

## CREATE LEXICAL CHAINS

Repeating key words or related words can help to emphasize important ideas and show how ideas are organized. These repetitions are called lexical chains. As you edit and revise your paper, it is useful to brainstorm a list of words and phrases you can use as alternative ways to discuss your central ideas.

In this excerpt, from a paper about studying abroad, notice how the writer uses two lexical chains.

### Lexical Chains Example

The first benefit of **studying abroad** is personal growth. The **International Education of Students** (IES) surveyed all **IES students** who **studied overseas** from 1950-1999 and found that these **students** said that they developed many positive personal characteristics through their **international experience**. When **students live in another country**, they are willing to try many new things in effort to adapt to the **host country**...

The next advantage for **international students** is improving their knowledge and understanding of both their own and their **host country's culture**.

The underlined words form one short lexical chain to explain the idea of “something good.” These repeated ideas help the reader to follow the organization of the paper.

The bold phrases form another, longer lexical chain of referring to the idea of “studying abroad.” This lexical chain draws the reader’s attention to the writer’s topic throughout the passage.

### Now You Try:

1. Read the following passage from an essay. The essay is titled “Eve’s Daughters” where Polster is introducing her reader to the topic of her paper, the characteristics of heroes.

Underline the words *hero* or *heroism* each time they are used. What do you notice about their use throughout the introduction?

Circle the words and phrases in the lexical chain that refer to the idea of characteristics. What are some of the different words that the author uses to express the idea of characteristics?

2. Read the following passage from an essay. The essay is titled “Mind Over Mass Media” where Pinker is introducing his topic of the relationship between technology and the brain.

Underline any words or phrases that are related to technology.

Circle any words or phrases that are related to thinking or the mind.

Notice how these two lexical chains are present throughout the passage. If you look closely, you’ll notice that often words from these two lexical chains appear in the same sentence.

### ***Eve's Daughters (pg. 163 Lines 1-15)***

When we move beyond the classic stereotype of heroes, we can see that many ordinary women and men are actually heroes. Furthermore, heroes are more numerous than we may have thought. Although heroes of the everyday may not receive the great acclaim accorded the classic hero, the value of private heroism may be greater precisely because we see everyday heroes up close; they are so near, so intimately connected. They are family, co-workers, neighbors, and their heroism takes place in commonplace settings and in response to everyday challenges.

Our images of heroes provide an inventory, if you will, of heroic characteristics. And while some of these characteristics may be basic to all heroism, others may be distinctly related to whether the hero is a woman or a man. A useful definition of heroism must include both types.

### ***Mind Over Mass Media (pg. 201 Lines 1-20)***

New forms of media have always caused moral panics: the printing press, newspapers, paperbacks and television were all once denounced as threats to their consumers' brainpower and moral fiber.

So too with electronic technologies. PowerPoint, we're told, is reducing discourse to bullet points. Search engines lower our intelligence, encouraging us to skim on the surface of knowledge rather than dive to its depths. Twitter is shrinking out attention spans.

But such panics often fail basic reality checks. When comic books were accused of turning juveniles into delinquents in the 1950s, crime was falling to record lows, just as the denunciations of video games in the 1990s coincided with the great American crime decline. The decades of television, transistor radios and rock videos were also decades in which I.Q. scores rose continuously.

For a reality check today, take the state of science, which demands high levels of brainwork and is measured by clear benchmarks of discovery. These days, scientists are never far from their e-mail, rarely touch paper and cannot lecture without PowerPoint. If electronic media were hazardous to intelligence, the quality of science would be plummeting. Yet discoveries are multiplying like fruit flies, and progress is dizzying. Other activities in the life of the mind, like philosophy, history and cultural criticism, are likewise flourishing, as anyone who has lost a morning of work to the Web site Arts & Letters Daily can attest.