

# CONSISTENT LANGUAGE AND KEY TERMS

Writing with *consistent language* contains the same person (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, or 3<sup>rd</sup>) and the same verb tense (past, present, or future). Consistent language orients the reader and prevents confusion. *Key terms* communicate the main ideas of a piece of writing through specific words and phrases. They make writing cohesive and emphasize important points to the reader.

You may adopt some of the source's key terms if one or more sources play a prominent part in the paper. Always use quotation marks and citations for key terms from outside sources.

## USING CONSISTENT LANGUAGE AND KEY TERMS

1. **Select your perspective** – Keep the point of view consistent throughout the paper and use third person in academic settings.
2. **Determine your verb tense** – Keep verb tense consistent when talking about the same topic or source. Consult the appropriate style manual for tense guidelines.
3. **Identify the assignment's key terms** – Ask yourself, “What are the main points of my organizing principle?” Each key term should match a different supporting point in your thesis. (See “Thesis Statements: Part 1” for more information.)
4. **Organize your sections with key terms** – Each section of your paper should focus on a different key term. Sections may vary in length depending on the assignment.
5. **Choose minor terms for sub-sections** – Ask yourself, “What are the main points that I plan to discuss in this section?” Attach each main point to a different minor term.
6. **Begin sections and sub-sections with key terms** – Introduce your key terms in the topic sentence of each section and state your minor terms in the topic sentence of each sub-section.
7. **Repeat minor terms throughout paragraphs** – Each main point of your paragraphs should focus on a different minor key term.

## EXAMPLE

---

**Thesis:** Consumers prefer waffles to pancakes because of their density, texture, and flavor.

- **Select your perspective:** “Consumers” is a third person subject; therefore, you would write this paper in third person.
- **Determine your verb tense:** “Prefer” is a present tense verb; therefore, you would write this paper in present tense.
- **Identify the assignment’s key terms:** The words “density,” “texture,” and “flavor” form the main points of the organizing principle, making them the key terms for this assignment.
- **Organize your sections with key terms:** Devote the first section of your paper to the term “density,” the second section of your paper to the term “texture,” and the third section of your paper to the term “flavor.”
- **Choose minor terms for sub-sections:** A section on flavor might reference the terms “tang” or “sweetness.”
- **Begin sections and sub-sections with key terms:** Waffle flavor escapes the mealy tang of pancake batter and pairs better with the sweetness of syrup.
  - **Introduce your key term:** flavor
  - **State your minor terms:** tang and sweetness
- **Repeat minor terms throughout your paragraph:** Focus on the minor term “tang” for your first main point, and discuss the minor term “sweetness” for your second main point. (See “Academic Paragraph Structure” for further help.)

PRACTICE NOW