

Outlining, Organization, and Cohesion

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Tonight's Agenda

- Two major organization strategies:
 - Brainstorming
 - Outlining
- Cohesion:
 - What is it?
 - How to achieve it
- More organization strategies
- Conclusion

On Organization in Scholarly Writing

- The organization of scholarly writing is simply the organization of an argument
 - Logical: Conclusions follow naturally from assumptions and reasoning
 - Hierarchical: Thesis, major reasons, supporting evidence, conclusion

On Organization in Scholarly Writing

- Since writing is the expression of your thoughts, you must first organize your ideas
 - Organization begins during the research process
 - Determine thesis, find/evaluate/classify sources and supporting evidence

Two Major Organization Strategies

- **Brainstorming:** Chaos permitted
 - What do I want to achieve in this paper?
 - What is my research question?
 - What do I want to argue?
 - What are the ways I can go about answering my research question?
 - What sources will help me to support my argument?

Two Major Organization Strategies

- **Outlining:** Evolving organization
 - Helps a writer to determine what to write, and the order in which to write it
 - Helps a writer to reflect on what she has written, and the order in which she wrote it (“reverse outlining”)

More on Outlining

- When should I be outlining?
 1. Before writing/during research:
 - Settle on a thesis
 - Find support for it
 - Organize evidence in a hierarchical way

More on Outlining

- When should I be outlining?
2. While writing: An iterative process
- Am I making the points I set out to make?
 - Are there key points that my argument is missing?
 - Are there unnecessary points/evidence that I can omit from the paper?

More on Outlining

- When should I be outlining?
3. After writing/during revisions:
- Does my paper accomplish what I set out to accomplish?
 - Did I stay true to my original outline?
 - If not, is my actual organization better than the one I proposed?

Two Types of Outlining

1. **Point-Based Outlining:**

- A series of assertions or claims you plan to make in your paper
- Supporting evidence or reasoning under each claim
- Organizing series from beginning to end as links in a chain (of reasoning)

Two Types of Outlining

2. Paragraph Outlining:

- A series of topic sentences which (will) begin each of the paragraphs in your paper
- Each paragraph's topic sentence should state the main idea of the paragraph
- Examine sequence of points: Can you understand the argument being made without reading the details of the paper?

Outlining Activity

- Sample paper: “Flawed Paired Testing Still Best Bet in Identifying Racial Segregation in the Housing Market”
- What is the thesis of the paper?
- Paper’s paragraph outline: Does it work?

Cohesion

- What is cohesion?
 - Cohesion is the way in which writing “sticks together”
 - Organization played out at a micro level: Section by section; paragraph by paragraph; sentence by sentence
 - Does the writing make sense?
 - Are the parts of the written argument clearly linked to one another?

Cohesion

- “Behind rules on what to avoid lies a rule on what to seek. It’s the Rule of Coherence: make writing hang together. The reader can understand writing that hangs together, from phrases up to entire books. She can’t understand writing filled with irrelevancies” (McCloskey, 2000, p. 50).

More Organization Strategies

- Determine your thesis and stick to it
 - What problem are you attempting to solve?
 - What are the possible answers to your research question?
 - What answer are you offering?
 - What is your stance on a particular issue?

More Organization Strategies

- Structure your paper around your argument
 - Communicate your main point immediately
 - Give your reader a sense of where you are going with the paper (especially long papers)
 - Logic and hierarchy:
 - Major reasons for your thesis?
 - Supporting evidence for each reason?

More Organization Strategies

- Imagine that you are telling a story
 - A story makes no sense if the events are out of order
 - A story makes no sense if its events do not have any supporting detail, or context
 - A story makes no sense if you complicate it with random, irrelevant details

More Organization Strategies

- One paragraph, one idea
 - Each paragraph should have a point, and only one point
 - Typical structure:
 - Topic sentence: Point of paragraph
 - Elaboration on the point
 - Supporting evidence for the point

More Organization Strategies

- **Parallelism:** Expressing parallel ideas in parallel form

- **Examples:**

- “The reader can understand writing that hangs together, from phrases up to entire books. She can’t understand writing filled with irrelevancies” (McCloskey, 2000, p. 50).
- “The regression showed that investment was a very important determinant of a country’s GDP growth rate. The country’s type of government was not an significant predictor of its GDP growth rate.”

More Organization Strategies

- Repetitions/variations of key words
 - Example:
 - “Recent advances in trade theory highlight the importance of political relationships between trading partners for the volume of trade. These results suggest that a country hoping to increase its volume of trading with its trading partner would do best to focus on the quality of its political relations.”

More Organization Strategies

- **Nominalization:** Turning verbs into nouns

- Examples:

- Link / Linkages
- Connect / Connection
- Growing / Growth
- Increasing / Increases
- “US GDP was steadily increasing over the post-war period. These increases in GDP led to a growing standard of living.”

More Organization Strategies

- Use one word to mean one thing
 - Bad ideas: “economic development,” “industrialization,” “growing structural differentiation,” “economic and social development,” “economic growth,” etc. (McCloskey, 2000, p. 56).

More Organization Strategies

- Keep a modifier near the word it modifies
 - Examples:
 - “The changes in investment spending that caused GDP to increase were rapid.”
 - “The rapid changes in investment spending caused GDP to increase.”
 - “Voter support for the new urban development policy, which the government proposed to implement soon, was ardent.”
 - “Voters ardently supported the new urban development policy that the government proposed to implement soon.”

Online Resources

- Purdue University's Online Writing Lab:
 - http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_outline.html
 - Overview of what an outline is and tips on how to organize one
- Harvard University's Writing Center:
 - <http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~wricntr/documents/Outlining.html>
 - Overview of creating an outline in the context of a hypothetical paper topic

Online Resources

- University of Missouri's Campus Writing Program:
 - [http://cwp.missouri.edu/resources/five_minute_workshops_and_teaching_resources/Five_Minute_Workshops/Coherence in Writing.htm](http://cwp.missouri.edu/resources/five_minute_workshops_and_teaching_resources/Five_Minute_Workshops/Coherence_in_Writing.htm)
 - Example paragraphs: One not very cohesive and one very cohesive
 - Overview of tips to increase cohesion in writing

Conclusion

- Begin the research and writing process early
- Organize your ideas, then your written expression of them
- Trial and error: Be willing to make changes to your organization (and outline) as you go
- Write with an argument in mind

Resources for Writing in Economics

- Steven A. Greenlaw *Doing Economics: A Guide to Understanding and Carrying Out Economic Research*. Houghton Mifflin Company. New York. 2006.
- <http://college.hmco.com/economics/greenlaw/research/1e/students/index.html>
- Deirdre N. McCloskey *Economical Writing*. Waveland Press, Inc. Prospect Heights. 2000.
- <http://www.waveland.com/Titles/McCloskey.htm>
- Robert H. Neugeboren *The Student's Guide to Writing Economics*. Routledge. New York. 2005.
- http://www.routledge.com/shopping_cart/products/product_detail.asp?sku=&isbn=0415701236&parent_id=&pc

Remaining Talks in the Series

- “The Analytical Essay”
Tuesday, March 20, 3:00-4:30pm
Monteith 339
- “Presenting Statistical Evidence and Graphical Information in Written Work”
Wednesday, April 4, 3:00-4:30pm
Monteith 339