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## **Writing a Reader-Friendly Paper**

Everyone has heard of a user-friendly computer program, the kind that doesn't require any effort or special knowledge on the part of the user. Your goal as a writer is to create a "reader-friendly" paper, one that communicates your ideas clearly to your reader and that makes the task of following your discussion as effortless as possible. In order to accomplish this task, you need to think about how your writing will affect your reader and then to guide and direct your reader's attention toward your main points and conclusions.

### **Elements of "Reader-Friendly" writing:**

Organization--a clearly stated thesis or purpose  
a focussed argument or development  
paragraphs that each develop one point  
topic and concluding sentences that offer guidance  
evidence with explanations about how each piece supports your point  
directive statements that introduce the relevance of direct quotations  
transitions between points

Even those petty details that English teachers always fuss about can help to make your writing more "reader-friendly": correct punctuation guides the reader's effort to construe the meaning of your sentences; accurate grammar and word-choice enable the reader to grasp your points quickly; even accurate typing, consistent presentation of quotations, and neatness contribute toward making the reader's experience of the paper as pleasant as possible.

### **Reading Someone Else's Writing**

Your job as a reader, then, is to point out places where the reading experience is difficult or irritating, where you get lost, or confused, or fail to be persuaded by the argument or evidence presented. I find that many readers assume that if they don't understand what has been written or find the meaning difficult to determine they are just not good readers. More often, the writer has not yet successfully formulated or expressed his or her ideas; your explanations of your confusion can help the writer to clarify those ideas and to improve the writing. Read carefully, but trust your responses. Remember: to be helpful, your comments should be honest and specific. Everyone appreciates criticism when it is tactfully presented!