

Coherence and Unity

Coherence refers to a certain characteristic or aspect of writing. Literally, the word means "to stick together." Coherence in writing means that all the ideas in a paragraph flow smoothly from one sentence to the next sentence. With coherence, the reader has an easy time understanding the ideas that you wish to express. Consider the following paragraph

My hometown is famous for several amazing natural features. First, it is noted for the Wheaton River, which is very wide and beautiful. On either side of this river, which is 175 feet wide, are many willow trees which have long branches that can move gracefully in the wind. In autumn the leaves of these trees fall and cover the riverbanks like golden snow. Second, on the other side of the town is Wheaton Hill, which is unusual because it is very steep. Even though it is steep, climbing this hill is not dangerous, because there are some firm rocks along the sides that can be used as stairs. There are no trees around this hill, so it stands clearly against the sky and can be seen from many miles away. The third amazing feature is the Big Old Tree. This tree stands two hundred feet tall and is probably about six hundred years old. These three landmarks are truly amazing and make my hometown a famous place.

Major Connectors :

Minor Connectors :

Now, look at this paragraph. Can you identify the main points?

Each of the U.S. manned space exploration projects had specific major goals. The Mercury project was designed to test whether or not human beings could survive and function in outer space. The Mercury project tested rockets with the new Mercury space capsule, which could hold one person. The Gemini project was intended to find out whether two people could work in the weightless environment of space. Gemini astronauts took "spacewalks." They floated outside their spacecraft in a spacesuit, connected to it by a tether. Gemini astronauts tried out new flying skills. Some astronauts flew two spacecraft extremely close together; this procedure was called "rendezvous." On some Gemini flights, astronauts physically linked two spacecraft together. Linking, or

"space docking," was a major goal of the Gemini program. The Apollo project, with three astronauts, was intended to test spacecraft and skills so that people could actually fly to the Moon and land on it. Performing scientific experiments on the lunar surface and collecting rocks for study on Earth were goals.

Now consider the same paragraph with a few changes:

Each of the U.S. manned space exploration projects had specific major goals. For example, the Mercury project was designed to test whether or not human beings could survive and function in outer space. *In addition*, the Mercury project tested rockets with the new Mercury space capsule, which could hold one person. As another example, the Gemini project was intended to find out whether two people could work in the weightless environment of space. One way of doing this was by having Gemini astronauts take "spacewalks." That is, they floated outside their spacecraft in a spacesuit, connected to it by a tether. Gemini astronauts also tried out new flying skills. For example, some astronauts flew two spacecraft extremely close together; this procedure was called "rendezvous." On some Gemini flights, astronauts physically linked two spacecraft together. This linking, or "space docking," was a major goal of the Gemini program. Finally, the Apollo project, with three astronauts, had the goal of testing spacecraft and skills so that people could actually fly to the Moon and land on it. Other goals included performing scientific experiments on the lunar surface and collecting rocks for study on Earth.

Do you see which of the connectors above are major and which are minor?

Here is a table of a few common connectors (also called **transitions**):

For example,	As another example,	On the one
For instance,	Another example of	hand,
One example of	[xxx] is (that)	On the other
(this) is	Finally,	hand,

First, Third, etc.	Second, To summarize,	In conclusion, To summarize,	However, ..., but... also
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Paragraph Unity

Unity is a very important characteristic of good paragraph writing. Paragraph unity means that one paragraph is about ONLY ONE main topic. That is, all the sentences -- the topic, supporting sentences, the detail sentences, and (sometimes) the concluding sentence -- are all telling the reader about ONE main topic. If your paragraph contains a sentence or some sentences that are NOT related to the main topic, then we say that the paragraph "lacks unity," or that the sentence is "off-topic."

Look at the following paragraph, which is similar to the paragraph that we have studied above. Does it have perfect unity? Try to find the sentence that is off-topic and **underline** it:

Each of the Russian manned space exploration projects had specific major goals. For example, the Vostok project was designed to test whether or not human beings could survive and function in outer space. For another example, the Voshkhod project was intended to find out whether people could work in the weightless environment of space. One Voshkhod cosmonaut experimented with weightlessness by taking a "spacewalk." That is, he floated in a spacesuit outside his Voshkhod spacecraft, connected to it by a tether. The cosmonaut to do this was Alexei Leonov. Several weeks later, Leonov's spacewalk was followed by that of U.S. astronaut Ed White. Finally, the Soyuz project, with three cosmonauts, had goals of testing spacecraft and spaceflight skills so that people could fly long missions in Earth orbit.