Hooping Paragraphs
(A strategy to check for paragraph coherence)

It is not always easy to construct relationships between ideas, since we often list them as they come into our heads. As a result, paragraphs may be arbitrarily linked (often with mechanical transition phrases, such as "Another reason," or "This also…"). In the rough draft stage, mechanical transitions such as these can be useful because they help you organize more easily. But at the final stage, it is important to smooth out mechanical transitions so that they appear imperceptible and natural.

Each paragraph in your essay must be linked in some logical fashion to another, but sometimes it is difficult to detect when a transition is needed, particularly when we think like a writer, rather than a reader. Often, when we write, we don't stop to ask ourselves how one idea relates to another, why one paragraph is followed by another. This type of writing affects not only how clearly ideas are explained or supported, but also how they are arranged and organized.
On way to determine whether or not paragraphs are indeed linked logically and naturally is to read them in a new way. The exercise called hooping enables you to do so.

Hooping: Step by Step (Note diagram)

1. Print out a copy of your essay
2. Isolate two sequential paragraphs from the body of your essay.
3. Take a pen or pencil and circle the last two or three sentences from the first paragraph and the first two or three sentences of a second paragraph.
4. Rewrite the circled sentences as if they were combined in one paragraph. Read this new paragraph, noting if it reads coherently. Does it flow? If not, it may mean that you need to add a transition between the two paragraphs.

Hooping enables you to detect illogical shifts, abrupt changes, and awkward turns that otherwise might go unnoticed. Squeezing sentences from disparate paragraphs into one complete paragraph forces you to read these sentences as an outside reader would: like a series of connecting ideas.