start

Flow & Unity

Understanding Flow & Unity

- We judge the *flow* of a sequence of sentences depending on how each sentence ends and the next begins.

- We judge the *unity* of passage depending on how all the sentences in a passage cumulatively begin.

No Flow, No Unity

❧ Recent research has given us much deeper—and more surprising—insights into the father's role in childrearing. My family is typical of the east side in that we never had much money. Their tongues became black and hung out of their mouths. The back-to-basics movement got a lot of press, fueled as it was by fears of growing illiteracy and cultural demise.

Flow without Unity

❧ Recent research has given us much deeper—and more surprising—insights into the father's role in childerearing. Childrearing is a complex process that is frequently investigated by psychologists. Psychologists have also investigated sleep patterns and dreams. When we are dreaming, psychologists have shown, we are often reviewing recent events in our lives.

Flow with Unity

❧ Recent research has given us a much deeper—and more surprising—insights into the father's role in childrearing. It shows that in almost all of their interactions with children, fathers do things a little differently from mothers. What father's do—their special parenting style—is not only highly complementary to what mothers do but is by all indications important in its own right.

A Sense of Flow

❧ Scientists have raised some astonishing questions about the nature of the universe by studying black holes in space. <u>The collapse of a dead star into a point perhaps no larger than a marble creates a black hole.</u> So much matter compressed into so little volume changes the fabric of space around it in puzzling ways.

A Sense of Flow

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Old/New Contract

- To Atlanta on Flight 29: Gate C12

  To Dallas on Flight 35: Gate C25

  To Memphis on Flight 16: Gate B20

- Gate B20: Flight 16 to Memphis

  Gate C12: Flight 29 to Atlanta

  Gate C25: Flight 35 to Dallas

Diagnose & Revise Flow

- ❧ Begin sentences with information familiar to your reader.

- ❧ End sentences with information readers cannot anticipate.

Diagnose & Revise Flow

The old/new contract is another principle for writing clear prose. Beginning your sentences with something old—something that links to what has gone before—and then ending your sentences with new information that advances the argument is what the old/new contract asks writers to do. An effect called *flow*, which is closely related to *unity*, is created by following this principle. Whereas the relationship between topic sentence and the body of the paragraph between the parts and the whole is what *unity* refers to, the clear relationship between one sentence and the text is what *flow* relates to.

Diagnose & Revise Flow

Another principle for writing clear prose is the old/new contract. The old/new contract asks writers to begin sentences with something old—something that links to what has gone before—and then to end sentences with new information that advances the argument. Following this principle creates an effect called *flow*, which is closely related to *unity*. Whereas *unity* refers to the clear relationship between the body of a paragraph and its topic sentence and between the parts and the whole, *flow* refers to the clear relationship between one sentence and the next, between part and part.

Unity: A Sense of the Whole

ꕥ Sayner, Wisconsin, is the snowmobile capital of the world. The buzzing of snowmobile engines fills the air, and their tank-like tracks crisscross the snow. The snow reminds me of Mom's mashed potatoes, covered with furrows I would draw with my fork. Her mashed potatoes usually make me sick—that's why I play with them. I like to make holes in the middle of potatoes and fill it with melted butter. This behavior had been the subject of long chats between me and my analyst.

Unity: A Sense of the Whole

A paragraph will have unity when:

- Subjects of sentences make up a set of related topics.

- Sentences share a set of common themes or ideas.

- One sentence in the paragraph states its main point.

Topic Sentence

The procedure is actually quite simple. First, you arrange things into different groups. Of course, one pile may be enough depending on how much there is to do. If you have to go somewhere else due to lack of facilities, that is the next step, otherwise, you are pretty well set. Next you operate the machines according to the instructions. After you complete the procedure, you arrange the materials into different groups again. Then you can put them in their appropriate places. Eventually, you will have to repeat the whole cycle. However, that is part of life.

Topic Sentence

❧ <u>The procedure for washing clothes is actually quite simple.</u> First, you arrange things into different groups. Of course, one pile may be enough depending on how much there is to do. If you have to go somewhere else due to lack of facilities, that is the next step, otherwise, you are pretty well set. Next you operate the machines according to the instructions. After you complete the procedure, you arrange the materials into different groups again. Then you can put them in their appropriate places. Eventually, you will have to repeat the whole cycle. However, that is part of life.

Revise & Diagnose Unity

_ʕ_ Diagnose

 a. Underline the first 7 or 8 words of each sentence.

 b. If you can, underline the first 5 or 6 words of every clause in those sentences, both subordinate and main.

Revise & Diagnose Unity

∾ Analyze

    a. Do the underlined words constitute a relatively small set of related ideas?

    b. Do the words name the most important characters, real or abstract?

    c. What are the main topics/characters? (Try giving the passage a title.)

Revise & Diagnose Unity

ॐ Revise

a. In most (not necessarily all) of the sentences, use subjects to name the main topics.

b. Put those subjects close to the beginning of the sentences.

Diagnose & Revise Unity

❧ The particular ideas toward the beginning of sentences define what a passage is "about" for a reader. Moving through a paragraph from a unified point of view is made possible by a sequence of topics that constitute a limited set of related ideas. A seeming absence of context for each sentence is one consequence of making random shifts in topics. Feeling of dislocation, disorientation, and lack of focus in a passage occur when this happens.

Diagnose Unity

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Analyze Unity

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Revise Unity

~ Readers look for consistent topics of sentences to tell them what a whole passage is "about." If they feel that its sequence of topics focuses on a limited set of related ideas, then they will feel they are moving through that passage from a coherent point of view. But if topics seem to shift randomly, then readers have to begin each sentence from no unified point of view, and when that happens, they feel dislocated and disoriented, and the passage seems out of focus.

To Create Flow & Unity

Flow

 ❧ Begin sentences with familiar information.

 ❧ End sentences with new information.

Unity

 ❧ Provide a topic sentence for each paragraph.

 ❧ Begin sentences with a consistent set of topics.

A Model of Clarity

Topic		Stress	
Familiar, short, simple		New, long, complex	
Subject	Verb	(Object)	
Character	Action		

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