

IMPROVE YOUR WRITING

Linking Strategies

Liverpool is a city in the north-west of England. Liverpool has a unique history. Liverpool's history has given it a character all of its own. Liverpool was once Britain's second-largest city. Liverpool has played a vital role in Britain's rise and decline as a world power.

The text above is part of a paragraph written for a tourist brochure. What do you think of it? The English is correct – but do you agree that it is not particularly “reader-friendly”? The most obvious weakness is the repetition of the name *Liverpool* – five times in just over three lines. The result is that the text does not hang together very well and is rather irritating to read. It is easy to fix this – we just need to use pronouns:

The city of Liverpool in the north-west of England has a unique history. Its history has given it a character all of its own. It was once Britain's second-largest city. It has played a vital role in Britain's rise and decline as a world power.

This is certainly an improvement. But it is still not very fluent. Pronouns are one way of improving coherence in a text (i.e. making it hang together). Another is by joining sentences together. This can be done in one of two ways: first, by linking them together using words like *and* or *but*, and, secondly, by making one of the sentences dependent on the other. Let's try using the second method:

The city of Liverpool in the north-west of England has a unique history that has given it a character all of its own. Once Britain's second-largest city, it has played a vital role in the country's rise and decline as a world power.

As you can see, two of the original sentences have now become phrases without verbs. The second one has become a clause (a phrase with a verb in it) dependent on another sentence. (A dependent clause.) Instead of having five finite verbs (*is, has, has, was, has*), we now only have three. Notice too that we

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have avoided a repetition of *Britain* in the same sentence by using not a pronoun this time, but a noun that refers to it – *the country*. This is a good way of creating variation in a text without it losing coherence. Let's look at the next part of the paragraph in our brochure:

In the 18th century Liverpool gained huge profits from the slave trade. This established its wealth as a port. In the 19th century the Industrial Revolution was at its height. Liverpool was Britain's gateway to the Atlantic. It handled about 40% of the world's trade.

Not bad. But it can be improved. Five sentences in three lines is a bit much. We need to make some dependent clauses here. And sometimes we can improve things by changing the order in which they come:

Liverpool's wealth as a port was established during the 18th century when the city gained huge profits from the slave trade. In the 19th century, when the Industrial Revolution was at its height, it was the country's gateway to the Atlantic, handling about 40% of the world's trade.

We call the last part of the sentence an -ing clause and it is a very common way of joining sentences in English. We are going to find it useful in improving the last part of the paragraph.

The city was also an important transit for emigrants. Especially Irish emigrants left from here to go to the New World. Many poor Irish families came to live here during the Great Famine of the 1840s. They gave the city a Celtic flavour that it has kept to this day.

We can make two sentences out of four by using -ing clauses:

The city was also an important transit port for emigrants, especially from Ireland, leaving for the New World. During the Great Famine in the 1840s, many poor Irish families came to live there, giving the city a Celtic flavour that it has kept to this day.

Here we have looked at just some of the strategies you can use to give your English more flow and coherence. There are many others. The important thing is to be aware that there is always more than one way of expressing something. When you are writing, you should always be weighing up the alternatives.

We have looked at the first paragraph of the brochure about Liverpool. Here is the second paragraph. How can it be improved? Work in pairs, or alone if you prefer, and use the linking strategies we have mentioned – and any others that occur to you – to make a coherent, reader-friendly text.

Liverpool's importance as a port saw a gradual decline in the 20th century. In the 1970s container transport took over. The docks closed. Many people were put out of work. Liverpool is still not a rich city. But it has seen an economic revival in recent years. This is not least because of Liverpool's attractions as a tourist destination. Some come on the trail of the Beatles. They started their career playing at the Cavern. They went on to conquer the world. Others come to experience the excitement of Premier League football. Liverpool has two Premier League clubs, Liverpool and Everton. Still others come to enjoy Liverpool's inhabitants. They are called Scousers. They are famous for their humour and wit.