**Coherence:** Paragraphs should have both coherence and unity. A paragraph with unity develops a single idea thoroughly and links it to the rest of the paper. Paragraph coherence is achieved when sentences are ordered in a logical manner and when clear transitions link sentences. A paragraph is a sequence of related sentences that develop a single idea. The main idea can be implied, but most often is directly stated in a topic sentence that begins the paragraph. The paragraph is unified if all of the sentences support the main idea or topic sentence and coherent if the sentences build upon the previous sentences within the paragraph. Controlling both these elements is essential for effective writing.

Tips:

### 1.  Organise your paragraphs around one main idea

### 2. You don’t have to include all your ideas/examples – learn to select

### 3. “for example” is not the best way to introduce an example

### 4. Just say how the example illustrates the main point

**Sample of a coherent paragraph**

(1)Throughout most of my school days my eyes failed to focus correctly when reading. (2)Consequently, I saw different symbols every time I read a sentence. (3)As a result, the printed page was a chaotic kaleidoscope of constantly changing letters that made no sense. (4) For example, when reading the last sentence I would see: “A tters made sense,” or “As le ter that made no ense,” or“Letters mad no sens,” depending on how my eyes focused on a sentence. (5)After my eye problem was corrected, my real problems began because it was assumed that I could now read like everyone else. (6)This was a big mistake that overlooked the psychological effects created by my visual disability. (7)Most importantly, I was left doubting my understanding when reading unfamiliar material while teachers began to give me increasingly complex material to read.

In this writer’s first sentence, he introduces the topic of the paragraph, then creates a

connection of cause and effect with his use of “consequently” at the beginning of the next

sentence.

• In sentence (3), he creates coherence by creating another cause and effect relationship with the

phrase, “as a result”, and by referring back to the “last sentence.”

• In sentence (5), he creates a narrative relationship between events by beginning his sentence

with “after” and repeats a key concept, “eye problem”, from the topic sentence.

• The writer then creates coherence in sentence (6) by using a pronoun, “this”, to refer back to an

event he described in sentence (5).

• In sentence (7), he completes the circle by referring to another key idea in his topic sentence,

that of reading.

Decide on an order for your sentences that will best develop the paragraph’s main idea.

Your supporting sentences are raw materials. They will not make sense to a reader unless

they are put in order. This order could be based on several factors:

**Chronological sequence**. This is useful for describing a sequence of events.

**Modified chronology**. Sometimes a major idea presented early in a paragraph can

be supplemented with necessary background information.

**Spatial position of different objects**. This method is useful for description.

**Logical form of argument**. Some form of logical proof, like a syllogism, can

serve as the basis for order.

Once you have put your sentences in order, express the connections between them with

transitional words or phrases. Think of these as signposts to guide the reader through

your paragraph. They should be clear.

**Sample 2**

In the first phase of our *study*, we will examine *market segments* in the Western Pacific region to determine how *Asian companies* have competed with *American* products. The *study* will examine, in detail, *labor costs* and the ability of *Asian competitors* to introduce new products quickly. By *studying*these elements, we will develop a plan that will demonstrate how *American industry* can restructure its operations so that it can better exploit unexpected *market opportunities*,*particularly in the Pacific Rim*.

This paragraph clearly explains what the study will do and what results can be expected by employing the following devices.

**Repetition of words**

The key words in the topic sentence are repeated several times within the paragraph. The repetition links the sentences and keeps the main idea in focus.

**Pronouns**

Sometimes the ideas from sentence to sentence are connected through the use of pronouns. Make sure pronouns clearly refer back to their antecedents, the words they replace.

**Related words**

Some of the key words are altered for a more specific meaning, but they are still connected to the previous ideas. *Asian companies* moves to *Asian competitors*; *market segments*, for instance, becomes the more specific topic of *labor costs.*

**Transitional words**

Sometimes sentences need an explicit connection, such as when the direction of the argument is turning or when an idea is to be paralleled or contrasted with an earlier idea. Words such as however or although signal a turn in the discussion, while words such as consequently or therefore can indicate a cause-effect relationship.