

# Organization, Coherence, and Style

AP English Language ■ Unit 5

AP English Language



## What we will cover

- 1 Describing the Line of Reasoning
- 2 Developing a Line of Reasoning and Commentary
- 3 Organization, Unity, and Coherence
- 4 Using Transitional Elements
- 5 Word Choice, Comparisons, and Syntax
- 6 Using Words and Syntax for Tone and Style



## Describing the Line of Reasoning

Unit 5 turns from *what* an argument contains to *how it holds together*. It has two subjects: **coherence** and the beginnings of **style** .

The CED's statement of the body paragraph is exact and worth memorising: the body paragraphs of a written argument make claims, support them with evidence, and provide commentary that explains the relationship of the evidence to the claim.



## Developing a Line of Reasoning and Commentary

Applied to your own writing: draft the **claims first, as a list**, before writing any paragraph. You then have the line of reasoning in front of you and can check that it moves.

A useful habit under exam conditions is to make the commentary sentence begin with a word that forces a relationship – *because, which means, so, the effect of this is* – because those words cannot be followed by a restatement.

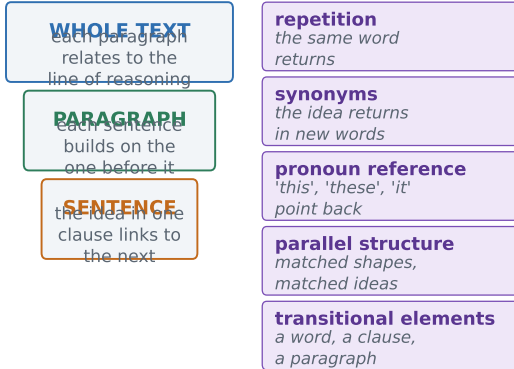


## Three levels, and five named devices

- In a **sentence**, the idea in one clause logically links to the idea in another.
- In a **paragraph**, each sentence builds on the one before it.
- Across the **whole text**, each paragraph relates to the line of reasoning.
- **Repetition** , **synonyms** , **pronoun references** , and **parallel structure** may indicate or develop a relationship between ideas.

# Three levels, and five named devices, in detail

Coherence happens at three levels built by these devices



A "structure" question is asking which of these the writer used, and what it made the reader do next.

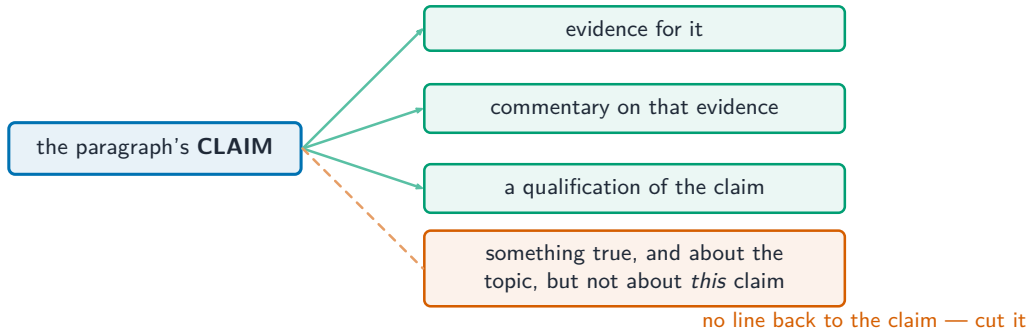
In a **paragraph**, each sentence builds on the one before it.

# Organization, Unity, and Coherence

The CED then names the devices that create those links:

- In a **sentence**, the idea in one clause logically links to the idea in another.
- In a **paragraph**, each sentence builds on the one before it.
- Across the **whole text**, each paragraph relates to the line of reasoning.
- **Repetition** , **synonyms** , **pronoun references** , and **parallel structure** may indicate or develop a relationship between ideas.
- **Transitional elements** are words or other elements – phrases, clauses, sentences, or whole paragraphs – that **assist in creating coherence**.

## The unity test



Run it on a draft: draw the line from each sentence **back** to the claim. The sentence without one is not a bad sentence – it is in the wrong paragraph



## Using Transitional Elements

Transitions have a second job the CED names explicitly: they **introduce evidence** or **indicate its relationship to other ideas or evidence**.

Choose transitions that carry information about the relationship, not ones that merely mark a boundary.

## Transitions, by relationship

- Words have both **connotative and denotative meanings** . Denotation is what a word refers to; connotation is what it carries.
- **Descriptive words** - adjectives and adverbs - not only qualify or modify what they describe but **convey a perspective** toward it.

# Transitions, by relationship, in detail

| THE RELATIONSHIP | THE WORDS                                     | WHAT YOU HAVE PROMISED                         |
|------------------|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| ADDING           | moreover, furthermore, in addition            | another reason of the same kind                |
| CONTRASTING      | however, yet, nevertheless, on the other hand | something that cuts against what you just said |
| CONCEDING        | admittedly, granted, of course                | you will now answer the point you have granted |
| CONCLUDING       | therefore, thus, consequently                 | what follows is entailed by what came before   |
| EXEMPLIFYING     | for instance, in particular                   | a case of the general claim, not a new one     |

Denotation is what a word refers to; connotation is what it carries.



## Word Choice, Comparisons, and Syntax

Unit 5 opens the course's treatment of style with three claims about diction:

- Words have both **connotative and denotative meanings** . Denotation is what a word refers to; connotation is what it carries.
- **Descriptive words** – adjectives and adverbs – not only qualify or modify what they describe but **convey a perspective** toward it.
- **Precise word choice** reduces confusion and helps the audience perceive the writer's perspective.

## Word Choice, Comparisons, and Syntax, continued

The second is the analytically useful one. When a rhetorical-analysis passage calls a policy *ambitious* rather than *expensive*, no fact has changed and the reader's disposition has.

That is a rhetorical choice, and it is exactly what the question asks you to explain.



## Using Words and Syntax for Tone and Style

For your own writing, precision is worth more than range. A concrete rule: prefer the word that is exactly right to the word that is impressive.

Examiners reward control, and an inflated word used slightly wrongly reads as loss of control.

## Exam tips

- Every body paragraph: **claim, evidence, commentary**. Lost points are nearly always the third.
- Draft your **claims as a list first**. It is the only way to see whether the reasoning moves.
- Begin commentary with *because, which means, so* – words that cannot be followed by a restatement.
- Know the coherence devices **by name**: repetition, synonyms, pronoun reference, parallel structure, transitions.
- A transition should **carry the relationship**, not just mark a boundary. *Furthermore* usually carries nothing.
- **Connotation** is where diction analysis lives. Same denotation, different disposition, is a rhetorical choice worth explaining.

## Shape, effect – and risk

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- Begin commentary with *because, which means, so* - words that cannot be followed by a restatement.
- Know the coherence devices **by name**: repetition, synonyms, pronoun reference, parallel structure, transitions.

## Shape, effect – and risk, in detail

| THE SHAPE                        | WHAT IT DOES                                             | THE RISK                                |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| a short sentence after long ones | lands — the reader has nowhere to look away              | used often, nothing lands               |
| a long cumulative sentence       | accumulates, so the weight arrives with the last clause  | the reader loses the subject            |
| parallel structure               | makes items feel equivalent, and rhythm does the arguing | it can equate things that are not alike |
| a question                       | makes the reader supply your answer themselves           | if they supply a different one          |

Draft your **claims as a list first**.

## Worked example – a shift in connotation

A writer describes a proposal's supporters as ***“determined”*** in one paragraph and ***“unyielding”*** in the next.

- **Low-scoring:** *“The writer uses strong diction.”*
- **Scoring:** *“Both words denote persistence, but ‘determined’ carries approval and ‘unyielding’ carries obstruction. By moving from one to the other without changing the facts described, the writer withdraws sympathy from the supporters while appearing only to continue describing them.”*

Connotation, tone and effect on audience in one move – and the audience's judgment shifts before any counter-argument is made.



## Unit 5 – key takeaways

1

### Body paragraph

claim, evidence, commentary –  
lost points are the third

2

### Draft claims

as a list first, to see whether  
reasoning moves

3

### Because/so

words that cannot be followed by  
restatement

4

### Coherence

name the device: repetition,  
synonym, pronoun, parallel

## Check yourself

- 1 What three parts does every body paragraph need?
- 2 How should you draft claims?
- 3 Begin commentary with which words?
- 4 A transition should carry what?

**Answers:** claim, evidence, commentary ■ as a list first ■ because / which means / so ■ the relationship