Coherence and Cohesion

# Cohesion and Coherence

Cohesion and coherence are what differenciates a text from a collection of sentences. Cohesion is the glue that sticks together words and sentences within a paragraph, whereas coherence looks at a text as a whole.

## Cohesion

There are five ways to achieve good cohesion:

1. **Reference Words:** words that do not have a sense of their own but refer to something else mentioned before in a text. e.g. this, these, that, those, it, they, them.   
   When writing a text, make sure that it is clear to everybody what your reference words refer to.
2. **Repeated words/ideas:** Sometimes it is necessary to repeat certain words in a paragraph because they are referred to in a sentence not directly adjacent to the one written.   
   Headings are a special case. Do not use the words in a heading as part of the first paragraph. Repeat the words of the heading (as an example see the section on coherence below).
3. **Transition signals:** Two or more sentences/ideas are put in relation to each other. See cheat sheet.
4. **Substitution:** One or more words are replaced by others.   
   Example*: There are two types of people: one that divides people into two groups and the other that doesn't*. (Both 'one' and 'the other' are substitutions for the word 'group'.)
5. **Ellipsis:** Words are omitted because their meaning is clear.   
   ""Wise men talk because they have something to say; fools [talk], because they have to say something" (Plato). 'Talk' can be omitted, the meaning of the sentence is still clear to the reader.

## Coherence

Coherence refers to how ideas are organised and how they progress within a text. It also determines how easy it is for the reader/audience to understand these ideas.

### How to improve coherence

There are two basic ways how to improve coherence of a text:

1. Organising ideas
2. Use an outline before writing
3. Use a reverse outline after writing (i.e. create the outline from the written text).
4. Make sure the text is well structured, i.e. it has a thesis statement, topic sentences (for each paragraph) and a conclusion.
5. Make sure that all ideas, examples etc. presented in a paragraph relate to its topic sentence.
6. Make sure that all the topic sentences relate to the thesis statement at the beginning.
7. Making ideas understandable to the reader
8. consider the audience of a text
9. consider the purpose for which a text is written
10. use peer editing (i.e. ask a colleague to read the text).