



Strategies For Improving Technical Style

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SENTENCE STRATEGIES

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1. Write in
the Active
Voice

2. Using
There Are

3. Use
Parallelism

4. Avoid
Nominaliza
tion

5. Put the
Main Idea
First

6. Writing
Long
Sentences

7. Use You
Correctly

8. Avoid
Sexist
Language

1. Write In The Active Voice

The active voice emphasizes the performer of the action rather than the receiver.

Rephrase the following:

- The test was conducted by the intern
- This method was ruled out
- The heated water is sent into the chamber

Write In The Passive Voice

Typical situation needs no agent

- Robots are used in repetitive activities.

Active verb requires an unnecessary agent

- Companies use robots in repetitive activities

Active accuses

- You violated the ethics code by doing that.

Passive avoids accusing

- The ethics code was violated by that act.

to emphasize a certain word

- Milk samples are preserved by the additive.

Exercise: Passive Voice

* Revise the passive voice sentences in these paragraphs.

Numerous problems with flexographic printing have to be considered. On very short runs of 1000 or less the cost can be excessive. In addition dot gain is another issue that can be a problem. Small print and reverse print can be other problems with flexography.

The page is entitled features. All of the features of the Netmeeting software are listed down the center of this page. Under each feature a brief discussion of the feature is given so that the user is told what the feature is for. The uses of each feature in detail can be found by clicking on the icon

USE PARALLELISM

Faulty	My duties included <i>coming</i> in early in the morning and doing preparation work, <i>to cook</i> on the front line, <i>trained</i> new employees, and <i>took</i> inventory.
Parallel	My duties included <i>coming</i> in early to do preparation, <i>cooking</i> on the front line, <i>training</i> new employees, and <i>taking</i> inventory.

Exercise: Parallel Structure

Write a sentence in which you give three reasons why a particular Web search engine is your favorite.

Use *there are* sparingly

(there is, there will be, etc.)

- Most sentences are more effective if the subject is placed first.

Ineffective	<i>There are two reasons why we should talk about abandoning our current location.</i>
Effective	<i>We should abandon our current location for two reasons.</i>

PRACTICE: Eliminate *there are*, or any related form, from the following sentences.

- There are slowness and inefficiency in the data processing and information retrieval.
- There is a need for some XML code to be learned by me.
- There is a reliance on business to provide product information on the Web.
- There is the necessity to modify packaging methods so that there can be fewer contaminants released into the environment.

Avoid Nominalizations

- Avoid using too many nominalizations, **verbs turned into nouns** by adding a suffix such as -ion, -ity, -ment, or -ness.
- Nominalizations weaken sentences by presenting the action as a static noun rather than as an active verb

Static	The training policy for most personnel will have the <i>requirement</i> of the <i>completion</i> of an initial one-week seminar.
Active	The training policy will <i>require</i> most personnel <i>to complete</i> a one-week seminar.

EXERCISE: Correct the nominalizations in the following sentences.

- Insertion of the image into the document occurs when you click OK.
- Specification of the file as a Word document was necessary to make the conversion of the file from text to Word.
- The manipulation of the layout in order to cause the transformation of it into film is the process of color separation

Put The Main Idea First

Main idea
is last

The writing of manufacturing processes, which explain the sequence of a part's production, and design specifications, which detail the materials needed to produce an object, are two types of professional writing I will do.

Main idea
is first

Two types of professional writing that I will do are writing manufacturing processes, which explain the sequence of a part's production, and design specifications, which detail the materials needed to produce an object.

Write Sentences Of 12 To 25 Words

- Combine short sentences into a longer one, connecting the parts with parallel structure.

One sentence, 40 words long	The problem is the efficiency policy, which has measures that emphasize producing as many parts as possible, for instance, 450 per hour, compared to a predetermined standard, usually measured by the machine's capacity, say, 500, for a rating of 90%.
Two sentences, 20 and 21 words long	The problem is the efficiency policy, which calls for producing as many parts as possible compared to a predetermined standard. If a machine produces 450 per hour and if its capacity is 500 per hour, it has a rating of 90%.

Use *You* Correctly

- Use you to mean “the reader”; it should not mean “I,” or a very informal substitute for “the” or “a” (e.g., “This is your basic hammer.”)

Rephrase the following:

- *I knew when I took the training course that you must experience the problems firsthand*
- This evaluation is different than the change from your old remote control to the new laser ones.
- Two methods exist to enhance fiber performance. In the first you orient the fibers. The second is the alkali process.

Avoid Sexist Language

Sexist	The clerk must make sure that <i>he</i> punches in.
Use an infinitive	The clerk must make sure <i>to punch</i> in.
Use the plural	The clerks must make sure that <i>they</i> punch in.
Use the plural to refer to “plural sense” singulars	Everyone will bring their special dish to the company potluck.

Paragraph Strategies

AVOID CLARITY ERRORS

Choppy
Sentences,

Wordiness
And
Redundancy

Strings Of
Nouns

ELIMINATING CHOPPINESS

Choppy	Both models offer safety belts. Both models have counterbalancing. Each one has a horn. Each one has lights. One offers wing-sided seats. These seats enhance safety.
Clear	Both models offer safety belts, counterbalancing, a horn, and lights. Only one offers wing-sided seats, which enhance safety.

Prune Excess Wording

Unnecessary subordinate clause

I found the site *by the use of keywords that are* nano-technology and innovation

Redundant intensifiers plus unnecessary subordinate clause

It is made of *very* thin glass *that is milky white in color*

Redundant

The tuning handle is a metal protrusion that can be easily grasped *hold of by the hand* to turn the gears.

Unnecessary repetition plus over use of prepositions

This search was done by a *keyword search* of the *same words* using the *search function* of different *search engines*.

Noun Clusters *[Three Or More Nouns Joined In A Phrase]*

Noun cluster	<i>Allowing individual input variance of data process entry will result in higher keyboarder morale.</i>
Revised	We will have higher morale if we allow the keyboarders to enter data at their own rate.

Practice: Clarity

Revise the following sentences, to remove choppiness & unnecessary words.

- Numerical control exists in two forms. CNC is one form. CNC is Computer Navigated Control. DNC is Distributed Numerical Control.
- On-line registration is frustrating. It should make it faster to register. The words on the screen are not self-explanatory. Screen notices say things like “illegal command.” Retracing a path to a screen is difficult.
- This project will be presented in Web format with links to the resource sites as well as other links that are associated with the sites and links that are associated with the topic of researching a report.
- In fact many sites are available on the Web where the viewer can have the actual experience of purchasing equipment, new and used, from the site.

PROPER PARAGRAPH ORGANIZATION

Start With
Topic
Sentence

Arranging
Sentences By
Level

Repeating
Terms In A
New/Old
Sequence,

Placing Key
Terms In The
Dominant
Position,

Indicating
Class Or
Membership,

Using
Transitions

Maintaining Coherence

Put only one idea
in each sentence

Avoiding
examples that
require readers to
research

Consider your
word choice

Use consistent
vocabulary

Write words in full
instead of using
contractions,

Use –ing and –ed
forms carefully

Reference:

Riordan, D. (2012). Technical Communication Style in Technical Report Writing Today. *Cengage Advantage Books. p.88-105*