

Which do we put first—the outcome or the condition? That depends on what we think our reader has in mind. In these sentences, the reader would have in mind the ideas of disengaging gears and forwarding payments. So we begin with what readers know and move to what they do not.

Some verbs, conjunctions, and propositions are implicitly negative:

Verbs: *preclude, prevent, lack, fail, doubt, reject, avoid, deny, refuse, exclude, contradict, prohibit, bar.*

Conjunctions and Prepositions: *except, unless, provided, without, against, lacking, absent, but for.*

As complex as multiple explicit negatives can be, we can baffle our readers if we combine them with implicitly negative verbs and conjunctions. Compare these:

Except when applicants have **not** submitted applications **without** documentation, benefits will **not** be denied.

You will receive benefits only if you submit your documents.

To receive benefits, submit your documents.

Exercise 5-1

Prune the redundancy from these sentences.

1. Critics cannot avoid employing complex and abstract technical terms in order for them to successfully analyze literary texts and discuss them in a meaningful way.
2. Scientific research generally depends on precisely accurate data if it is to offer theories that will allow the world to advance into the future in a safe and cautious way.
3. In regard to prospects for desirable employment in teaching positions, the future of those engaged in studies at the graduate school level is at best uncertain.
4. Those various agencies and offices that provide aid and assistance to those who participate in our program activities have reversed themselves from the policy that they recently announced to return to the original policy established earlier.

5. It is true that in spite of the fact that the educational environment is a very significant and important facet to each and every one of our children in terms of his or her future development and growth, different groups do not support reasonable and fair tax assessments that are required for the purpose of providing an educational experience at a decent level of quality.
6. Most likely, a majority of all patients who appear at a public medical clinical facility do not expect special medical attention or treatment because their health problems and concerns often seem of a minor nature and can for the most part usually be adequately treated with minimal understanding and attention.
7. Notwithstanding the fact that all legal restrictions on the use of firearms are the subject of heated debate and argument, it is necessary that the general public continue carrying on discussions pro and con in regard to them.
8. Under circumstances in which individuals with financial resources to invest anticipate the possibility that the goods and services that they buy may continue to increase in price, those individuals will ordinarily put a majority of their discretionary financial resources into specific objects of artistic value and worth.
9. In the event that governors of the various states have the opportunity to gather and discuss matters of economic needs and problems in their respective states, it is possible that they will find a way to overcome the major problem they have of specifying exactly how to divide up and distribute Federal economic resources to their different states.
10. Those engaged in the profession of education and teaching have for a long time had an interest in gaining a better understanding about significant improvements in how individuals learn and commit to memory information from written textual material. The first problem is identifying common and different features among comparable passages of writing. The second addresses the difficult matter of assigning some kind of value to the quality and quantity of information that a reader does not forget after that person reads a passage.

Exercise 5-2

A paragraph in this Lesson is wordy. Find and revise it.

Exercise 5-3

What single words can you find for the negative phrases in these sentences? Each was in an earlier draft of this book and revised.

1. While the standard definition of a verb as an action word is not reliable, it is in fact not bad advice.
2. A second set of rules includes those whose observance we do not notice, and whose violation we do not notice either.
3. But we ought not accept the argument that we do not need the word *finalize*, or that it is ugly because of the *-ize*.
4. While it is not clear what counts as "too many" prepositions, it is clear that when you do not use abstract nouns, you do not need most of the prepositional phrases.
5. These choices among points of usage let those among us who wish to do so express our sense of linguistic decorum, a decorum that many of us believe testifies to our precision. It is an impulse we ought not scorn, so long as it is not ignorant or thoughtless.

Exercise 5-4

Where appropriate, change the following negatives to affirmatives. Do any additional editing you think useful.

1. There is no possibility in regard to a reduction in the federal deficit if reductions in federal spending are not introduced.
2. Do not discontinue medication unless symptoms of dizziness and nausea alleviate within 6 hours.
3. No one is prevented from participating in cost-sharing educational programs without a full hearing into the reasons for his or her not being accepted.
4. No agreement exists on the question of an open or closed universe, a dispute about which no resolution is likely as long as a computation of the total mass of the universe has not been done.
5. So long as taxpayers do not engage in widespread refusal to pay taxes, the government will have no difficulty in paying its debts.
6. No alternative exists in this country to the eventual development of tar sand, oil shale, and coal as sources of fuel, if we wish to stop being energy dependent on imported oil.

7. Not until a resolution between Catholics and Protestants in regard to papal authority supremacy is achieved will there be the start of a reconciliation between the two Christian religions.
8. Except when such expenses do not exceed \$100 the Insured may not refuse to provide the Insurer with all relevant receipts, checks, or other evidence of costs.
9. It seems to me that in a look at the nature of advertising, it is not illogical to start out with a statement that will define the term. This will establish a common point of reference so that we will not be subjective in our approach to a subject matter that is not often the topic of unemotional discussion. There is no single definition or agreement for the word *advertising*, making the chances for possible objectivity not likely.
10. Regardless of the fact that we do not know with any degree of certainty whether or not there is the existence of life forms in the universe other than our own, evidence of a statistical nature makes it highly unlikely that life does not exist somewhere among the large number of probable planetary systems scattered throughout the length and the breadth of the universe as we know it.

A PARTICULAR KIND OF REDUNDANCY: METADISCOURSE

In Lesson Four, I described METADISCOURSE as the language we use to refer to elements in a rhetorical moment:

- to what we do as writers: *to sum up, candidly, I believe, therefore, however.*
- to what we want our readers to do: *note that, consider now, as you see.*
- to what we intend our text to do: *first, second, finally.*

We need metadiscourse in almost everything we write. But some writers use so much that it buries their ideas:

The last point I would like to make is that in regard to men-women relationships, it is important to keep in mind that the greatest changes