 5.2. Synonyms - Use these to avoid the boredom caused by repeating the same term or phrase.
 - 5.3. Pronouns - These are useful devices when you want to refer to something mentioned previously.
 - 5.4. Words and Phrases - Use words and phrases that cue the reader to relationships between sentences. (See page 54 in the Harris book for a chart of transitions.) Starting sentences with *and* or *but is an issue of concern*.
 - 5.5. Transitions in and between Paragraphs - To signal the connections, use repetition, synonyms, pronouns, and transitional words and phrases. Use repetition as a hook

to make a connection between one paragraph and another. Use transitional words to show direction.

6. Sentence Variety

6.1. Combining Sentences

- 6.1.1. You can combine two sentences into one longer sentence.
- 6.1.2. You can combine the subjects of two independent clauses in one sentence when the verb applies to both clauses.
- 6.1.3. You can join two predicates when they have the same subject.

6.2. Adding Words

- 6.2.1. You can add a description, a definition, or other information about a noun after the noun, thus creating an appositive.
- 6.2.2. Sometimes, you can delete the *who*, *which*, *what* words.
- 6.2.3. You can add phrases and clauses at the beginning of the sentence.
- 6.2.4. You can begin with infinitives (to + verb) or with phrases that start with the present or past participle form of the verb.
- 6.2.5. You can add transitional words at the beginning of sentences.
- 6.2.6. You can begin with dependent clauses by starting these clauses with dependent marker words.

6.3. Changing Words, Phrases, and Clauses

- 6.3.1. You can move adjectives after the *is* verb to the front of the sentence so that they describe the subject noun.
- 6.3.2. You can expand your subject to a phrase or clause.
- 6.3.3. You can change a sentence to a dependent clause or put it before or after the independent clause.

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