"Glossing" an Essay

What Is Glossing?

Glossing is a strategy that enables writers to consider a paper's **purpose, organization, and logic**. By glossing a paper, writers get an overall picture of how its parts fit together and function as a whole.

How Can Glossing Help My Writing?

Specifically, glossing can help writers refine a paper's <u>unity</u> and <u>coherence</u>:
- **Paragraph unity** means that all ideas in one paragraph should be closely related to its topic sentence and should further develop that topic sentence. That is, all sentences in a single paragraph must be unified around a central point or main idea.
- **Coherence** refers to connections among paragraphs and ideas. A coherent essay has a logical flow of ideas that stem from the sequence of paragraphs and the transitions between paragraphs.

An essay must contain a clear thesis statement, and its body paragraphs must support and help prove the thesis. Glossing can also help you identify and clarify your thesis, as well as ensure that it is developed throughout an essay.

How to Gloss a Paper

Glossing will help you pinpoint the various sections of your essay and determine if these ideas support its overall purpose. To get started, chunk your paper into sections (or groups of sentences) and pose simple questions. The University of Richmond's Writer's Web has a worksheet on glossing that is reprinted here. A gloss can be either a single word, phrase, or sentence. One simple way to gloss is to take a section or a few sentences from the paper and ask the following questions:
- How does…?
- Who?
- What?
- Why?
- When?
- Where?

You might also ask more specific questions:

- How does this section connect with my paper's overall purpose?
- What is the main point of this group of sentences?
- Why did I include these ideas in this particular part of the paper?
- What am I trying to convey in this paragraph? Try to sum up the main point in one or two sentences.

✖ The answers to these questions should be written in the margin of your rough draft. These answers should also be written in your own language. If there is a discrepancy between the answers and your intentions for your paper, then editing must be done.

✖ After asking and answering these questions, make a list of the glosses. This will help to sort the ideas and see the connections between the glosses.

✖ Next, look at the connections between the glosses and the concept of your paper. Complete this exercise and print out the result to help you as you revise your draft.

This handout has been adapted from the University of Richmond Writer's Web:
http://writing2.richmond.edu/writing/wweb/glossing.html

Glossing Worksheet

- What is my thesis? (i.e., What is the general idea I am trying to express, argue, etc.)

- Is the thesis included in the introduction? If not, where is it?

- Do my paragraphs follow this main idea or thesis? If not, where do they diverge from the thesis?

- Do I have topic sentences? Underline those topic sentences.

- Do these topic sentences follow the thesis? If not, where do they diverge from the thesis?

- Why did I order my paragraphs this way?

- Is the order logical? Why or why not?

- Does the conclusion do more than simply repeat my introduction word for word?