

Description

You can use a technique called “signaling” to eliminate choppiness in your writing. Every sentence of every paragraph should end in such a way that what follows seems natural to the reader. Otherwise, the passage feels choppy and readers will have to work to make sense of what you’ve written. They may go off on tangents that are not supported by the writing or they may simply stop reading altogether.

Properly signaled sentences carry the reader along with them. The reader is never bogged down by non-sequiturs or burdened with fillers. Here are some structures you can use to signal sentence flow:

Coordinating and Subordinating Conjunctions

Examples: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so, so that, before, after, unless, although, insofar as, whenever, because, since, why

Overlap

Using a word from the end of the first sentence in the beginning of the second sentence

Relative Clauses

A dependent clause that begins with a relative pronoun (who, whom, whose, that, or which) or a relative adverb (when, where, or why)

Demonstrative Pronouns

Examples: this, these, that

Coordinating and Subordinating Conjunctions

Here’s what happens when a writer almost totally recapitulates the idea of sentence 1 in the beginning of sentence 2 instead of using the right conjunction:

To successfully stride forward, planners must first target key sectors that relate to both the economy and to national security. To realize a technological leap forward in areas important to the national interest is a good way for developing nations to catch up to advanced ones without wasting limited resources.

Presented with this, the reader must struggle to determine whether any nuanced or new information is being presented in the first part of sentence 2. The writer could have better signaled the approach: outcome relationship between these two sentences by using a Subordinating Conjunction to combine them:

To successfully stride forward, key sectors that relate to both the economy and to national security must be targeted, so that developing nations can catch up to advanced ones

without wasting limited resources.

Overlap

Sometimes the opposite extreme obtains. In this example, sentence 2 is unmoored from sentence 1.

The people's continuous demand for material things is at odds with the austerity preached by Revolutionary leaders. No one wants to have less than their neighbors.

Knit these two sentences together and strengthen them both by repeating the strong word "austerity." This kind of repetition is called Overlap.

The people's continuous demand for material things is at odds with the austerity preached by Revolutionary leaders. Austerity is popular with no one.

Relative Clauses

Choppiness can also result when writers refrain from using Relative Clauses. Compare the next two examples.

There were 57 tasks in the Twelve-Year Plan. They were accomplished ahead of schedule.

There were 57 tasks in the Twelve-Year Plan, which were completed ahead of schedule.

The use of the relative clause in the second example smooths an awkward pause. Note that it attaches to the "plan" and not to the "tasks," with which it is not contiguous.

Demonstrative Pronouns

Finally, let's look at how a Demonstrative Pronouns can emphasize your point.

Scholars say that human beings are a cultural phenomenon defined by their use of S&T that first appeared 100,000 years ago.

Scholars define the human being as a cultural phenomenon defined by its use of S&T. That would mean S&T has been developing for 100,000 years.

This technique calls the reader's attention to a fact the writer thinks is worthy of analysis in its own right.

In this article we have looked at grammatical structures you can use to signal connectivity in your writing. These structures are Coordinating and Subordinating Conjunctions, Overlap, Relative Clauses, and Demonstrative Pronouns. Using them will make your writing flow!

Category

1. Language & Grammar
2. Reporting Research

Date Created

2014/03/04

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