



SciWrite 3.x

3.1: Experiment with punctuation

- dash, colon, semicolon and parenthesis
 - used to vary sentence structure
- increasing **power to separate**
 - comma, colon, dash, parentheses, semicolon, period
- increasing **formality**
 - dash, parentheses, the others
- **Semicolon**
 - connects two independent clauses
 - clause: unit of grammatical organization just below a sentence in rank; it always contains a subject and predicate
 - puts emphasis on second part of the sentence
 - used to separate items in lists that contain internal punctuation
- **Parentheses**
 - insert an afterthought or explanation (word, phrase, sentence) into a passage that is grammatically complete without it
 - if removed the main point of the sentence should not change
 - parentheses give the reader permission to skip over the material
- **Colon**
 - use after an independent clause to introduce a list, quote, explanation, conclusion or amplification

- "The colon has more effect than the comma, less power to separate than the semicolon, and more formality than the dash."
- **rule of three's** (for lists, examples)
 - NOTE: The rule of three's for lists and examples
- use to join two independent clauses if the second amplifies or extends the first
- **Dash**
 - use to add emphasis or to insert an abrupt definition or description almost anywhere in the sentence
 - just don't overuse it, or it loses its impact
 - "A dash is a mark of separation stronger than a comma, less formal than a colon and more relaxed than parentheses"
 - use a dash only when a more common mark of punctuation seems inadequate
 - i.e. reserve this tool for the really tough jobs!

3.2: Practice: colon and dash

- colon: introduce a list
- dash: long descriptive clause that could be set off by a dash

3.3: Parallelism

- pairs of ideas joined by and, or, but should be written in parallel form
- make a choice and stick to it!
- list of ideas (and numbered lists of ideas) should be written in parallel form (remember the rule of 3's)
- examples
 - **The velocity decreased (SVX)** by 50% but **the pressure decreased (SVX)** by only 10%

- We aimed **to increase the resolution (infinitive phrase)** and **to improve picture quality (infinitive phrase)**

3.4: Paragraphs

- 1 paragraph = 1 idea
- give away the punch line early
 - inverted pyramid → important stuff first
 - not necessarily a topic sentence
- paragraph flow is helped by:
 - logical flow of ideas
 - sequential in time (avoid the Memento approach)
 - General → specific (take-home message first)
 - Logical arguments (if a then b; a; therefore b)
 - parallel sentence structures
 - if necessary: transition words
 - not really needed to use all different variations (e.g. but, if, soon, hence)
- your reader remembers the first and last sentence best. Make the last sentence memorable. Emphasis at the end!
 - sentence variety (long, short, long) + build-up to the conclusion

3.5: Practice: paragraphs

- verb-tally
 - be, have → boring
- wordiness tally
- watch repetition
- avoid meta-comment
 - why you wrote what you wrote

- idea flow chart (outline)
 - **main idea of the paragraph**
 - **supporting ideas**
 - **sub-supporting ideas**
- avoid if possible: effect \leftarrow cause / illogical order
- unnecessary repetition
- empty words
- consider ordering: first (primary), then second (secondary)

3.6: A few more tips: repetition, key words and acronyms

- when you find yourself reaching for the thesaurus to avoid using a word twice within the same sentence or even paragraph, ask:
 1. Is the second instance of the word even necessary?
 - challenges/difficulties, illustrate/demonstrate, teaches clinicians/guides clinicians
 2. If the word is needed, is a synonym really better than just repeating the word?
 - repeat key words! (e.g. name of comparison groups, variables or instruments)
- disastrous synonyms
 - whereas it's just amusing or inelegant in some types of writing, in scientific writing it's a disaster
 - the reader may think you are referring to a different instrument, model, group, variable, etc.
- acronyms/initialisms
 - it's ok to repeat words
 - resist the temptation to abbreviate words simply because they recur frequently

- use only standard acryonyms/initialisms. Don't make them up!
- if you must use acronyms define them separately in:
 - abstract
 - each table/figure
 - text
 - for long ppapers: redefine occasionally (as readers don't typically read start to finish)