**Effective Paragraph Writing**

*The following are keys to an effective paragraph:*

**Unity**

* All sentences in a paragraph explain, develop, and support a central idea in some way
* Achieve unity by having a clear purpose
	+ topic sentence
	+ all sentences are clearly related to topic sentence

**Development**

* + Don’t leave reader with any questions
	+ Full development of your ideas so the reader understands the assumptions, evidence and reasoning you have used
	+ Supporting detail which explain:
* What lead you to the conclusion you made in the paragraph?
* What texts and ideas do you refer to that influenced your thinking?
* What reasoning do you use?
* Does it answer the who, where and why questions?
	+ Evidence which fulfills the purpose of your essay:
		- Personal or factual
		- Emotional or logical
		- Direct or paraphrased quotes
	+ Pattern of development (creative to analytical)
		- Narration
		- Description
		- Process
		- Exemplification
		- Comparison/Contrast
		- Definition
		- Cause and Effect

**Length**

* + Long enough to fully develop your topic
	+ Focuses on one topic
	+ Supports the effect you are trying to create
* longer paragraphs slow readers down
* shorter paragraphs are easier and quicker to read
	+ Paragraphs over 12 sentences in an academic essay *probably* needs to be divided
	+ Paragraph of 5 or fewer sentences in an academic essay *probably* needs to be developed further or combined with another paragraph
	+ Length can vary greatly from discipline to discipline

**Coherence (FLOW)**

* + Sentences are arranged according to a definite plan
	+ Sentences are not just about the same main topic, but they also “stick together” and lead readers smoothly from the topic sentence to the concluding one
	+ Sentences follow, one from the other, in a way that makes sense
	+ Each sentence takes a logical step forward
	+ Coherence is achieved through use of *ordering principles*, *pronouns*, *transitional words*, and *repetition*:
* **Ordering Principles:**
* pattern of development that creates a logical flow between the sentences
* choose one method and make sure you use it consistently to link the ideas in your paragraph together
* **Pronouns:**
* use pronouns to refer to nouns in previous sentences in the paragraph, thus “sticking” the sentences together
* make sure it is clear what noun (antecedent) the pronoun is pointing to or you could cause confusion instead of coherence
* use them judiciously
* **Transitional Words:**
* provide bridges between sentences within the paragraph and between paragraphs
* words and phrase groups create relationships
	+ *addition* (“also,” “in addition to,” “additionally,” “furthermore”)
	+ *detail or example*(“for example,” “that is,” “more specifically”)
	+ *logic* (“therefore,” “thus,” “in conclusion”)
	+ *contrast* (“yet,” “nevertheless,” “on the other hand”)
	+ *similarity* (“likewise,” “similarly,” “in other words”). Make sure that the link you have created between your sentences is a clear and logical one.
* **Repetition:**
* Judicious repetition of key words and phrases and synonyms throughout a paper can provide your readers with necessary signposts and strengthen the flow of the essay
* Good rule of thumb is to use no more than two separate terms or phrases per paragraph, creating with variety without creating confusion

1 McCloud-Bondoc, Linda. "Writing Effective Paragraphs." *Write Site: Athabasca University*. N.p.. Web. 24 Oct 2013. <http://write-site.athabascau.ca/documentation/writing-effective-paragraphs.pdf>.