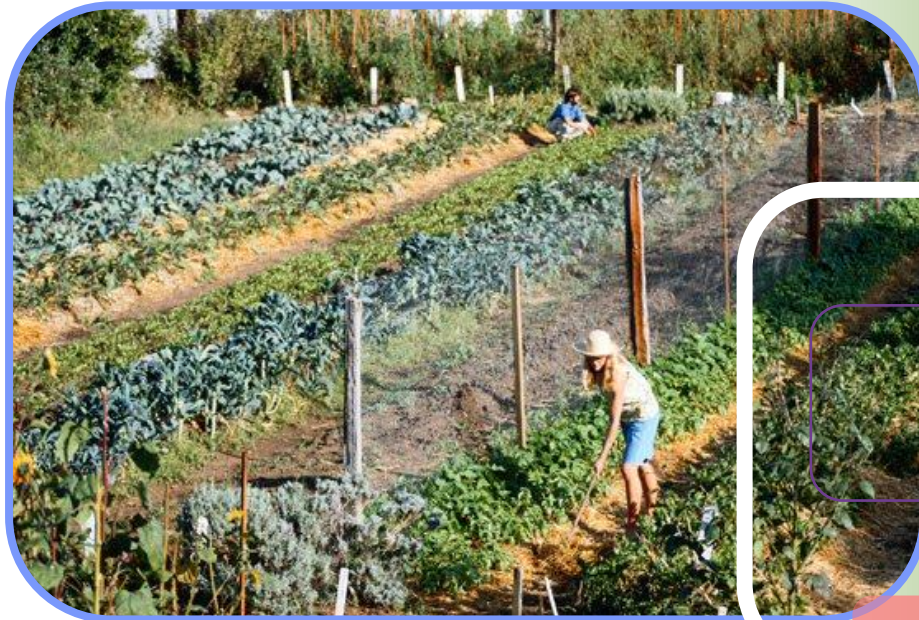


CHAPTER Four

Constructing Clear Sentences and Paragraphs



Overview

- ▶ Role of adaptation in writing clearly limited sentence content and economical use of words
- ▶ Right emphasis to content
- ▶ Sentence unity and clarity
- ▶ Short, unified sentences; appropriately used topic sentences; movement shown

Clarity and Short Sentences

Writing clearly generally involves writing short sentences. But there are exceptions.

You can write short sentences in two ways:

- 1 by limiting content,
- 2 by using words economically.

Break up long sentences.

(Limiting Content)

DON'T

Many consumers have expressed dissatisfaction with the relatively high prices of the new Japanese cars, but this has not prevented large numbers of people from purchasing these cars and pushing sales higher than many automotive experts had forecast, thus firmly entrenching the Japanese cars in a large segment of the automobile market.

Break up long sentences.

(Limiting Content)

DO

Many consumers have expressed dissatisfaction with the relatively high prices of the new Japanese cars. However, this has not prevented large numbers of people from purchasing these cars and pushing sales higher than many automotive experts had forecast. The Japanese cars have thus become entrenched in a large segment of the automobile market.

Break up long sentences.

(Limiting Content)

DON'T

The production planning department assigns to each production order a number that is called a job-order number, which becomes the identifying means of reporting to the accounting department the direct costs relating to a production order, and which can reveal additional information about the job through code numbers or letters added to the job-order number.

Break up long sentences.

(Limiting Content)

DO

The production planning department assigns to each production order a number that is called a job-order number. This number becomes the identifying means of reporting to the accounting department the direct costs relating to a production order. Adding code numbers or letters to the job-order number reveals more information about the job.

Break up long sentences.

(Limiting Content)

DON'T

I should appreciate first obtaining clearance from your bureau, subsequent to which I plan to send this preliminary draft through appropriate channels to Mr. Suarez of the Nevada agency, asking him for information we need in order to discuss the statistics for the entire year, and also inviting someone in the agency to participate as joint author of the final article.

Break up long sentences.

(Limiting Content)

DO

I should appreciate first obtaining clearance from your bureau. Then I plan to send this preliminary draft through appropriate channels to Mr. Suarez of the Nevada agency, asking him for information we need in order to discuss the statistics for the entire year. I plan also to invite someone in the agency to participate as joint author of the final article.

Eliminate cluttering phrases.

- ▲ Regardless of the fact that sales increased, profits continue to decline.
- ▲ Even though sales increased, profits continue to decline.
- ▲ Production will decrease next month due to the fact that we must retool for the next model.
- ▲ Production will decrease next fall because we must retool for the next model.
- ▲ In very few instances do the salespeople receive bonuses over the amount of \$100.
- ▲ The salespeople seldom receive bonuses over \$100.
- ▲ At all times the cash box is kept locked.
- ▲ The cash box is always locked.

Eliminate cluttering phrases.

- ▲ At whatever time we receive a special order it is immediately sent to the production planning department.
- ▲ Whenever we receive a special order, we send it to the production planning department.
- ▲ Contrary to our expectations, the new law will allow the company to reduce its income taxes.
- ▲ Unexpectedly, the new law will let the company reduce its income taxes.
- ▲ In some instances, we sell directly to the retailer.
- ▲ Sometimes we sell directly to the retailer.

Cut surplus words.

- ▲ You are hereby instructed to send all daily reports directly to this office as promptly as possible.
- ▲ Send all reports to this office promptly.
- ▲ Your attention is directed to paragraph 3, which summarizes the findings of this study.
- ▲ Paragraph 3 summarizes the findings of this study.
- ▲ Enclosed herewith are general instructions which are sent to you for your guidance and information.
- ▲ The enclosed general instructions are for your guidance and information.

Cut surplus words.

- ▲ On the date of March 1, all reports must be ready for the purpose of mailing them to the home office.
- ▲ All reports must be ready to mail to the home office by March 1.
- ▲ It will be observed that all reports coming from our St. Louis headquarters are routed through the district sales managers.
- ▲ Reports from our St. Louis headquarters are routed through the district sales managers.
- ▲ Enclosed herewith are two copies of the status report.
- ▲ Enclosed are two copies of the status report.

Rephrase roundabout constructions.

- ▲ All the books are in readiness for the annual audit.
- ▲ The books are ready for the annual audit.
- ▲ The charge of negligence has been denied by all four of the officers.
- ▲ The four officers denied the negligence charge.
- ▲ It is our expectation that this plan will be successful.
- ▲ We expect the plan to succeed.
- ▲ There have been many times when we suspected theft.
- ▲ Many times we suspected theft.
- ▲ It is our conclusion that production should stop.
- ▲ We conclude that production should stop.

Rephrase roundabout constructions.

- ▲ We are in receipt of your report.
- ▲ We received your report.
- ▲ Your attention is invited to the contents of enclosed brochures.
- ▲ Please see the enclosed brochures.
- ▲ We are not in a position to stop the trend.
- ▲ We cannot stop the trend.
- ▲ Please find enclosed a list of applicants.
- ▲ A list of applicants is enclosed.

Remove unnecessary repetition.

- ▲ We have verified the charges to your account and find that the account balances on our books agree with the account balances on your books.
- ▲ We have verified the charges to your account and find that our records agree with yours.
- ▲ This change will enable us to get started sooner than if we wait for a later date.
- ▲ This change will enable us to get started sooner.
- ▲ At the present time the research is almost complete.
- ▲ The research is almost complete.

Remove unnecessary repetition.

- ▲ You must do and perform the following duties and functions.
- ▲ You must perform the following duties.
- ▲ While auditing a good auditor follows the accepted procedures for auditing.
- ▲ A good auditor follows accepted procedures.
- ▲ The manager repeatedly kept telling me over and over again.
- ▲ The manager repeatedly reminded me.
- ▲ This situation calls for quick and expeditious action.
- ▲ This situation calls for quick action.

Sentence Emphasis

Write sentences that give their contents proper emphasis.

- ▲ Short sentences stand out (an item standing alone gets emphasis).
- ▲ Long sentences de-emphasize content (the two or more items share emphasis).

All Short Sentences

(The effect is choppy.)

The main building was inspected on October 1. Mr. George Wills inspected the building. Mr. Wills is a vice president of the company. He found that the building has 6,500 square feet of floor space. He also found that it has 2,400 square feet of storage space. The new store must have a minimum of 6,000 square feet of floor space. It must have 2,000 square feet of storage space. Thus, the main building exceeds the space requirements for the new store. Therefore, Mr. Wills concluded that the main building is adequate for the company's needs.

Some Subordination (but not logical)

Mr. George Wills, who inspected the main building on October 1, is a vice president of the company. His inspection, which supports the conclusion that the building is large enough for the proposed store, uncovered these facts. The building has 6,500 square feet of floor space and 2,400 square of feet of storage space, which is more than the minimum requirements of 6,000 and 2,000 square feet, respectively, of floor and storage space.

Good Subordination

(important points emphasized)

The main building is large enough for the new store. This conclusion, reached by Vice President George Wills following his October 1 inspection of the building, is based on these facts: The building's 6,500 square feet of floor space exceeded the minimum requirements by 500 square feet. The 2,400 square feet of storage space exceeded the minimum requirement by 400 square feet.

Include only related ideas for sentence unity.

- ▲ The Passman shredder was the first manufactured, and we have had a Timmons since 1996.
- ▲ The Passman shredder was the first manufactured. We have had a Timmons since 1996.
- ▲ The weather was unusually bad last month, and sales of Drummond products increased 12 percent.
- ▲ Even though the weather was unusually bad last month, our sales of Drummond products increased 12 percent.
- ▲ We value your satisfaction, and we have carefully looked into the handling of your order.
- ▲ Because we value your satisfaction, we carefully looked into the handling of your order.

Include only necessary detail for sentence unity.

- ▲ Both hotels can guarantee the 250 rooms we will require, although the Marriott is new (since 2002) and its rooms are more modern and therefore more appealing, but the 69-year old Westgate is well preserved and comfortable.
- ▲ Both hotels can guarantee the 250 rooms we will require. The Marriott is new (since 2002), and its rooms are modern and, therefore, more appealing. The 69-year old Westgate, however, is well preserved and comfortable.

Include only necessary detail for sentence unity.

- ▲ I rented offices in Marina Towers, a downtown office building, and the suite rents for \$3,000 per month for three executive offices which open into a single support office which is large enough for two administrative assistants.
- ▲ I rented offices in Marina Towers, a downtown office building. The office suite selected rented for \$3,000 per month. It has three executive offices, each opening into a single support office, which is large enough for two administrative assistants.

Use logical construction for sentence unity.

- ▲ We cleared the site, and then the foundation was constructed.
- ▲ We cleared the site, and then we constructed the foundation.
- ▲ Because our inventories have decreased has increased our back orders.
- ▲ Our decrease in inventories caused an increase in back orders.
- ▲ Helping people to help themselves is how I got the job done.
- ▲ I got the job done by helping people to help themselves.

Use logical construction for sentence unity.

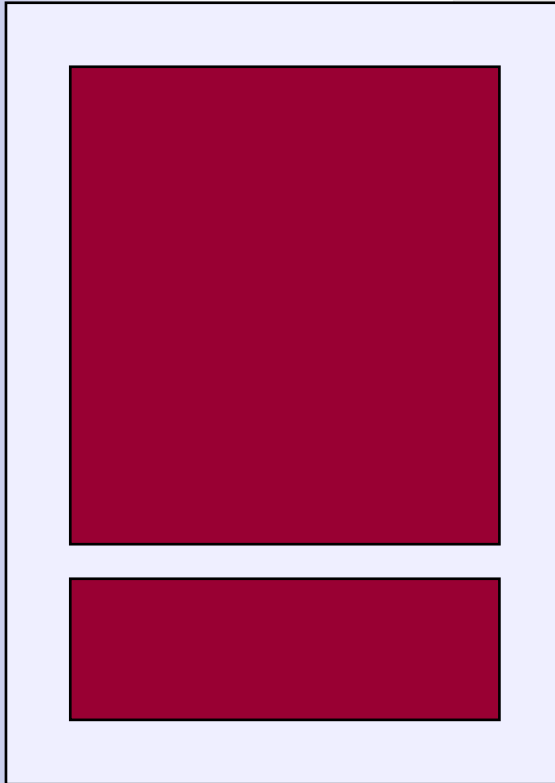
- ▲ Because I have a degree in information systems is the reason I am qualified for the job.
- ▲ My degree in information systems qualifies me for the job.
- ▲ The fact that sales increased is because we opened new territories.
- ▲ Our sales increased because we opened new territories.

Lack of Unity in a Paragraph

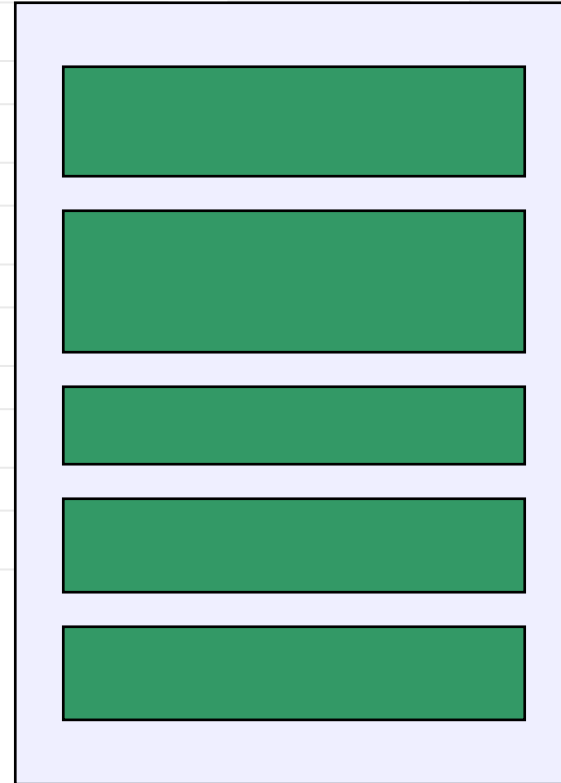
This paragraph inserts information about personal qualities into a paragraph about coursework.

At the university I studied all the basic accounting courses as well as specialized courses in taxation and computer security. I also took specialized coursework in the behavioral areas, with emphasis on human relations. Realizing the value of human relations in business, I also actively participated in organizations such as Sigma Nu (social fraternity), Delta Sigma Pi (professional fraternity), and University Sing. I selected my elective coursework to round out my general business education. Among my electives were courses in investments, business report writing, and business ethics. A glance at my resume will show you the additional courses that round out my training.

Contrasting Pages: Long Paragraphing versus Short Paragraphing



Heavy paragraphs make the writing appear to be dull and difficult.



Short paragraphs give well-organized effect -- invite the reader to read.

Topic Sentences in Paragraph Construction

In constructing a chart line, you should plot the item to be illustrated as a continuous line on a grid. On the grid, you should plot time on the horizontal axis (X-axis). You should plot the value of the series on the vertical axis (Y-axis). You should include the scale values and time periods on the axis lines.

You may also compare two or more series on the same line chart. In such a comparison, you should clearly distinguish the lines by color or form (dots, dashes, dots and dashes, and the like). You should clearly label them by a legend somewhere in the chart. But the number of series that you may compare on one chart is limited. As a practical rule, four or five series should be a maximum.

Include only necessary information.

This paragraph tells more than the reader needs to know:

In reviewing the personnel history form you filled out last week, I found an error that needs to be corrected. The section titled “work history” has blank lines for three items of information. The first is for dates employed. The second is for company name. And the third is for type of work performed. On your form you wrote company name only, and it extended across all three blanks. You did not indicate years employed or your duties. This information is important. It is reviewed by your supervisors every time you are considered for promotion or for a pay increase. Therefore, it must be completed. I request that you come by my office and complete this form at your earliest convenience.

Include only necessary information.

Only this information is really necessary:

Please come by my office at your earliest convenience to correct an error in the personnel form you filled out last week.

Give paragraphs movement with transitional words and phrases.

This paragraph moves steadily forward to reach its goals.

We at Digex take care of all the needs of your online business. First, we supply the hardware and software necessary to get your site up and running. Next, we make certain you are online 24/7/365 with our world-class data centers and networks. In addition, we provide the administration, monitoring, and security that assures your site success.

**“Writing and thinking are inseparable.
Not only does thinking help us to
write, writing helps us to think.”**

**--Richard Lederer
*The Write Way***