Know That It Flows:

Tips for Writing Papers That Are Clear, Organized, and Purposeful

Reverse Outline: A simple way to check for solid organization.
- In the margins next to each paragraph, write a short phrase that summarizes your paragraph. If you are unable to summarize the paragraph in a brief statement, you may have too many ideas in the paragraph.
- Do a **THESIS CHECK** to ensure each paragraph relates to your thesis.
- Make sure each paragraph has a clearly stated topic sentence.

Use Transitions: Vital words and phrases that connect your ideas.
- Transitions signal relationships between ideas. These signals enable your readers to stay engaged and understand the logic of your paper.
- Although transitions are an excellent help with connecting your ideas and making your paper flow, they cannot replace solid organization.
- Transitions add flavor to your writing, but they do not replace the substance.

Here are some helpful transitions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Addition or Adding Support</th>
<th>Contrast</th>
<th>Cause or Effect</th>
<th>Example or Evidence</th>
<th>Exceptions</th>
<th>Sequence of Order</th>
<th>Summary or Conclusion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Also</td>
<td>However</td>
<td>Because</td>
<td>For example</td>
<td>Yet</td>
<td>First</td>
<td>To conclude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In addition</td>
<td>By contrast</td>
<td>Since</td>
<td>In this case</td>
<td>Nevertheless</td>
<td>Second</td>
<td>In brief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Again</td>
<td>Although</td>
<td>Evidently</td>
<td>For instance</td>
<td>Despite</td>
<td>Third</td>
<td>In conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once again</td>
<td>On the other hand</td>
<td>Thus</td>
<td>On this occasion</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>At this time</td>
<td>Summing up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Then</td>
<td>Compared to</td>
<td>As a result</td>
<td>As an illustration</td>
<td>Still</td>
<td>Next</td>
<td>In the end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finally</td>
<td>By comparison</td>
<td>For</td>
<td>Specifically</td>
<td>In spite of</td>
<td>Then</td>
<td>On the whole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Next</td>
<td>While</td>
<td>Therefore</td>
<td>Namely</td>
<td>Of course</td>
<td>Finally</td>
<td>Thus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources:
Repetition: Repeat key ideas to keep the topic consistent.

- The MAIN IDEAS are repeated throughout the paper/paragraph to create a sense of unity within the paper.
- KEY TERMS are used often (but not too much) to emphasize your point. Emphasizing also helps you stay on track with your idea.
- If you feel as though you have repeated the word too many times, find a synonym.

Old to New: Move from familiar information to new Information.

- Readers can move more easily through information if you begin your sentences with what is familiar then move to what is unfamiliar.
- Moving from old to new information not only improves clarity but also helps your reader build comfortably upon each new idea.
- Without moving from old to new, readers may feel overwhelmed with new information and find it difficult to understand the topic.

Example paragraph:

Coffee lovers will be happy to learn the many health benefits of drinking coffee. [Even though] the caffeine content in coffee has been the subject of much scrutiny, researchers found that an appropriate amount of coffee is beneficial for good health. [For example], research shows that drinking coffee reduces the risk of certain cancers and heart disease. [Along with] reducing many health risks, coffee also packs in many antioxidants that boost the immune system. [In fact], Americans receive more antioxidants from coffee than from any other source. [Although] coffee drinkers need to moderate their java-loving habit, they can happily sip at their cup full of health benefits.

_____ = Repetition  [ ] = Transitions  **Bold** = Old to New

Finally, ask these questions:

- What is my thesis?
- Can I identify the topic sentence in each paragraph?
- Am I able to relate each paragraph back to the thesis or main topic of my paper?
- Do I use transitions to connect each paragraph to the next?
- Do I introduce old information first and new information last?
- Can I identify the key terms in my paper? Are these ideas repeated throughout the paper?
- If I feel as though I am using a particular word too often, what are synonyms I can use to replace it?
- Are my sentences clear? If so, are they unified with the other sentences in the paragraph?