

4: Writing Process

MENG311 English V:
Technical Writing Practice I

Items to be discussed

- ▶ Writing Process
- ▶ Flow of writing
 - Unity & Cohesion (making smooth transitions)

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The Process of Writing

- ▶ Writers face the same challenges:
 - coming up with ideas,
 - creating content,
 - addressing and adequately informing about the topic
 - incorporating research and facts for validity,
 - presenting the information in an organized format, and
 - polishing the final presentation with regards to word choice, spelling, grammar, usage, and punctuation.
- ▶ Making matters worse, most writers try to accomplish all of the above at once, aiming to get the writing over with as quickly as possible.



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The Process of Writing

- ▶ As a result, many writers find themselves staring at a blank screen, unsure of where to start.
- ▶ A common remark: “*I know what I want to say, but I just don’t know how to write it.*”
- ▶ The solution is simple: breaking the writing process into different phases
- ▶ This allows the writer to focus on one aspect at a time.
- ▶ This leads to successful writing, and in the long run, actually saves time— and stress!



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Writing Process



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Writing Process: (1) Preparation

- ▶ Writing should start with thinking about the topic and purpose of your writing.
 - Establishing your aim/objective
 - What exactly do you want your readers to know when they have finished reading what you have written?
 - Can you formulate your aim in one statement? “I want to write an online shopping program”
 - Identifying your audience
 - Their technical knowledge, educational level
 - Determining your scope of coverage
 - What kind of information to include? Example, just Android phone, or iPhone

[ISI specification](#)

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Writing Process: (2) Research

- ▶ Taking Notes
- ▶ Doing Library Research
- ▶ Interviewing for information
- ▶ Creating and using a questionnaire
- ▶ Browsing the web

Primary information “raw” – observations, surveys, experiments, questionnaires.

Secondary information – primary information that has been analyzed, assessed, evaluated, compiled, organized – books, articles, reports, operating and procedure manuals, brochure, journals

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Writing Process: (3) Plan & outline

- ▶ Choosing the best method of development
 - Sequential, chronological, increasing-order-of-importance, decreasing-order-of-importance, comparison, general-to-specific
- ▶ Outlining
 - Ensuring that it has a beginning (introduction), a middle (body), and an end (conclusion)
 - Introduction gives your readers enough general information about the your topic.
 - Conclusion pulls together the results/findings and interprets them. It restates the goal(s) toward which the study is aiming, which should be consistent with the introduction.

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Writing Process: (3) Plan & outline

- ▶ Creating and using illustrations
 - Help readers absorb facts and ideas (tables, figures, E-R Diagram, flowcharts) you are preparing
- ▶ Selecting an appropriate format
 - Proposal, Trip report, Final Year Project report, ISI report
- ▶ Choosing a title
 - The title should indicate its topic and announce its scope and objective



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Online Shopping Mall – Background and Related Work

- ▶ *Lead paragraph – What is online shopping website?
This report describes only the background and related work of this project.....*
- ▶ *Section 2.1 Background*
Describe the general features of e-commerce platforms, with attention to those that you will implement in the project
- ▶ *Section 2.2 Related work*
Compare your planned system with an existing web site or e-commerce package. Describe reference systems that will be used in the modeling and design.

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Writing Process: (4) Writing a draft

- ▶ Choosing a point of view
 - Choosing first (I, We), second (You) or third (He, She, It) person
 - Third person – Impersonal view – Example: The evidence suggests that the absorption rate is too fast.
- ▶ Developing lead paragraph and topic (lead) sentences
 - States the controlling idea of a paragraph
- ▶ Writing paragraphs
- ▶ Using quotations, paraphrasing and summary

Not to worry about grammar at this stage, converting ideas into sentence/paragraphs

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Writing Process: (4) Writing a draft -- paragraphs

- ▶ For paragraphs,
 - Write a great topic (opening) sentence, people see it to decide if they should skim through or read.
 - Topic sentence should focus on the topic to be discussed in the paragraph.
 - Focus each paragraph on a single topic
 - Avoid short and long paragraphs
- ▶ Good paragraphs answer the following three questions in the given order:
 - What are you trying to tell your reader?
 - Why is it important for the reader to know this?
 - How should the reader use this knowledge?

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Writing Process: (4) Writing a draft

-- Quotations

- ▶ **Quotations** must be identical to the original, using a narrow segment of the source.
- ▶ They must match the source document word for word and must be attributed to the original author.
- ▶ Using quotations is the easiest way to include source material, but quotations should be used carefully and sparingly.



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Writing Process: (4) Writing a draft

- Quotations: when to use it?

You should quote...

- ▶ when the original wording is engaging for the reader and you feel you could not match this
- ▶ if the quote is particularly well-known
- ▶ where the exact words of an authority would lend support to your own ideas
- ▶ when you want to give the author's exact position.

Be selective in your use of quotes, they should add impact to your work, not draw attention away from it!



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Writing Process: (4) Writing a draft

-- Paraphrasing

- ▶ A **paraphrase** is a **detailed restatement in your own words** of a written or sometimes spoken source material.
- ▶ **Paraphrasing** involves putting a passage from source material into your own words.
- ▶ Apart from the changes in organization, wording, and sentence structure, the paraphrase should be nearly identical in meaning to the original passage.
- ▶ It should also be near the same length as the original passage and present the details of the original.
- ▶ While **paraphrases do** not require **quotation marks**, they **do** require citations.

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Writing Process: (4) Writing a draft

- Paraphrasing: when to use it?

You should paraphrase...

- ▶ to demonstrate your understanding of the ideas of the author
- ▶ to assist your readers by explaining difficult concepts or terminology
- ▶ when the original ideas are impressive but the original wording is less so
- ▶ when you want to change the emphasis of the ideas to better match your own context
- ▶ to avoid overuse of direct quotes and the consequent risk of losing your own 'voice'.

However, a paper composed mostly of paraphrases from others may also be seen as too dependent on its sources. Although each paraphrase might have been cited correctly, your own 'voice', which provides contextual analysis, is absent.

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Writing Process: (4) Writing a draft

– Paraphrasing: steps to do it

How to paraphrase in five steps

1. Read the passage several times to fully understand the meaning.
2. Note down key concepts.
3. Write your version of the text without looking at the original.
4. Compare your **paraphrased** text with the original passage and make minor adjustments to phrases that remain too similar.
5. Cite the source where you found the idea

<https://www.adelaide.edu.au/writingcentre/sites/default/files/docs/learningguide-toparaphraseorquote.pdf>

- ▶ with an example of an acceptable combination of paraphrasing/quoting from the source text vs plagiarized text

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Writing Process: (4) Writing a draft

-- Summarizing

- ▶ A **summary** is a condensed version of a **passage**.
- ▶ Similar to paraphrasing, summarizing involves using your own words and writing style to express another author's ideas.
- ▶ Unlike the paraphrase, which presents important details, the summary presents only the most important ideas of the passage.

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Writing Process: (4) Writing a draft

– Summarizing: when to use it?

You may use the summary often for the following reasons:

- ▶ To condense the material. You may have to condense or to reduce the source material to draw out the points that relate to your paper.
 - ▶ To omit extras from the material. You may have to omit extra information from the source material to focus on the author's main points.
 - ▶ To simplify the material.
- When you decide to summarize, avoid keeping the same structure of ideas and/or sentence structure.
 - Also avoid just changing some of the words.
 - Be careful not to add your ideas into the summary and to be faithful to the meaning of the source material.

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Writing Process: (5) Revision

Rewrite, edit, and delete content as necessary.

- ▶ Check *consistency in writing style and formatting*.
- ▶ Check completeness (report content) and accuracy (data, experiments)
- ▶ Eliminate problems with spelling, grammar, sentence and paragraph structure.
- ▶ Check for appropriate word choice
- ▶ Make writing active (voice) – active, passive
- ▶ Check for unity and cohesion

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Items to be discussed

- ▶ Writing Process
- ▶ Flow of writing
 - Unity & Cohesion (making smooth transitions)

Flow of Writing: Unity & Cohesion

- ▶ Unity is the quality of sticking to one idea from start to finish, with every sentence contributing to the central purpose and main idea of that paragraph
 - A good check on **unity** is to ask yourself if everything in your paragraph or essay is subordinate to and derived from the controlling idea.
 - Make sure that your controlling idea--the topic sentence or thesis--indicates the subject and the focus on that subject.
- ▶ Cohesion focuses on the grammar in sentence formation.
 - It involves the smooth transition from sentence to sentence or paragraph to paragraph.
 - The writing 'holds together' so that it is easy to read and understand. (More details on this later).

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Cohesion and Transition

- ▶ Cohesion Strategy
- ▶ Practice on transitional words



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What is Cohesion?

- ▶ A key quality of an effective paragraph is unity. A unified paragraph sticks to one topic from start to finish, with every sentence contributing to the central purpose and main idea of that paragraph.
- ▶ A strong paragraph is more than just a collection of loose sentences. Those sentences need to be clearly connected so that readers can follow along, recognizing how one detail leads to the next. A paragraph with clearly connected sentences is said to be cohesive.
- ▶ This word comes from the word *cohere*, which means 'to stick together'.



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Cohesion examples: Maintaining cohesion within and between paragraphs

► Within paragraphs:

Weak: The project was originally expected to cost \$300,000. The final cost was \$450,000.

Improved: The project was originally expected to cost \$300,000. However, the final cost was \$450,000.

► Between paragraphs:

The complete system would be too expensive for us to purchase now.....

In addition, a more advanced system is expected on the market within six months.....

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Cohesion Strategy

- The proper use of transitional words and phrases can help make your writing clear and form as a whole unit, which will make it easier for the reader to follow the main ideas.
- Cohesion refers to how you connect those ideas together, and this also affects how easy it is to follow your ideas (coherence).



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Example

► Why I Don't Make My Bed

Ever since I moved into my own apartment last fall, I have gotten out of the habit of making my bed--except on Fridays, of course, when I change the sheets. Although some people may think that I am a slob, I have some sound reasons for breaking the bed-making habit. In the first place, I am not concerned about maintaining a tidy bedroom because no one except me ever ventures in there. If there is ever a fire inspection or a surprise date, I suppose I can dash in there to fluff up the pillow and slap on a spread. Otherwise, I am not bothered. In addition, I find nothing uncomfortable about crawling into a rumpled mass of sheets and blankets. On the contrary, I enjoy poking out a cozy space for myself before drifting off to sleep. Also, I think that a tightly made bed is downright uncomfortable: entering one makes me feel like a loaf of bread being wrapped and sealed. Finally, and most importantly, I think bed-making is an awful way to waste time in the morning. I would rather spend those precious minutes checking my email or feeding the cat than tucking in corners or snapping the spread.

How many transition words/phrases?

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Transition Word – Addition

- and
- not only . . . but also
- also
- moreover (more formal)
- furthermore (more formal)
- in addition (more formal)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IsDR3XEv50E>



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Addition Examples

- **Not only** did my brother break his leg, **but** he **also** bruised his rib.
- Cheating is dishonest. **Moreover**, it hinders students from learning.
- Students should be on time. **Furthermore**, they must be prepared.
- You must complete this essay by 5 p.m. **In addition**, you must do the exercises on page 47.

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Transitions – Giving Examples

- ▶ for example
- ▶ for instance
- ▶ specifically
- ▶ in particular
- ▶ The first (second, another, etc.)
- ▶ example/reason is . . .



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Giving Examples – Examples

- ▶ I have been to many countries. For example, I have been to Russia, Canada, Mexico, and Spain.
- ▶ He often eats strange foods. For instance, he once ate cow brains.
- ▶ I like to travel. Specifically, I enjoy places with old cathedrals.
- ▶ My friend hates skiing for several reasons. The first reason is that she dislikes being cold. Another reason is that she often falls.

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Transition – showing a contrast

- ▶ but
- ▶ however
- ▶ on the other hand
- ▶ otherwise
- ▶ instead
- ▶ in contrast (more formal)



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Showing a contrast – Examples

- ▶ Bill earned an A on his essay, but Susan got a B.
- ▶ We wanted to leave at 8:00. However, Mike arrived too late.
- ▶ Students should attend class. Otherwise, they may lose their status.
- ▶ I am not going out tonight. Instead, I will stay home and watch a video.
- ▶ Women usually enjoy shopping. In contrast, men often dislike it.

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Transition – Showing a Similarity

- ▶ likewise (more formal)
- ▶ similarly (more formal)
- ▶ in the same way



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Showing a Similarity – Examples

- ▶ Math was hard for me in high school.
Likewise, it is hard in college.
- ▶ Rock climbing takes much practice and skill.
In the same way, learning to write well requires a great deal of practice.



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Transition – Showing a Result

- ▶ so
- ▶ as a result
- ▶ therefore
- ▶ thus (more formal)
- ▶ as a consequence
- ▶ consequently (more formal)



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Showing a Result – Examples

- ▶ Janet passed her exam, so she is very happy.
- ▶ Tim was late. As a result, we could not go to the concert.
- ▶ The committee voted against the proposal. Thus, we must consider another idea.
- ▶ I forgot that the cake was in the oven. As a consequence, it burned.



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Transition – Explaining or Emphasizing

- ▶ in fact
- ▶ actually
- ▶ in other words



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Explaining or Emphasizing – Examples

- ▶ The bookstore sells cards. In fact, they have the best cards around.
- ▶ James is actually the first person I have known who has been to Africa.
- ▶ He was late to class again. In other words, he didn't wake up on time.



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Transition – Showing a condition

- ▶ or
- ▶ whether . . . or
- ▶ if . . . (then)



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Showing a condition – Examples

- ▶ I must study hard, or I will fail my exam.
- ▶ Whether you are coming or not, I am still going to Amy's party.
- ▶ If you want to get good grades, then you must do your homework.



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ADDING and as well as moreover furthermore in addition too on top of that another point is	SEQUENCING first, firstly, first of all second, secondly.. third next meanwhile now subsequently	ILLUSTRATING for example such as for instance in the case of as shown by illustrated by take... one example is..
COMPARING similarly likewise as with like equally in the same way	QUALIFYING but however although unless except apart from as long as if	CONTRASTING whereas alternatively unlike on the other hand conversely having said that nevertheless however

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Class exercise – Transition words

1. My friend speaks Korean and English. She speaks Chinese.
2. James is not feeling well. He will not be here today.
3. I love fruit. I like bananas, pineapple, and berries.
4. She hates housecleaning. She doesn't mind cooking.
5. Houseplants require much care and attention. Outdoor plants must be cared for properly.
6. Tina lost her keys. She could not drive home.

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