

In Sections 10.3–10.6 I discuss the points that struck me as I read these two essays. I expect you will find that you have picked out many of the same points. There's no great mystery about what is good writing and what is not. Good writing is easy to read and makes sense. Poor writing is unclear and confusing; it keeps making you stop to try to work out what it's saying and where it's going.

10.3 Argument and structure

Which essay did you find easiest to read? For me it was definitely Erin's. As I read Lewis's essay I was uncertain where it was going. There were interesting points, but no real sense of direction. Erin's on the other hand flows as an 'argument'.

10.3.1 Presenting an argument

It's clear that Erin has worked out a sequence of points for her essay, with links from one to the next. Look carefully at how the logic flows in her first paragraph:

People go to great lengths to gain happiness, and many assume that money is an automatic route to achieving it. However, evidence presented by Richard Layard suggests that this is not the case. Over the past 50 years society has changed dramatically. People have many more material possessions and higher quality services, yet there are no signs of increasing happiness. Instead there seems to be rising dissatisfaction and depression.

Erin's sentences pass on the logical flow from one to the next, as shown in Table 10.1 (the numbers refer to sentences):

	Erin's sentences	Contribution to the argument
1(a)	People go to great lengths to gain happiness	Takes up the theme from the title, which links wealth to unhappiness: initially by noting that happiness is a fundamental goal of human action,
1(b)	and many assume that money is an automatic route to achieving it.	then by pointing to the common assumption that happiness can be pursued through money.
2	However, evidence presented by Richard Layard suggests that this is not the case.	Connects with the reference to Layard in the title and signals that his article will provide evidence casting doubt on the assumption just mentioned.