

Macro-Level Coherence

Coherence describes a writer's ability to connect ideas and provide information in a fluid and comprehensible way. Coherence is achieved through appropriate lexical and structural choices, but it's also achieved through a consideration of *audience* and *genre**. We'll examine each issue individually.

A Consideration of Audience

Read the following paragraph and determine which historical event it describes:¹

On the same day, Zorcon invaded Limlam, making rapid progress by using aggressive tactics. At the end of the month, Norpalese troops were forced to evacuate the continent, abandoning their heavy equipment. On June 10th, Tak-tak invaded, declaring war on Limlam and Norpal. Twelve days later, Limlam surrendered and was soon divided between Zorcon and Tak-tak. In early July, the Norpalese attacked Limlam's fleet in Zoot to prevent their seizure by Zorcon.

It's difficult to understand, right? Key vocabulary in the paragraph is meaningless for the audience (you). If you had a decoder that translated the terms into ones you understand, the paragraph would become a lot more comprehensible and coherent. *Vocabulary knowledge is essential for understanding a text.* Look on the top of the next page to see what the paragraph means.

Consider the paragraph below. Is it comprehensible for a layman?

The freeze and thaw durability test was conducted according to ASTM C 666 (procedure A) using two 75 x 100 x 400 mm (3 x 4 x 16 in.) specimens cast from one concrete batch. The free shrinkage measurements were conducted according to ASTM C 157 on three 75 x 75 x 275 mm (3 x 3 x 11 in.) specimens also prepared from one batch of concrete. The scaling tests were performed according to the modified ASTM C 672 procedure using two slabs (each with exposed area 72 in) cast from the same batch. The modification of the standard method involved evaluation of the extent of scaling based on the amount of material lost (expressed in pounds per unit area) rather than using the visual rating of the surface. All specimens were cured in lime-saturated water at temperature of 23°C up to date of testing. The only exception was the scaling tests (for which specimens were water cured for 14 days and then moved to curing room and kept at 50% humidity and 23°C where they were stored for another 14 days). The results of both fresh and hardened properties presented in this paper represent an average of at least two measurements.

* *Genres* are predictable patterns for arranging information to reach particular audiences. *Genres* help audiences anticipate the information they'll receive in a document.

¹ The paragraph below has been modified from Wikipedia.com. The original can be accessed at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_Two.

This is probably difficult to understand for a non-expert. Much of the vocabulary is technical, so a non-expert audience will struggle to understand the paragraph.

On a separate sheet of paper, write the paragraph above in layman's terms. Each color represents a separate idea. Try to summarize each color in one sentence.

The Answer: World War Two. Read the paragraph below.²

On the same day, Germany invaded France, making rapid progress by using aggressive tactics. At the end of the month, British troops were forced to evacuate the continent, abandoning their heavy equipment. On June 10th, Italy invaded, declaring war on France and Britain. Twelve days later, France surrendered and was soon divided between Germany and Italy. In early July, the British attacked Italy's fleet in Algeria to prevent their seizure by Germany.

A Consideration of Genre

An expert audience member will have organizational and content expectations for your document. These expectations are the result of a genre. Genres help audiences know what will be in a document and where it will be. Two examples of genre are:

Analytical Report Introduction Methods Results Discussion Conclusion	Procedure Introduction List of parts/tools Safety Info Ordered Steps Conclusion
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Inside each of these genres are sub-genres. Introductions and conclusions, for example, are sub-genres. There are particular rules for constructing both introductions and conclusions.

How to Write an Introduction

First, define your subject

Severe weather has become a genuine concern for the residents of Tippecanoe County in recent years.

² The paragraph below has been modified from Wikipedia.com. The original can be accessed at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_Two.

Second, state your purpose

This report offers some strategies for managing severe weather in Tippecanoe and neighboring counties.

Third, state your main point

Specifically, it provides tips on how to keep friends and family members from making bad decisions during emergency weather situations.

Fourth, stress the importance of the subject

Without this information, you or a loved one may make a mistake in severe weather that could cost someone's life.

Fifth, provide background information

Recently, twenty Tippecanoe residents have been injured or killed during severe weather.

Finally, forecast the content

This report will recommend simple changes residents can make around the home to protect against future injury. Then, it will give specific steps residents can take when severe weather hits. Finally, it will identify resources available for further severe weather education.

Example:

Severe weather has become a genuine concern for the residents of Tippecanoe County in recent years. This report offers some strategies for managing severe weather in Tippecanoe and neighboring counties. Specifically, it provides tips on how to keep friends and family members from making bad decisions during emergency weather situations. Without this information, you or a loved one may make a mistake during severe weather that could cost someone's life. Recently, twenty Tippecanoe residents have been injured or killed during severe weather.

This report will recommend simple changes residents can make around the home to protect against injury or death from severe weather. Then, it will give specific steps residents can take when severe weather hits.

How to Write a Conclusion

First, make a transition

Transitional words and phrases let the reader know where they are in a document. For a conclusion, use a transitional phrase like: *In conclusion, To sum up, In closing, In summary, Finally, Overall, As a whole, In the end, On the whole, In brief, Put briefly, or Ultimately.*

Second, restate the main point

In summary, if Tippecanoe residents want to stay safe during severe weather, they need to prepare beforehand and be aware of their surroundings.

Third, re-stress the importance.

We can easily reduce the number of casualties from severe weather by preparing our homes and property. Moreover, by disseminating information on how to handle severe weather situations, we can save our loved ones from harm.

Fourth, look to the future

If we all take these steps, Tippecanoe residents will reduce weather-related casualties. Increased severe weather will not have a detrimental impact on our lives.

Example:

In summary, if Tippecanoe residents want to stay safe during severe weather, they need to prepare beforehand and be aware of their surroundings. We can easily reduce the number of casualties from severe weather by preparing our homes and property. Moreover, by disseminating information on how to handle severe weather situations, we can save our loved ones from harm. If we all take these steps, Tippecanoe residents will reduce weather-related casualties. Increased severe weather will have a minimal impact on our lives.