

Know That It Flows:

Tips for Writing Papers That Are Clear, Organized, and Purposeful

Reverse Outline: A simple way to check for solid organization.

- ❖ In the margins next to each paragraph, write a short phrase that summarizes your paragraph. If you are unable to summarize the paragraph in a brief statement, you may have too many ideas in the paragraph.
- ❖ Do a **THESIS CHECK** to ensure each paragraph relates to your thesis.
- ❖ Make sure each paragraph has a clearly stated topic sentence.

Use Transitions: Vital words and phrases that connect your ideas.

- ❖ Transitions signal relationships between ideas. These signals enable your readers to stay engaged and understand the logic of your paper.
- ❖ Although transitions are an excellent help with connecting your ideas and making your paper flow, they cannot replace solid organization.
- ❖ Transitions add flavor to your writing, but they do not replace the substance.

Here are some helpful transitions:

Addition or Adding Support	Contrast	Cause or Effect	Example or Evidence	Exceptions	Sequence of Order	Summary or Conclusion
Also	However	Because	For example	Yet	First	To conclude
In addition	By contrast	Since	In this case	Nevertheless	Second	In brief
Again	Although	Evidently	For instance	Despite	Third	In conclusion
Once again	On the other hand	Thus	On this occasion	Sometimes	At this time	Summing up
Then	Compared to	As a result	As an illustration	Still	Next	In the end
Finally	By comparison	For	Specifically	In spite of	Then	On the whole
Next	While	Therefore	Namely	Of course	Finally	Thus

Sources:

“Considering Structure and Organization.” *Institute for Writing and Rhetoric*, Dartmouth College, 13 Jan. 2015, writing-speech.dartmouth.edu/learning/materials-first-year-writers/considering-structure-and-organization.

Fowler, H. Ramsey, and Jane E. Aaron, editors, *The Little, Brown Handbook*. 12th ed., Pearson, 2012.

Repetition: Repeat key ideas to keep the topic consistent.

- ❖ The MAIN IDEAS are repeated throughout the paper/paragraph to create a sense of unity within the paper.
- ❖ KEY TERMS are used often (but not too much) to emphasize your point. Emphasizing also helps you stay on track with your idea.
- ❖ If you feel as though you have repeated the word too many times, find a synonym.

Old to New: Move from familiar information to new information.

- ❖ Readers can move more easily through information if you begin your sentences with what is familiar then move to what is unfamiliar.
- ❖ Moving from old to new information not only improves clarity but also helps your reader build comfortably upon each new idea.
- ❖ Without moving from old to new, readers may feel overwhelmed with new information and find it difficult to understand the topic.

Example paragraph:

Coffee lovers will be happy to learn the many health benefits of drinking coffee. [Even though] the caffeine content in coffee has been the subject of much scrutiny, researchers found that an **appropriate amount** of coffee is beneficial for good health. [For example], research shows that drinking coffee **reduces the risk** of certain cancers and heart disease. [Along with] **reducing many health risks**, coffee also packs in many antioxidants that boost the immune system. [In fact], Americans receive more antioxidants from coffee than from any other source. [Although] coffee drinkers need to **moderate their java-loving habit**, they can happily sip at their cup full of health benefits.

_____ = Repetition

[] = Transitions

Bold = Old to New

Finally, ask these questions:

- ❖ What is my thesis?
- ❖ Can I identify the topic sentence in each paragraph?
- ❖ Am I able to relate each paragraph back to the thesis or main topic of my paper?
- ❖ Do I use transitions to connect each paragraph to the next?
- ❖ Do I introduce old information first and new information last?
- ❖ Can I identify the key terms in my paper? Are these ideas repeated throughout the paper?
- ❖ If I feel as though I am using a particular word too often, what are synonyms I can use to replace it?
- ❖ Are my sentences clear? If so, are they unified with the other sentences in the paragraph?