

Tiemersma's Simple Rules for Coherent Writing

Adding Transitions

It is important in technical writing to add transitions between sections, paragraphs, and sentences. The following list gives some transitional phrases and their typical uses.

1. **and, or, nor, also, moreover, furthermore, indeed, in fact, first, second, third, in addition.**
Use to add another thought.
2. **for instance, for example, for one thing, similarly, likewise.**
Used for adding, illustrating, or expanding a point.
3. **therefore, thus, so, and so, hence, consequently, finally, on the whole, all in all, in other words, in short.**
Used for adding up consequences, summarizing minor points to emphasize a major point.
4. **frequently, occasionally, in particular, in general, specifically, especially, usually, often.**
Used for adding a qualifying point or illustration.
5. **of course, no doubt, doubtless, to be sure, granted, certainly.**
Used for conceding a point to the opposition, or recognizing a point just off the main line.
6. **but, however, yet, on the contrary, not at all, surely, no, until.**
Used for reversing or deflecting the line of thought, usually back to your own side.
7. **still, nevertheless, notwithstanding.**
Used for returning the thought to your side after a concession.
8. **although, though, whereas.**
Used for attaching a concession.
9. **because, since, for.**
Used to connect a reason to an assertion.
10. **if, provided, in case, unless, lest, when.**
Used for qualifying and restricting a more general idea.
11. **as if, as though, even if.**
Used for glancing at tentative or hypothetical conditions that strengthen and clarify your point.
12. **this, that, these, those, who, whom, he, she, it, they, all of them, few, many, most, several.**
Relative and demonstrative words, like adjectives and pronouns, tie things together, pointing back as they carry the reference ahead. But be sure there is no mistaking the specific word to which each refers.

Gaining Coherence

One can gain coherence in writing by using the following:

1. filling in with thought,
2. filling in with specific illustrative detail,
3. using transitional tags (see above) that tie sentences together,
4. repeating words or syntactical patterns.

Sentence Starts

As a rule of thumb, 60% of all sentences should start with the subject of that sentence. To avoid monotony the other 40% should start with one of the following:

1. prepositional phrase,

2. parenthetical element,
 3. an infinitive (e.g., To begin with, ...),
 4. adverbs, which modify a sentence (but don't use "hopefully" in this way),
 5. a subordinating conjunction,
 6. participial phrase (but make sure it modifies the right word),
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The above words are my recording of some of the advise from the late Dr. Tiemersma, Calvin College, who taught me how to write.

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