Strategies for Writing Coherently: Topic Sentences and Transitional Words and Expressions

1. Be Clear**--**Express your thoughts simply and directly.
2. Guide the Reader**--**Use signposts that show the reader what lies ahead and how thoughts relate to one another. Topic sentences, generally the first sentence in each paragraph, introduce the content of a paragraph; the remaining sentences are related details that support the topic sentence.
3. Put Your Thoughts in Order**--**Arrange information so that “first things come first.”

Below are four common ways of organizing paragraphs and essays:

Chronological Order--Write about events in the order in which they occurred. Use chronological order for telling a true or fictional story, for writing about a fictional event, and for describing steps in a process.

Spatial Order--Organize your writing spatially when you want to describe a person, an animal, a place, or an object. Include details in an orderly way, moving from left to right, top to bottom, near to far, or inside to outside.

Order of Importance**--**Organize by degree of importance when trying to persuade your audience. State the least important reasons and details first, and end with the most important ones---or the reverse.

Logical Order**--**Organize your paragraphs logically to give information in the order a reader needs to know it. Usually, logic determines which details you group together or where you provide background information or definition of terms.

Transitional wordsand phrases connect sentences within a paragraph or one paragraph to the next so that your writing flows smoothly.

Some Common Transitional Words and Expressions

To show time**--**after, afterward, at last, before, during, finally, first, immediately, later, soon, then, when

To show place--above, across, among, behind, below, between, in front of, inside, into, off, outside, there, through, under

To show examples--for example, for instance, in addition, in other words, namely, that is

To summarize--as a result, finally, therefore

To emphasize--for this reason, again, moreover, most important, in fact

To show order of importance--above all, finally, first, most importantly, second, then, lastly

To showcause and effect**--**as a result, because, consequently, if . . . then, for that reason, since, so, so that, therefore

Tocompare--also, and, like, likewise, as similarly, too

Tocontrast--although, however, in contrast (to), nevertheless, on the other hand, but, still, yet

Source: Goldenberg, Phyllis, et al. *Grammar for Writing.* New York: Sadler-

Oxford, 2000. Print.