Cohesion, literally “sticking together,” is essential to good, clear expository writing. It helps a reader follow your argument and see the relationships you want them to understand. Cohesion makes writing flow by creating and reinforcing connections on the sentence level and the paragraph level. Cohesion in writing is achieved in a variety of ways, mainly by using words, phrases, and ideas that act as connectors or point back to earlier words/phrases/ideas. The most basic cohesive devices are reference words, transitions, and repetition.

**REFERENCE WORDS:** point to a specific thing or to a location in space or time.

- **definite and indefinite articles:** the, a, an
- **personal pronouns:** we, us, you, he, she, it, him, her, his, they, them
- **demonstrative pronouns:** this, that, these, those, none, neither
- **place and time markers:** now, later, here, there, yesterday

**TRANSITIONS:** connect sentences, showing relationships between ideas or clarifying the progression of an argument. Transitional devices include comparison, contrast, emphasis, example/illustration, summary, and time sequence.

- **adverbs:** however, moreover, additionally, therefore, furthermore
- **phrases:** as a result, on the other hand, from my point of view
- **clauses:** since I was a child, when disaster strikes, if all this is true
- **logical markers:** first, second, next, finally
- **modifying phrases:** having given this some thought, taking everything into consideration

**REPETITION:** emphasizes and maintains prominence of key words, phrases, or ideas. Effective use of repetition incorporates:

- **variations of the word:** work, worker, working
- **nouns/pronouns:** position/it, students/they
- **synonyms:** inform, explain, clarify

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In the passage below, the cohesive devices have been underlined and defined. Notice how much repetition and reference there is in even a relatively short piece of writing.

**Early Political Parties**

Many differences existed between the two earliest political parties in the United States, the Federalist Party and the Republican Party. For one thing, the Federalists favored a loose interpretation of the Constitution. Although the Constitution does not specifically mention a bank, for instance, the Federalists argued that the power to establish one is implied. The Republicans, on the other hand, believed in a strict interpretation of the Constitution; they felt that only in extreme circumstances would it be acceptable to assume the power for establishing a bank. A second, and perhaps more significant, difference between the two parties involved their attitudes toward the structure of the government itself. The Federalists believed in a strong central government geared to serving the interests of the few. Conversely, the Republicans supported the concept of a weak centralized government, with its powers distributed among the many. This difference resulted from what was perhaps the most fundamental dissimilarity between the parties. The “rich, wise and well-born” were basically Federalists. They felt that the average citizen was incapable of governing intelligently. The Republicans, for their part, were average citizens. Thus the difference in background and philosophy of the members of the two parties underlay their different attitudes toward specific activities of the government and toward the very nature of government.