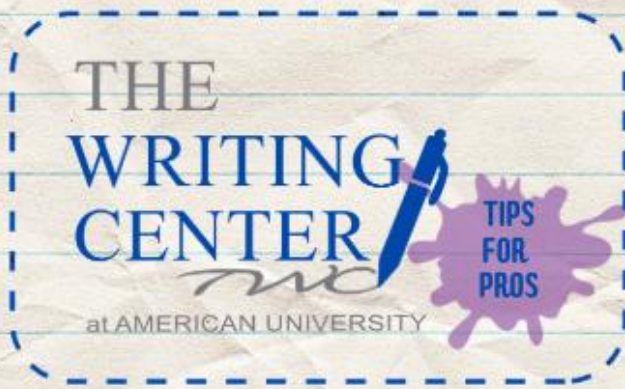




revising: organization/ structure

What does a well-organized paper look like?

It begins with a confident introduction that clearly states what the writer intends to establish and what sources they'll use. It ends with a conclusion that reaffirms how the evidence the writer laid out accomplished this task. In the middle, the writer moves through body paragraphs, explaining each idea fully before moving on to the next. When the writer shifts focus, she signals clearly to the reader with transition sentences and topic sentences. These transitions clearly state how the idea she just established and the next idea are related.

How do I know if my paper flows well/is well-organized?

That's the tricky part. We often are too close to see if our work makes sense to an outside. So: ask an outsider! You will know if your ideas flow logically once you ask a peer (and/or writing tutor) to read it through.

You can also use the following exercises to check that your structure is easy to follow.

If you want to make sure each paragraph is fully fleshed out: The PREP test

Go through each of your paragraphs and mark them with checkmarks to show that each of these bullet points is present.

Point: Does your paragraph have an introduction topic sentence? What is this paragraph going to be about?

Reason: Does your paragraph give reasoning for your topic sentence? Why do you think this way, or why is your point valid?

Example: Does your paragraph provide an example/ evidence from supporting sources that backup your reasoning. Do you provide quotes, and/or paraphrasing, and/or summary from other sources?

Point: Does your paragraph have a conclusion topic sentence? Does it sum up/(re)state the focus of the paragraph without being repetitive? Does it provide a smooth transition into your next paragraph?

If you want to make sure your paragraphs are in a logical order: Paragraph Cutting

If you have time and want to get hands-on with it, print out your paper and cut out each

paragraph separately. Write each paragraph's number on the back of the slip of paper. Now, try arranging them and rearranging them. Is there any alternate way that your points flow better?

If you're worried your ideas don't flow logically: Annotate and Read Out

Print out your paper. In the margins next to each paragraph, sum up the main idea of the paragraph in a sentence. Don't get hung up on vocabulary or academic language—summarize your point as frankly and concisely as possible. Now, read out each of these statements in order.

Do these ideas naturally flow? Where might you need to build up a transition? Are there any statements that repeat? Are there any closely related ideas that appear far away from each other?

If you're not sure your transitions are present and working well: Read Out Transitions

Go through your document, highlighting only the first and last sentences of each paragraph. Read just those sentences out loud, in order. Are your ideas clearly stated and attached to one another? Where is the relationship between ideas unclear?

Tips

- If you're using quotes, your explanation of the quote should be as long as the quote itself. Don't get outside sources to do your talking for you. To see if your paper as a whole is well-balanced between quotes and your own original thoughts, print it out and highlight quoted material. Is it less text than your original text? More?
- When this tip sheet says, "read out", it means it! READ OUT LOUD. Your ideas sound different and issues are more obvious when read aloud!
- Half of writing is ruminating. Start your revising process early so you can work in short spurts and avoid getting lost in your own thoughts. Breaks are crucial!