

Cohesion in writing

Cohesion refers to the logical flow and connections among words (this may overlap somewhat with coherence, the logical flow of ideas).

1. Noun and pronoun reference

1. Keyword repetition

Key words in the discussion are repeated, more commonly in the following situations: (1) when multiple possible referents or items are discussed, especially in more technical and scientific writing, and (2) repetition for rhetorical effect, especially in less formal writing or speaking.

[1] Participants in the study were allowed a choice of several options: a direct rebate of 10%, a significant discount on a purchase of an extended warranty, or a coupon for 20% on a future purchase. Overwhelmingly, subjects chose the 10% rebate option.

[2] Many cities are overcrowded. This city is overcrowded. This city lacks resources. But now there is help for this city.

2. Synonyms

The meaning of a good synonym is close enough so that the thought continues, but is different enough so that the idea expands and gains greater definition than it would by simply repeating the same word over (and this avoids redundancy and boring repetition).

This new engine is fast and powerful, but requires more toxic fuels. This leads to concerns about its usability, maintenance of the apparatus, and whether a vehicle with such a device be legal?

The herd migrated to the steppes, and then traveled to the tundra. It was quite a trek.

3. Pronouns

Demonstrative pronouns and adjectives include *this, that, these, those* (pronouns if used alone, as in “this is it” and adjectives if used to modify a noun, as in “this software”). Non-native writers may use *it* when *this* would be better, or *this* plus another noun, as in “this situation.” The noun refers to the topic of the discussion, and can be called a summarizing or referential noun. In formal and academic writing, *this* as a pronoun often refers back to a whole idea discussed previously.

Many universities now focus on their status in international rankings, and may thus turn to short-term means of boosting their rankings, such as pushing for more courses taught in English, to the detriment of meaningful teaching and learning. This [*or* this situation, this circumstance] ultimately does not serve the students or faculty, for whose sake the university should be run.

A general astronomy conference voted to demote Pluto to a planetoid from its previous status as a regular planet, as many general astronomers argued strongly for a particular criterion for defining a planet that would exclude Pluto. This [*or* this conclusion / decision / criterion], however, is strongly rejected by many planetary astronomers, who still argue strongly that Pluto is a true planet.

How each feature factors in individually has been examined, but few studies have examined their combined effects. ~~The~~ This lack of research provides the basis for the current study.

2. Relative clauses

1. Identifying (restrictive) relative clause

Most relative clauses are of this type. The relative clause (RC) identifies or specifies which item is discussed (e.g., not any “X,” but the “X which we saw yesterday”¹). This kind of RC only requires a comma if the relative pronoun is separated from the modified noun by other words, or in complex possessive relative clause constructions.

- [a] We will hear a talk by the man who invented the warp drive engine.
- [b] We will listen to the engineer tonight, who is the inventor of the warp drive engine.
- [c] The warp drive engine, whose fields were causing environmental damage, will be taken offline for repair.

2. Non-identifying (non-restrictive) relative clause

These simply add further descriptive information about the modified noun – most commonly, a proper noun or specific, known item. It is always separated by commas from the rest of the sentence in writing (by a voice pause / break in speaking). This is equivalent to a grammatical appositive (like the second sentence), which simply adds further descriptive information, not information to identify it or distinguish it from other entities.

- [a] Prof. Schmidt, who happens to be a world-famous expert on trans-uranium metals, will be speaking tonight at the conference.
- [b] Prof. Schmidt, a world-famous expert on trans-uranium metals, will be speaking tonight at the conference.

3. Descriptive phrases using *with*

East Asian students often use relative clauses with *have* as the main verb for simple descriptive phrases, when one normally would use a simple prepositional phrase using *with*. The full relative clause would be used in situations where the writer wants to emphasize possessing something or having a property, rather than a simple description. Otherwise,

1 In logic terms, it restricts the set of possible X's to one particular X, hence the traditional but less helpful grammatical term, 'restrictive clause.'

such expressions sound weak, and can be replaced with *with* or a stronger verb.

[1] We identified patients who had mild symptoms of hypertension

→ patients with mild symptoms of hypertension

[2] East Asian students often use relative clauses that have “have” as the main verb

→ relative clauses with “have” as the main verb

[3] We identified students who had an intrinsic interest in language learning

→ students with an intrinsic interest

→ students who showed an intrinsic interest

→ students exhibiting an intrinsic interest

3. Parallel structures

Consistent structure and wording with complex sentences is needed for smooth flow. Please refer to the extra handout on parallel structures.

Not Parallel: The teacher said that he was a poor student because he waited until the last minute to study for the exam, completed his lab problems in a careless manner, and his motivation was low.

Parallel: The teacher said that he was a poor student because he waited until the last minute to study for the exam, completed his lab problems in a careless manner, and lacked motivation.

Not Parallel: The sales representative expected that he would present his product at the meeting, that there would be time for him to show his slide presentation, and that questions would be asked by prospective buyers. (passive verb)

Parallel: The sales representative expected that he would present his product at the meeting, that there would be time for him to show his slide presentation, and that prospective buyers would ask him questions.

4. Articles

In the following text, articles (and other needed additions) are indicated in square brackets, while possible additions (such as articles) are in parentheses. Unnecessary items are underlined, while ungrammatical items were crossed out

1. The purpose of this study is to gain [a] deeper understanding of their students ~~who~~ ~~come~~ from various countries. They interviewed them separately, and [the] interviews were conducted in Chinese. Two measures were used, and ~~the~~ observational data of (the) classroom behavior were collected. After [a] one week trial, modifications were made.
2. This article discusses how ~~the~~ cultural diversity affects children’s development, and how ~~the~~ collectivism affects their development. Going to [a] US school was found to be beneficial for language acquisition and for adapting to ~~the~~ US environment. Furthermore, parents need to talk with teachers about their children; but ~~it~~ [this] does not go well due to their lack of English ability.

3. Writing in the planning field

As an applied science, the discipline of urban planning makes constant efforts to explore significant interactions between human being[s] and human settlements, and it tries to draw out practical implications from those interactions in order to solve various problems in the cities. Meanwhile, as Rosen and Behrens (1997) state, social science is mainly based on the following three positions: because human behavior is observable and predictable, scientists can delineate it; human behavior should be comprehended in the context of social systems; both ~~of~~ human being and social systems are not static but dynamic and evolving. These viewpoints are similarly accepted in the planning field[,] except that ~~our~~ [the] field mostly tries to focus on more practical aspects of the interaction between city dwellers and (the) city environment. In this regard, writing in the planning field seems ~~to be~~ similar to writing in the social sciences. Planning-specific writing, therefore, [a] has similar organization, logical structure, and citation system as other social science writing. The planning field usually uses the American Psychological Association (APA) style documentation system[,] even if there are some variations depending upon journals.

Due to the strong causation attributes of [the] planning discipline, writing in the planning field seems to be considered ~~as~~ “a thoughtful conversation” (Booth, Colomb, & Williams, 1995)[,] in which researchers should be able to make their readers share [their] arguments~~of researchers~~. To do so, [the] planning field writing ~~needs~~ [requires] a causational structure and content. In other words, a considerate researcher is most likely to make systematic efforts in order to make readers believe his or her claim, and the best way to do that will be making good arguments in the research using [the] essential four elements of arguments[, i.e.,] ~~such as~~ claim, evidence, warrant, and qualification (Booth et al., 1995). [A] claim can be defined as the main points of a research, and it is what the researcher would like to convey (Booth et al., 1995). To persuade (the) readers, however, (the) researcher~~s~~ should prove it using explicit and substantive evidence~~s~~, and reliable evidence~~s~~ can be achieved when researchers make [their] best efforts to present them accurately (Booth et al., 1995). Just reliable evidence~~s~~ or data, however, are not enough to be a well-rounded research. ~~So as to~~ [In] grant writing, it also is recommended that researchers honestly concede [the] limits of the research, such as (the) limiting conditions, scope, and certainty of its claim and evidence (Booth et al., 1995).

Documentation in the planning field is similar to the traditional APA-style. ... If a quotation about [a] keyword or phrase is necessary in a sentence, page numbers should be put in parentheses at the end of the quotation.

5. Tenses

The simple present is often used for general statements or generalizations, be they factual, theoretical, or hypothetical. The present progressive (e.g., “is changing”) refers to ongoing actions or changes, and is not very common in academic writing. The future tense is used for predictive statements, and is less common in academic writing. The simple past characterizes past events as fully completed past events, while the perfect (present perfect) tense views past events as recently completed, still ongoing, or somehow relevant to the present time.

The core meaning of the perfect tense is recently completed action, along with secondary meanings and uses. It implies relevance of a past event to the present state.

	<i>explanation</i>	<i>example</i>
Recency (core meaning)	Action in the past, completed recently; usually with action verbs	We have performed another experiment.
Continuous	Actions or states starting in the past and continuing to the present; used with action verbs or verbs of state	Linguists have tried to understand the perfect tense for many years.
Experiential	Describes an event as part of one's experience; roughly equivalent to <i>본적 있다</i>	Few researchers have conducted such a comprehensive statistical analysis.
Resulting state	Indicates accomplishment, achievement, or a change of state, with verbs of such meanings	The two experiments have confirmed our research hypothesis.
Recent past ("hot news")	This emphasizes the relevance or importance of an event, or makes it more vivid.	The experimental animals have escaped!
Present state	Denotes a present state, often as a result of a recent activity or state; this use is unique to the verbs <i>have</i> , <i>have got/gotten</i> , <i>got</i> , and is more colloquial – rare in academic writing.	We've gotten / We've got the results, and will present them at the upcoming conference.

In an academic paper, one might describe previous studies on the topic in the past tense for a purely historical description of past research. General conclusions drawn from past research, and factual or theoretical claims made by other scholars, might be described in the present tense, especially if the writer wants to frame these as true or valid (especially in more theoretical contexts). Some past research might be discussed in the perfect tense, if it is very recent, or if it is particularly relevant to your research. This might be because the claims or findings of others provide the basis for your current research, or you want to take issue with their findings.

The perfect tense is used because it implies something about the present. You might write, "we have performed another experiment..." to show that you now have more convincing evidence for your hypothesis; or "X have put forth their theory that..." because it is a current and relevant idea that you are going to comment on in connection to your own research.

For examples, refer to the scholarly papers in your field. Depending of the field, the literature review and discussion sections in particular may contain examples of present, perfect and simple past tenses, with tenses shifting according to the writers' specific purposes – how they wish to frame their discussion of particular ideas.