Global Coherence
Three features that help readers create local coherence in short passages:

- A sentence introducing the passage states at its end the key concepts that run through the rest of the passage.
- All the sentences that follow observe the principle of old then new information.
- Collectively, their *topics* focus on a few characters.
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A formula to help achieve global coherence:

• Begin each major section and subsection with a short, easily grasped segment that
  - states the point and
  - introduces the rest (the part that is longer and more complex).
Readers like to see four things:

• **Your readers must know where one section stops and the next one begins.**

• Readers must recognize a short segment that introduces each section and subsection

• At the end of that introductory segment, readers look for the sentence that states the point of the section, a statement that you expand on in the rest of that unit.

• Toward the end of that point sentence, they must see words that express the concepts that you develop in the rest of that unit.
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Thirty sixth-grade students wrote essays that were analyzed to determine the effectiveness of eight weeks of training to distinguish fact from opinion. That ability is an important aspect of making sound arguments of any kind. In an essay written before instruction began, the writers failed almost completely to distinguish fact from opinion. In an essay written after four weeks of instruction, the students visibly attempted to distinguish fact from opinion, but did so inconsistently. In three more essays, they distinguished fact from opinion more consistently, but never achieved the predicted level. In a final essay written six months after instruction ended, they did no better than they did in their pre-instruction essay. Their training had some effect on their writing during the instruction period, but it was inconsistent, and six months after instruction it had no measurable effect.
In this study, thirty six-grade students were taught to **distinguish fact from opinion**. They did so during the instruction, but the effect was **inconsistent**, **less than predicted**, and six months after instruction ended, the instruction had **no measurable effect**. In an essay written before instruction began, the writers failed almost completely to distinguish fact from opinion. In an essay written after four weeks of instruction, the students visibly attempted to distinguish fact from opinion, but did so inconsistently. In three more essays, they distinguished fact from opinion more consistently, but never achieved the predicted level. In a final essay written six months after instruction ended, they did no better than they did in their pre-instruction essay. We thus conclude that short-term training to distinguish fact from opinion has no consistent or long term effect.
Does your paper have global coherence?

1. Circle the introductory segment of each section.

2. Circle the sentence/sentences summarizing the point of every section.

3. If you read these *summarizing sentences* in sequence do you get a coherent summary of your paper?
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1. Segments that introduce major sections should be separate paragraphs.

2. The **point sentence** for each unit should be close to or at the end of each of those introductory segments.

3. Each point sentence should state at its end the key concepts that run through what follows.

4. When read in sequence, those point sentences along with the main point should coherently summarize your whole document.
Improving your global coherence

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- Write a point sentence for each section in your paper.
- Write a short introductory paragraph for each section incorporating your point sentence.
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Two more requirements for coherence

- Readers must see how everything in a section or whole is relevant to its point.
  - Sentences are relevant to a point when they offer these:
    * background or context
    * reasons supporting a point
    * evidence, facts, or data supporting a reason
    * an explanation of reasoning or methods
    * consideration of other points of view
Two more requirements for coherence

- Readers must see the principle behind the order of your document’s parts.
  - Readers also want to see the principal behind the order of the parts.
  - Readers look for 3 kinds of order:
    - **Chronological**: earlier → later, as a narrative or as a cause and effect. Signal time with *first, then, finally*; signal cause and effect with *as a result, because of that,*...
    - **Coordinate**: Paragraphs/sections/subsections equally support a point. Order these sections by importance, complexity and so on. Signal the order with phrases such as *first, second,*.. or *also, another, in addition,* ...
    - **Logical**: an example → generalization (or vice versa), premise and conclusion (or vice versa), or by assertion and contradiction.
Analyzing your paper’s global coherence

• How would classify the ordering of your paper’s sections?

• Pick a section and summarize the evidence presented in each paragraph to support your point.

• How would you classify the ordering of your evidence?

• Could your argument be made more coherent/stronger by a re-ordering of the evidence?

• If yes, what is this ordering?
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