

# Developing Unity and Cohesion in Texts

A super precedent for student writers is creating unity in written texts. Unified paragraphs adhere to one topic from beginning to end with each sentence contributing to the central purpose of the paragraph. However, writing a strong paragraph means more than just writing a collection of sentences. Those sentences need to be **connected** to ensure readers can follow the logic of the text, and recognizing how one detail leads to the next.

## Using Transitions for Unity and Cohesion!

The following paragraphs are **unified** and **cohesive**. Notice how the highlighted words and phrases, (i.e., *transitions*) guide the reader through the text, helping us see how one detail leads to the next.

- Writing is difficult and stressful, but one way to alleviate that stress is by having a comfortable place in which we can write. **For example**, in his article “To See Your Story Clearly”, novelist Kent Haruf notes that, when writing, he “prefer[s] a coal room in the basement of [his] house in southern Illinois . . .” (311). **In his basement**, Haruf marks the aesthetics he keeps around to make his writing environment his own: a Hereford bull skull, a sapling chewed by a beaver, red sand from the Globe Theater and other curious items. **Much like Haruf**, I also keep momentos on my desk and on the wall at home. I have an autographed set list from Dweezil Zappa, an incense holder my mother gave me, baseballs I’ve caught at baseball games, and I have a lot of stuff I gave to my dad as gifts that were returned to me after he passed. I always keep these things in the same place on my desk. **In fact**, when I move, those items get boxed up, **and when I find my new office space**, they find their rightful place back on my desk. Like Haruf and Cheever, I’m unwavering in my rituals.
- **Further**, these rituals do not just apply to my surroundings. **Like Haruf**, I also have a particular process for writing. Haruf likes to “remove [his] glasses, pull a stocking cap down over [his] eyes, and type the first draft . . .” (312). **I wouldn’t say I go this far**, but I usually like to think about a topic for several weeks or months before I even start writing. I feel like this allows me time to soak up what I have read and used as research. I walk or run, and when I do, I think about what I have read and inevitably, I come up with new notes to scribble down when I get home. **I guess it is true . . .** writers have their own processes, and each is different. Some may be a little odder than others, but if it works, go with it.

Note that while the paragraphs provided use traditional transition words to help guide the reader through the text, the writer also uses transitions that are particular to their writing style, and they create transitions to note time and space (“In his basement” and “when I find...”).

Below are some verbs you may use in developing your signal phrases. Experiment with them and find original ways to use them and develop them to shape your voice.

### Useful Transitional Expressions

#### Addition

additionally, again, also, and, or, as well, besides, equally important, further, furthermore, next, too, in addition, moreover, then, first, second, an alternative is...

#### Similarity

also, in the same way, just as . . . so too, likewise, similarly

#### Opposition, exceptions, contrasts, differences, comparison

but, however, in spite of, clearly then, on the one hand . . . on the other hand, nevertheless, nonetheless, notwithstanding, in contrast, on the contrary, still, yet, similarly, also, in the same manner, likewise

#### Time

after, afterwards, at last, before, currently, during, as, earlier, immediately, next, later, meanwhile, while, now, recently, immediately, simultaneously, subsequently, then, when

#### Example

for example, for instance, namely, likewise, in fact, specifically, to illustrate

#### Logical sequence/Cause and effect

accordingly, it follows that, for this reason, as a consequence, consequently, hence, if, so, clearly then, since, therefore, thus, as a result

#### To conclude or repeat

finally, thus, in a word, in brief, in conclusion, therefore, in the end, on the whole, thus, to conclude, to summarize, at last, after, in short, that is

### Some Verbs Used in Signal Phrases

Acknowledges	Comments	Endorses	Points out
Adds	Compares	Grants	Reasons
Admits	Confirms	Illustrates	Refutes
Addresses	Contends	Implies	Rejects
Argues	Declares	Insists	Reports
Asserts	Denies	Notes	Responds
Believes	Disputes	Observes	Suggests
Claims	Emphasizes	Writes	Thinks