

How To Brighten Your Style - Part 3: For Flow in Writing ... Connect!

For your thoughts to reach your reader in a smooth, coherent flow, you must show the reader how they connect. The key to flowing, connected writing in business and science is an overall pyramid structure: you begin your memo, letter, report, or e-mail with your main message and then make sure everything that follows relates to this main message. However, it's also important to show how the subsections connect to each other.

Let's begin with sentences. Here are three ways to connect them.

1.0 Set up a plan in the first sentence of the paragraph and then follow it.

Very simply, this means you tell the reader that you will consider several aspects of a message. Then you go on to address these issues one after another. Here is an example:

There are **three main kinds** of business meetings. **The first** is the brainstorming meeting, which allows everyone to throw out ideas and get pats on the back for doing so. **The second** is the progress meeting, which offers project members the chance to explain why they haven't made any. **The third** is the administrative meeting, which brings people together to plan future meetings. Of the three, this one is clearly the most popular, as it is the most frequent.

2.0 Repeat key words or structures.

Look at two passages from Winston Churchill's impassioned statements during World War II. By repeating words and structures, he enhances the power and connection of the thoughts in his message:

When I told the French that Britain would fight on alone whatever they did, their generals told their prime minister and his divided cabinet, "In three weeks, England will have her neck wrung like a chicken." Some **chicken**, some **neck**.

Never in the field of human conflict was **so much** owed by **so many** to **so few**.

Oscar Wilde achieves the same effect, on a lighter note, in *The Importance of Being Earnest*:

Of course the **music** is a great difficulty. You see, if one plays good **music**, people don't listen, and if one plays bad **music**, people don't talk.

3.0 Use transition words that show connection through time, space, or logic.

These small words were made for transitions. They aren't the most elegant form of connection, but used sparingly, they work. Here are some examples.

Time: *before, meanwhile, afterwards*

Space: *above, beneath, in front*

Logic: *because, if, therefore, however, as a result*

Look at the way Montesquieu uses transition words to connect his thoughts:

If we wanted to be happy, it would be easy. **However**, we want to be happier than other people. This is almost always difficult, **since** we think them happier than they really are.

More powerful still is the use of transition words not just to connect thoughts but actually to guide the reader through images to an inescapable conclusion. Chief Seattle does this in his letter to President Franklin Pierce on the proposed sale of Indian land:

If we agree, it will be to secure the reservation you have promised. **There** [connects to "reservation"], perhaps, we may live out our brief days as we wish. **When** [connects to "brief days"] the last red man has vanished from this earth, and his memory is only the shadow of a cloud moving across the prairie, these shores and forests will still hold the

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SUMMARY SENTENCE:

Connect your thoughts in three ways: set up a plan and follow it, repeat words or structures, or use transition words.

spirits of my people. **For** they love this earth as a new-borne loves its mother's heartbeat. **So**, if we sell our land, love it as we've loved it.

Strong connections can breathe life into your writing and make it both memorable and persuasive.

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This article is the third in a series of "tips and techniques" for the purpose of assisting you in developing an effective communication style. We hope that this series will be of value to you professionally and personally. We value your feedback.

Obituary

Wednesday, November 6, 2002

TANNER, Robert H. 1915-2002.

With his wife of 62 years by his side, Robert Tanner quietly passed away on November 2, 2002 in Naples, Florida. Left to mourn are his beloved wife, Joan; his sons and daughter Chris, Rosemary (Raymond Langston), Peter (Susan), and David (Natalie); and his grandchildren Emily Wanechko and Laura, Heather, and Michael Tanner. Following service in the Royal Signals during WWII, Robert emigrated to Canada with his young family in 1947. He joined Northern Electric in Belleville, Ontario. He moved to Ottawa in 1960 where he helped found Northern Electric's research and development division, Bell Northern Research. An accomplished acoustical engineer, with the acoustic design of many churches and theatres to his credit, Robert was especially proud of his work on the Festival Theatre in Stratford, Ontario; the Elgin and Winter Garden Theatres in Toronto, and the Naples Philharmonic Hall. He was active for many years in the IEEE (Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers), serving as President in 1972. The IEEE awarded him the McNaughton Gold Medal, the Haraden Pratt Award for Service, and the United States Activities Award for Engineering Professionalism. In 1989, Concordia University in Montreal bestowed on him an Honorary LL.D. for his services to engineering. Robert and Joan moved to Naples, Florida in 1975. Private arrangements have been made. Donations in Robert's name to The Hospice of Naples, 1095 Whipoorwill Lane, Naples, Florida 34105 would be greatly appreciated. Condolences may be sent to Joan at 1001 Arbor Lake Drive, Naples, Florida, 34110.