COMP496/901: Academic Presentation and Writing Skills
Writing Skills #2: Document Macrostructure

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Document Macrostructure

- Make sure your title identifies the key elements or aspects of your work
- Make it clear at the very outset of the document what it is that you are doing
- Make sure that your document has a well thought out story behind it, and a clear and logical argument structure
- Motivate what you have to say with examples
Some Maxims about Structure

- Every story should have a beginning, a middle, and an end
- Tell them what you’re going to tell them, tell them it, then tell them you’ve told them it
- First impressions count
- IMRAD: Introduction, Methods, Results and Discussion
- The Six Chapters of a Thesis
Rhetorical Structure Theory

• Basic idea:
  – The elements of a text are connected together by rhetorical relations
  – A text is coherent by virtue of the presence of these relations---if the text cannot be analysed in these terms then it is not coherent.
An Example

• Example 1:
  – I do research into classic car design.
  – The car I have studied most is the 1954 Holden.

• Example 2:
  – I do research into classic car design.
  – The car I have studied most is the 1997 Holden.
The Example Continued

- **Example 1:**
  - I do research into classic car design.
  - In particular, the car I have studied most is the 1954 Holden.

- **Example 2:**
  - I do research into classic car design.
  - But the car I have studied most is the 1997 Holden.
Relational Propositions

- ELABORATION(do-research, car-studied-most)
- CONTRAST(do-research, car-studied-most)
An RST Relation: Elaboration

I do research into ...  The car I’ve studied...
An RST Relation: Contrast

I do research into ...  The car I’ve studied...
Beyond Pairs of Sentences

You should come to the Northern Beaches Ballet performance on Saturday. I'm in three pieces. The show is really good. It got a rave review in the Manly Daily. You can get the tickets from the shop next door.
Beyond Pairs of Sentences

D1: You should come to the Northern Beaches Ballet performance on Saturday.
D2: I’m in three pieces.
D3: The show is really good.
D4: It got a rave review in the Manly Daily.
D5: You can get the tickets from the shop next door.
The Ballet Text

You should ... I’m in ... The show ... It got a ... You can get ...

The Relations in RST

- Circumstance
- Solutionhood
- Elaboration
- Background
- Enablement and Motivation
- Volitional and Non-volitional Cause and Result
- Condition and Otherwise
- Restatement and Summary
- Sequence, Contrast and Joint