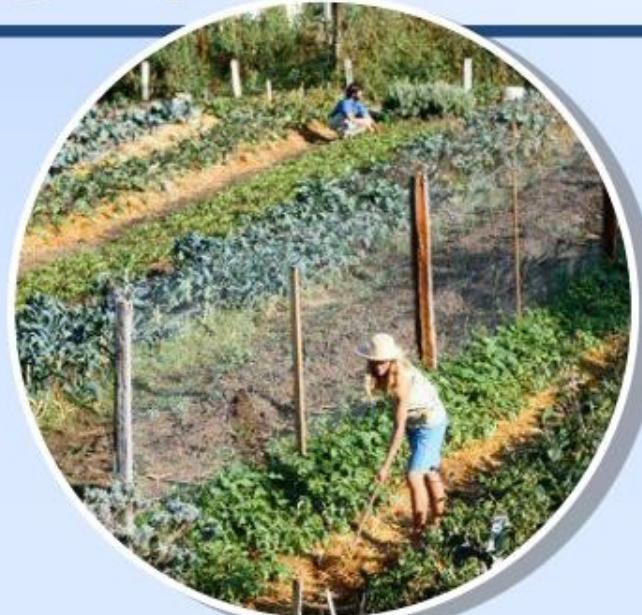




Construction of Clear Sentences and Paragraphs

chapter three



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.

Writing Economically

(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.

Writing Economically

(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.

Writing Economically

(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.

Writing Economically

(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.

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.

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 spaced 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.

Use logical construction for sentence unity.

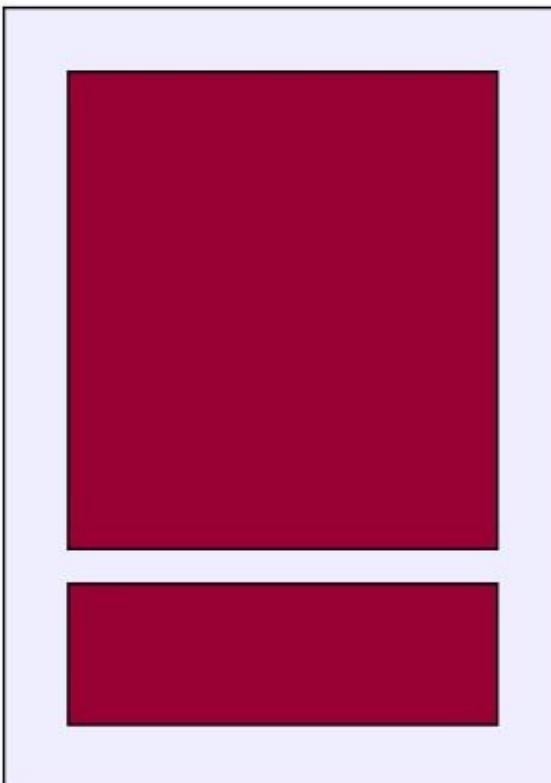
- We cleared the site, and then the foundation was constructed.
- We cleared the site, and then we constructed the foundation.
- Because our inventories have decreased has increased our back orders.
- Our decrease in inventories caused an increase in back orders.
- Helping people to help themselves is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

Lack of Unity in a Paragraph

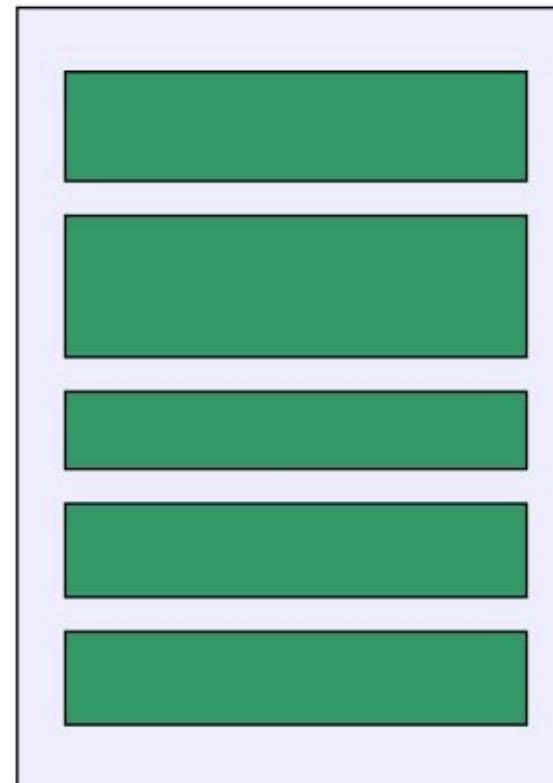
This paragraph inserts information about personal qualities into a paragraph about coursework.

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



chapter four

Writing for Effect



Overview

- Need for effect
- Conversation style, rubber stamps, old language
- You-viewpoint
- Positive language
- Courtesy
- Emphasis
- Flow, transitional devices

Writing for Effect

- Effective business writing sometimes must create the right effect.
 - The right effect can help to build goodwill.
 - And it can help in achieving message goals.

Create the right effect by (1) using conversational style.

Stiff and Dull

Reference is made to your March 16 letter, in which you describe the approved procedure for initiating a claim.

Enclosed herewith is the brochure about which you make inquiry.

I shall be most pleased to avail myself of your kind suggestion when and if prices decline.

Conversational

Please refer to your March 16 letter, in which you tell how to file a claim.

Enclosed is the brochure you asked about.

I'll gladly follow your suggestion if the price falls.

Create the right effect by (2) avoiding rubber stamps.

- At an early date
- Attached please find
- Complying with your favor of
- Due to the fact
- Hit the road
- Bit the hand that feeds you
- Take it with a grain of salt
- Too many irons in the fire
- As per
- Neither here nor there
- A good man is hard to find
- You'd better believe
- Let her hair down
- Rat race
- Thanking you in advance
- Couldn't care less

Create the right effect by (3) avoiding the old language of business.

In Openings

- we beg to advise
- your esteemed favor
- this is to inform you

In Contents

- deem it advisable
- attached hereto
- please be advised

In Closings

- Thanking you in advance
- We beg to remain
- Anticipating your favorable response

Letter filled with old-style, rubber stamp wording

Dear Mr. Canfield:

In re: Policy 437 H721 411

Agreeable to your favor of September 6, we have consulted our actuarial department to ascertain the status of subject policy.

Inasmuch as said policy was due on September 1 and this classification carries a 31-day grace clause, I am pleased to advise that your period of grace does not expire until October 1.

Therefore, permission is hereby granted to delay remittance until said date. Trusting to have your payment by that time, I am.

Yours very truly,

Letter revised with contemporary wording.

Dear Mr. Canfield:

Subject: Your September 7 inquiry about Policy 437 H721 411

You are still covered by your policy. As it has a 31-day grace period, you have until October 1 to pay. So that you may be assured of continued coverage, you should mail your payment a few days before this date.

If I can help you further, please contact me again.

Sincerely,

Create the right effect by (4) emphasizing the you viewpoint. (1 of 2)

- We:** Our policy requires that you pay by the 10th of the month in order to earn the discount.
- You:** You can earn the discount by paying by the 10th of the month.
- We:** We are offering a special discount to all our loyal customers.
- You:** As a loyal customer, you will receive a special discount.
- We:** Send us your check for \$741 today so that our books will show you as current.
- You:** Will you please keep your account current by sending your check for \$741 today.

Create the right effect by (4) emphasizing the you viewpoint. (2 of 2)

- We:** Our research engineers have worked forty-four years to make Deere a safe mower.
- You:** You can use the Deere with the comfort of knowing that it is a product of forty-four years of intensive safety research.
- We:** On February 7 we will deliver the Bush desk and chair set your ordered.
- You:** You will receive your Bush desk and chair set on our February 7 delivery.
- We:** I look forward to receiving additional orders from you.
- You:** I look forward to serving you again.
- You:** Serving you again will be a pleasure.

Create the right effect by (5) accenting positive language.

- Negative:** Your misunderstanding of your policy prompts your accusation that we are at fault.
- Positive:** Section 3 of your policy makes us responsible only when we service the equipment.
- Negative:** I regret the inconvenience caused you by the breakdown of the equipment.
- Positive:** The repaired equipment should give you years of good service.
- Negative:** We must refuse your request to use our equipment.
- Positive:** As we are a state office, our equipment can be used for government purposes only.

Common Negative Words

- Afraid
- Allege
- Beware
- Careless
- Decline
- Disappoint
- Fail
- Inconvenience
- Unfortunate
- Waste
- Worry
- Alibi
- Apology
- Blame
- Complaint
- Difficult
- Fault
- Impossible
- Misunderstanding
- Ruin
- Unfair
- Wrong

Create the right effect by (6) showing courtesy. (1 of 5)

Show courtesy by singling out the reader.

not this: Your training report for the third quarter has been received and has been judged to be satisfactory.

but this: Congratulations, Jane, on the good teaching indicated by the third quarter training report you submitted.

not this: A prompt reply will be appreciated.

but this: As the report is due on the 7th, Mr. Adami, will you please reply by that date.

Create the right effect by (6) showing courtesy. (3 of 5)

Show courtesy by doing more than expected.

Little extras like:

- giving more than the minimum information requested
- making helpful suggestions
- wishing good luck
- making encouraging remarks

Create the right effect by (6) showing courtesy. (4 of 5)

Show courtesy by avoiding anger.

- not this:** You failed to state whether you intend to use the equipment inside or outside.
- but this:** So that I can meet your needs exactly, please tell me whether you will use the equipment inside or outside.
- not this:** We have been very patient with your failure to reply to our letters.
- but this:** Probably there is a good reason why you have not answered our letters.
- not this:** Your negligence in this matter has caused us a loss in sales.
- but this:** Because corrective action was not taken, our sales declined.

Create the right effect by (7) giving proper emphasis to contents. (3 of 5)

Emphasis by Sentence Structure

These short sentences give equal emphasis to all items.

The Cc field is for courtesy copies. Courtesy copies are for the recipient's information. To send courtesy copies, put the recipients' addresses in the Cc field. They won't be expected to answer. They can answer if they choose. You can send yourself a courtesy copy for your file. Do this by placing your address in this field.

Create the right effect by (7) giving proper emphasis to contents. (4 of 5)

Emphasis by Sentence Structure

Here some items get more emphasis than others.

Put the addresses of those to whom you want to send courtesy copies in the Cc field. Courtesy copies are for the recipients' information. The recipients have a choice whether or not to respond. By placing your address in this file, you can receive a copy for your file.

Create the right effect by (7) giving proper emphasis to contents. (5 of 5)

Emphasis by Sentence Structure

This one emphasizes different items.

If you want others to have the information in your message, send them courtesy copies. Do this by placing their addresses in the Cc field. They have a choice whether or not to respond. Place your address in this field if you want a copy for your file.

Create the proper effect by (8) making the message coherent. (1 of 6)

Show coherence through tie-in sentences.

Initial Sentence

As always, we are willing to do as much as we reasonably can to make things right.

Abrupt Shift: The facts in every case are different.

Smooth Tie-in: What we can do in each instance is determined by the facts of the case.

Create the proper effect by (8) making the message coherent. (4 of 6)

Show coherence through repetition of key words.

- Before buying plants you should know which varieties are adapted to your area. Adapted varieties usually are sold by local nurseries.
- Preferably you should state the problem in writing. Stating the problem in writing is good for many reasons.
- The state of order of your findings depends on much on the plan you followed in your research. This research plan probably was the product of the preliminary analysis you made of your problem.
- Nouns are the doers of action. As doers of action, they attract the reader's attention.

Create the proper effect by (8) making the message coherent. (5 of 6)

Show coherence through the use of pronouns.

- Transitional sentences are essential to good writing. They are the mortar that holds bricks of thought together.
- If you think Mr. James is most interested in the conclusion, begin with the conclusion. A direct beginning will permit him to make his decision without delay. If he has confidence in your work, he may not choose to read beyond this point.

Create the proper effect by (8) making the message coherent. (6 of 6)

Show coherence through the use of transition words.

- The promotion failed for two reasons. First, we had very little preparation time. Second, we were extremely short of experienced salespeople.
- For three years we had no funds for maintaining the equipment. As a result, we have suffered a succession of breakdowns.
- After the incident, we installed two additional video cameras. Nevertheless, theft losses continued to increase.
- They built the building on the site that had been filled. Consequently, the foundation cracked.
- Flights attendants at US Airways went on strike. Similarly, pilots and mechanics refused to cross the picket line.

Good business etiquette should guide the use of effect.

Whatever you write should be

- true
- fair
- considerate

“Write as though you were addressing intelligent people you understand and respect. Don’t patronize them, but don’t talk over their heads.”

--Patricia T. O’Conner
Words Fail Me