

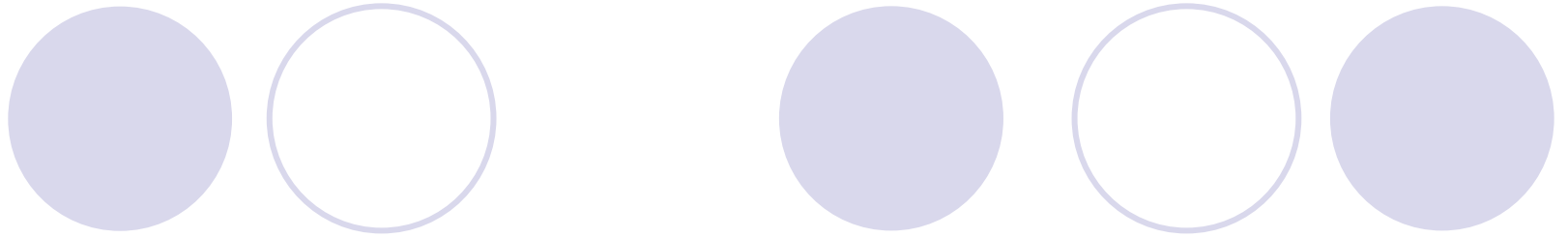


U.S. Academic Writing

Considerations for Non-native
English Speakers

STRUCTURE-----LANGUAGE

- Linear structure
- Obvious thesis/claim
- Flow
- Clearly written thesis/claim
- Transition words and phrases
- Direct, concise language
- Appropriate language



STRUCTURE



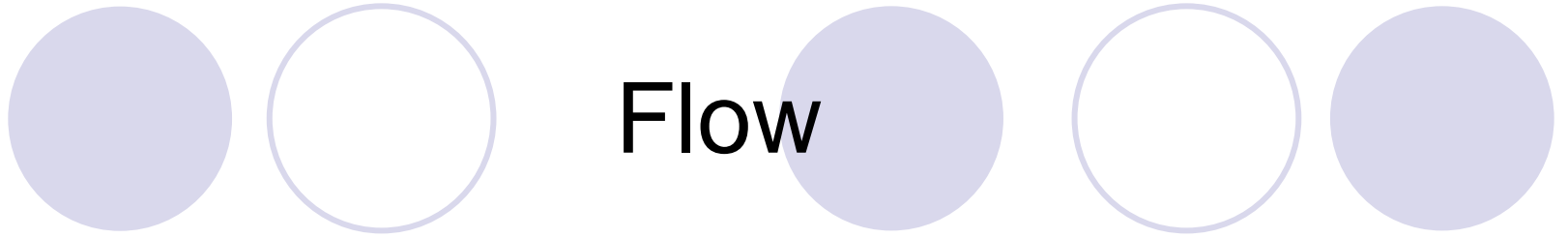
Linear Structure

- Think of giving directions to your readers to guide them efficiently from one “place” to another.
- Organizing your thoughts and ideas *before* writing will help achieve this structure.
- To do this organizing, use an outline or some type of diagram, for example, a flowchart or “tree.”
- Online resources/handouts: “Roadmaps” (<http://uwp.aas.duke.edu/wstudio/resources/documents/Roadmaps.rev.pdf>), “Guide to Mapping” (<http://depts.gallaudet.edu/Englishworks/reading/mapping.html>)

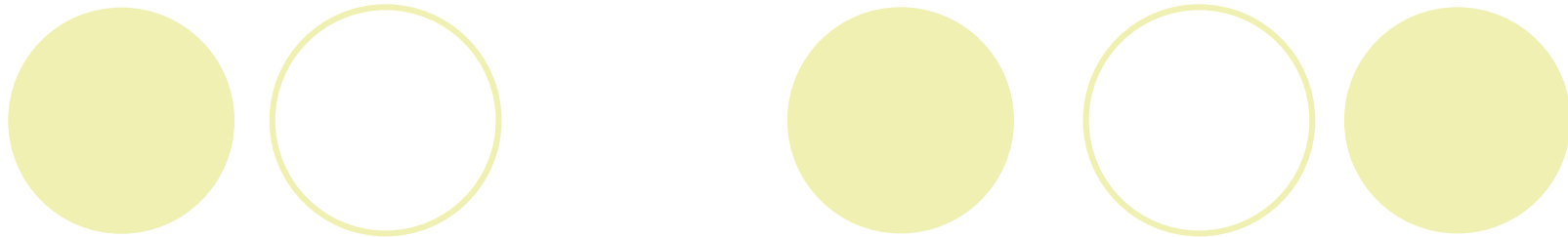


Obvious Thesis/Claim

- A thesis (also called a main claim) is the main point that you will make in your essay or paper.
- It occurs near the beginning, typically in the introductory section.
- All content that follows the thesis must connect to it by supporting or clarifying it.
- Different academic fields may have specific requirements for constructing a thesis/claim.



- “Flow” refers to the verbal connection of your ideas to each other throughout your paper.
- “Flow” applies at both the level of sentences and paragraphs.
- One way to achieve “good flow” is to use transitional words and phrases between sentences and paragraphs.



LANGUAGE



Clearly Written Thesis

- A thesis is usually one to three sentences long.
- A thesis makes a *specific* claim.
- Examples:
 - Not very specific: “North Carolina apple farmers are responding to the current economic situation by finding new ways to generate income.”
 - Better: “With hurricanes causing significant crop damage over the past decade, North Carolina apple farmers are increasingly relying on agro-tourism to generate supplemental income.”

Transition Words and Phrases

- You can use “this” + a linking word or phrase that refers to a previous sentence or paragraph. For example: “North Carolina apple farmers are increasingly relying on agro-tourism to provide supplemental income. *This new type of tourism* has proven to be more profitable than initially expected.”
- You can use specific words and phrases to indicate a relationship between sentences and paragraphs.

Transition Words and Phrases

- Examples:
 - “in the same way” for similarity
 - “however” for exception or contrast
 - “first,” “next,” “finally” for order or sequence
 - “currently” to indicate time
 - “in fact” for emphasis
 - “consequently” if one thing/event leads to another
 - “furthermore” for additional information or evidence
 - “finally” to sum up or conclude
- Online resource/handout: “Transitions”
(<http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/transitions.html>)

Direct and Concise Language

- Evaluate sentences for length and complexity. Are your points clear or will your readers be confused by overly long and complicated sentences?
- Use words that fit your audience and that you can use comfortably; beware the thesaurus!
- Explain your points fully, but don't be redundant.



Appropriate Language

- Formal versus informal
- Jargon
- Idioms and slang
- Discriminatory language

Formal versus informal language

- Who is your audience?
 - How well do you know them?
 - Are you writing in a formal or informal setting?
- What is your purpose?
 - To impress your audience?
 - To display your knowledge to your audience?
 - To persuade your audience?
 - To educate an audience unfamiliar with your topic?



- Jargon is vocabulary that is used by people with a common knowledge set, for example, physicians, engineers, basketball fans, etc.
- Know your audience!
 - Will your audience understand specialized terminology?
 - Do you need to demonstrate your specialized knowledge by using appropriate terminology?



Idioms and slang

- Idioms

- Can you use them correctly?
- Are they formal or informal idioms?
- Are you writing for native or non-native speakers?

- Slang

- Slang is usually inappropriate for academic writing.

Discriminatory Language

- Don't use:
 - Language that stereotypes a group of people.
 - “Mary is 13 years old, so she must be more interested in new clothes than in school.”
 - Sexist language.
 - “*Man's* greatest invention is the automobile.”
 - “My neighbor is a *woman doctor*.”
 - Masculine pronouns (he, his, him) exclusively for the generic singular.
 - “The average U.S. citizen likes to drive *his* car.”
- Online resource/handout: “Using Appropriate Language” (<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/608/01/>)



REFERENCES

- Duke University Writing Studio. “Developing a Central Claim.” http://uwp.aas.duke.edu/wstudio/resources/documents/developing_claim_001.pdf. Accessed March 17, 2008.
- Online Writing Lab (OWL) at Purdue University. 1995-2001. “Basic Tips for ESL Students: Writing for an American Academic Audience.” <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/print/esl/eslaudience.html>. Accessed March 4, 2008.
- Online Writing Lab (OWL) at Purdue University. 1995-2008. “Using Appropriate Language.” <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/608/01/>. Accessed March 4, 2008.
- The Writing Center at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. 1998-2007. “Transitions.” <http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/transitions.html>. Accessed March 4, 2008.