

Creating Flow

Creating the body of an essay, as you already know, requires more than just putting the points and arguments in the right order. You also need to create flow between the paragraphs, connect them to one another (and to your thesis). This makes your essay more readable and more interesting.

This handout shows some of the ways of creating flow.

Sequence

A popular way of creating flow is to use sequences. A sequence can show the order of steps you need to follow to do something, or simply the order of the arguments you are presenting. In sequences, we usually use specific words at the beginnings of the first sentence in each paragraph or section of the essay. The words are usually used in this order:

1. First, ... (... Second, ... Third, ...)
2. Next, ... *or* Then ...
3. Finally/Lastly,...

Note that commas are required to follow all of these sequences words, except for “then”, after which it is optional.

Comparison

Another way to create flow is to connect a paragraph to the previous one using a comparison. When you show that the next point is more complicated, more interesting, more expensive, or whatever, you automatically connect it to the previous paragraph, too.

- Even worse, ... / Even better... / Even more expensive...
- However, there is a more interesting... / more expensive... / more frightening...
- There’s another reason that’s even scarier:... / ... even more surprising...

Note that we would use comparative until the last point, at which point it’s common to switch to the superlative:

- The scariest reason is ... / oldest reason is ... / etc.

Bridging

This is similar to comparison, but instead of comparing, you connect the paragraph through a simple addition. You’re not comparing the points, at least not yet, but you are stating that you’re starting a new point:

- There’s another reason...
- One more thing that is important is that...
- Another thing to consider is that...

This signals clearly to the reader to get ready for a new topic sentence that supports the thesis. It can work well when you need to connection points that are quite different or can’t really be compared.

Ending Open

Lastly, when you end a paragraph, you can end it in such a way that a new paragraph following it is expected, and necessary. The phrases in bold below signal that something connected will come in the next sentence

- ... This is **just one reason** why you should consider throwing your TV away.
- ... If TV is bad for children, we should at least **start** by not letting kids watch it.
- ... Getting rid of your TV is **an important part of** the solution.

Keywords

Using the same keywords over and over throughout your essay will not only help emphasize certain points, it will also help your essay to flow better. Reading the same words in different paragraphs helps the reader to see and feel the connections between those paragraphs and arguments. However, choose your keywords carefully! Don’t repeat just any word: always use keywords that are important to your thesis!