Cultures differ on their expectations for the roles writers and readers take in relation to a text. According to John Hinds (1987), some cultures (like the US) favor “writer-responsible” writing, in which the writer has the primary responsibility for making sure that ideas are clearly communicated to the reader, while other cultures (like Japan) favor “reader-responsible” writing, in which the reader is responsible for making sense out of the writer's ideas. While it is likely that all cultures use both styles in different contexts, it is undeniable that in US academic writing, writer-responsible text is preferred. In this handout, we share strategies for writing writer-responsible texts through the use of signposting (language that creates a route for a reader through a text, such as forecasting statements, topic sentences, and conjunctive adverbs) and cohesion (such as the movement from given-to-new information in sentences and the use of demonstrative pronouns).

**Signposting**

**Forecasting statements:** These are statements that announce to the reader content that will appear in the text. Examples: “I will argue that ...”; “In this section, I will describe ...”; “In this essay, I first x, then y, then z.”

**Topic sentences:** Typically the first line of each paragraph, topic sentences are used to indicate to the reader the focus of the paragraph. One test to see if topic sentences are used effectively is to copy and paste all first sentences to another document, and then read through them to see if a reader could understand the direction of the paper just based on these sentences.

**Conjunctive adverbs:** Also called “linking words,” conjunctive adverbs are words and phrases used to show the reader how the idea in one sentence related to that in the sentence before it. Here are examples¹ (for more examples, go to the Academic Phrasebank: [http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk](http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk)):

- **Highlighting or emphasizing a point:** Importantly, Indeed, In fact, More importantly, Furthermore, Moreover, It is important to highlight

- **Changing direction or creating a comparison:** However, Rather, In contrast, Conversely, On one hand, On the other hand, In comparison, Compared to, Another point to consider is

- **Adding a similar point:** Similarly, Likewise, Again, Also

- **Summarizing:** Finally, Lastly, In conclusion, To summarize, Overall

- **Acknowledging something and moving to a different point:** Although, Even though, Despite, Not withstanding

- **Following a line of reasoning:** Therefore, Subsequently, Hence, Consequently, Accordingly, As a result, As a consequence, To this end

Cohesion

Movement from given to new information: This sentence pattern creates a sense of “flow” for readers. Consider this example²:

Molecules are comprised of covalently bonded atoms. Molecules’ reactions are controlled by the strength of the bonds. Molecules, however, sometimes react slower than bond strength would predict.

Readers may describe these sentences as “choppy,” as there isn’t a clear relationship between them:

Molecules ... bonded atoms     Molecules ... bonded strength     Molecules ... bonded strength would predict

A → B        A → C     A → D

Now consider this revision:

Molecules are comprised of covalently bonded atoms. Bond strength controls a molecule’s reactions. Sometimes, however, those reactions are slower than bond strength would predict.

Now, the relationships between the ideas presented in the sentences are clearer:

Molecules ... bonded atoms     Bond strength ... reactions   Reactions ... bonded strength would predict

A → B        B → C     C → D

We can also use demonstrative pronouns (this/these) to move from given information to new information. A demonstrative pronoun plus a noun can be used to summarize or refer back to information given in a previous sentence, as shown in these examples³:

In recent years, the number of students applying for PhD programs has increased steadily, while the number of places available has remained fairly constant. This situation has resulted in intense competition for admission.

According to a recent survey, 26% of all American adults, down from 38% 30 years ago, now smoke. This decrease can be partly attributed to the mounting evidence linking smoking to fatal diseases, such as cancer.

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