

Forceful and Coherent Sentences

Remember above all else, a unified sentence should make a single main point or have some good reason for making more than one. In any case, it should produce a single effect.

Simple Sentence

The children hurriedly left for school.

Compound Sentence

He notified the office, and the manager corrected the error.

This sentence is compound; it has two main clauses.

Complex Sentences

We lost touch with the Carters after they moved.

He was a man who had many close friends.

Compound-Complex Sentences

Although the critics gave it good reviews, the play never attracted the public, and the producers closed it reluctantly after two weeks because they could not afford the losses.

Wordiness

It should be observed whether your dog is eating weeds, rubbish, or other things not part of his usual diet, for if he is participating in such behavior, you may know that this is a symptom of his having worms.

It is requested by the management that the audience refrain from using flash attachments for the purpose of picture taking during the performance.

Redundancy

In this country of ours, everything has become so large in size that the individual feels isolated and unable to cooperate together with others.

The criticisms I will make are major ones which ought to be given careful consideration because of their importance.

Unnecessary Repetition

The question of who is to be considered needy is a hard question to answer.

If one examines the story carefully, one will find that the hidden symbolism in the story makes the story stand for something more than one first found in the story.

Anticlimax

Einstein was a deeply philosophical man, a great mathematician, and a fair amateur violinist.

She had won all the delegates in Ohio, California, and South Dakota.

He owes his success to hard work, perseverance, and his father-in-law.

Passive Construction

When your bill is paid, your charge account will be reinstated.
 Every night Mr. Richardson's lawn had to be watered by me.
 The picnic was enjoyed by everyone who went on it.
 Disapproval was felt by even the enemies of the accused girl as well as her friends because of the illegal methods indulged in by the sheriff when evidence was being collected.

Parallel Structure

He likes to swim in the summer and skiing in the winter.
 Every player is taught to work with the team and that good sportsmanship must be shown.
 I concluded that she was intelligent, witty, and liked to make people uncomfortable.
 Harrison signed up as the camp counselor in charge of evening programs, swimming, sailing, and to lead occasional overnight hikes.
 The vineyard is often visited by tourists who sample the grapes and connoisseurs of wine.
 Lake is not only famous for his poetry but also for his illustrations.
 He either is a liar or a remarkably naive person.
 The Legislature hoped both to raise taxes and stimulate business.
 She is a woman of strong convictions and who always says what she thinks.
 In the middle of the sleepy village is a statue dating from 1870 and which shows General Lee on horseback.

Faulty Reference

In Nostromo Conrad's style is ironic and his setting is highly symbolic, so that it sometimes confuses the reader.
 Two major highways converge at the sign, each lined with huge, ugly billboards rising above the corn stalks and obscuring the gently rolling hills. It is a convenient location for hitching rides.
 The waitress locked the door, slapped at the flies, and then sat down wearily to rest for a minute before cleaning up the litter. But they gave her no peace.
 Our neighbor was a semiprofessional golfer who took every spare moment he could to get to practice it.
 If intercollegiate sports are banned, they would have to develop an elaborate intramural program.

Confusing Shifts

When you try hard enough, one can do almost anything.
 I could find only one fault with my new gun. When you fired it, gas would leak through the action.
 I stood on the starting block and looked tensely at the water below; for the first time in my life I am about to swim the 50-yard freestyle in competition.
 At the beginning of the Divine Comedy, Dante finds that he has strayed from the True Way into the Dark Wood of Error. As soon as he realised this, Dante lifted his eyes in hope to the rising sun.

Mixed Constructions

Because he ran out of gas made him late for work.

signal words The most important signs of continuity are words indicating exactly how a statement in one sentence relates to the statement it follows. The possible types of relation, along with examples of each type, are these:

CONSEQUENCE:

- therefore, then, thus, hence, accordingly, as a result

LIKENESS:

- likewise, similarly

CONTRAST:

- but, however, nevertheless, on the contrary, on the other hand, yet

AMPLIFICATION:

- and, again, in addition, further, furthermore, moreover, also, too

EXAMPLE:

- for instance, for example, *General → Specific*
in fact, especially

CONCESSION:

- to be sure, granted, of course, it is true

INSISTENCE:

- indeed, in fact, yes, no

SEQUENCE:

- first, second, finally

RESTATEMENT:

- that is, in other words, in simpler terms, to put it differently

RECAPITULATION:

- in conclusion, all in all, to summarize, altogether

TIME OR PLACE:

- afterward, later, earlier, formerly, elsewhere, here, there, hitherto, subsequently, at the same time, simultaneously, above, below, farther on, this time, so far, until now

Such signals need not appear in every sentence, but they are always useful and sometimes essential. Look back, for example, to the "fourteenth century" paragraph on pages 158-159. Its suspended

ATTITUDE

fortunately
unfortunately
naturally
in a sense

SUBORDINATION

--order lesser thoughts below the main ones; this is the basic principle of subordination

--this can be done with the relative pronouns: that, which, who

e.g. The car, which runs perfectly, is not worth selling.
He thought that the car would run forever.
He thought that omitted but understood the car would run forever.

--also done with subordinating conjunctions and adverbs: although, if, because, since, until, where, when, as if, so that

e.g. Next morning when the first light came into the sky and the sparrows stirred in the trees, when the cows rattled their chains and the rooster crowed and the early automobiles went whispering along the road, Wilbur awoke and looked for Charlotte.

Twice in my life, for reasons that escape me now, though I'm sure they were discreditable, I allowed myself to be persuaded that I ought to take a hand in turning out a musical comedy.

--done with adjectives-with-phrase; appositive and adjectival

e.g. The law was passed, thick with provisions and codicils, heavy with implications.

--done with participles (verbs acting as adjectives)

e.g. He had been thrown.

He had accepted.

He felt a need.

He demanded money.

He failed.

He chose not to struggle. (see first paragraph on other sheet)

Dead to the world, wrapped in sweet dreams, untroubled by bills, he slept until noon.

--done with absolutes (a prepositional phrase without the preposition)

e.g. He ran up the stairs, with a bouquet of roses under his arm, and rang the bell.

She walked slowly, with her camera ready.

Having been thrown by an accidental murder into a position where he had sensed a possible order and meaning in his relations with the people about him; having accepted the moral guilt and responsibility for that murder because it had made him feel free for the first time in his life; having felt in his heart some obscure need to be at home with people and having demanded ransom money to enable him to do it--having done all this and failed, he chose not to struggle any more.

--Richard Wright, Native Sons

When we have once known Rome, and left her where she lies, like a long decaying corpse, retaining a trace of the noble shape it was, but with accumulated dust and fungus growth overspreading all its more admirable features--left her in utter weariness no doubt, of her narrow, crooked intricate streets so uncomfortably paved with little squares so alleylike, into which the sun never falls, and where a chill wind forces its deadly breath into our lungs--left her, tired of the sight of those immense seven-storied, yellow-washed hovels, or call them palaces, where all that is dreary in domestic life seems magnified and multiplied, and weary of climbing those staircases, which ascend from a ground floor of cookshops, cobblers' stalls, stables, and regiments of cavalry, to a middle region of princes, cardinals, and ambassadors, and an upper tier of artists, just beneath the unattainable sky--left her, worn out with shivering at the cheerless and smoking fireside by day, and feasting with our own substance the ravenous little populace of a Roman bed at night--left her, sick at heart of Italian trickery which has uprooted whatever faith in man's integrity had endured till now, and sick at stomach of sour bread, sour wine, rancid butter, and bad cookery, needlessly bestowed on evil meats--left her, disgusted with the pretense of holiness and the reality of nastiness, each equally omnipresent--left her, half lifeless from the languid atmosphere, the vital principle of which has been used up long ago, or corrupted by myriads of slaughters--left her, crushed down in spirit with the desolation of her ruin, and the hopelessness of her future--left her, in short, hating her with all our might, and adding our individual curse to the infinite anathema which her old crimes have unmistakably brought down--when we have left Rome in such a mood as this we are astonished by the discovery, by and by, that our heart strings have mysteriously attached themselves to the Eternal City and are drawing us thitherward again, as if it were more familiar, more intimately our home, than even the spot where we were born.

--Nathaniel Hawthorne,
French and Italian Notebooks

REVISING SENTENCES

1. This sentence is in need of an active verb.
2. There is a great deal of feeling and involvement in his description.
3. Another noticeable feature of the passage is the use of nouns, not only in reference to the name of things present, but in achieving a more forceful description of the scene.
4. Central to our understanding of the character of Lucrece in William Shakespeare's The Rape of Lucrece is the long passage toward the end of the poem devoted to a painting of the fall of Troy.
5. It is the totality of the interrelation of the various components of language and the other communication systems which is the basis for referential memory.
6. For the writer, the practice of bad writing is harmful, for it results in an inhibition of his responses to intellectual and imaginative stimuli.
7. A piece of prose may be considered sincere if, in some manner, it establishes its credibility to its audience. The degree of sincerity, however, is relative to the type of person reading it. A logical scientific person would feel gratified if the author included the relationship of counterpoints to his message. To them this technique shows that the author considered opposing viewpoints while presenting his own; an analytical ideal for such an audience.

8. A third advantage of the market as a means of social organization is its "devil-take-the-hindmost" approach to questions of individual equity. At first blush this is an outrageous statement worthy of the coldest heart among the nineteenth-century Benthamites. And obviously I have stated the point in a way more designed to catch the eye than to be precise.

Some Revising Guidelines:

1. Circle the prepositions.
2. Circle the "is" forms.
3. Ask "Who is kicking who?"
4. Put this "kicking" action in a simple (not compound) active verb.
5. Start fast--no mindless introductions.