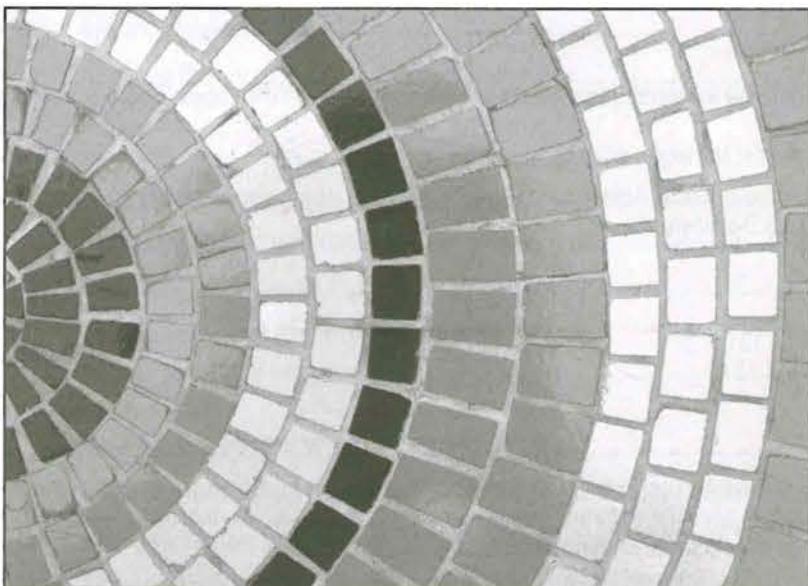


GETTING PUBLISHED

IN INTERNATIONAL JOURNALS

Writing Strategies for European Social Scientists



Finanziert aus Studienbeiträgen

Friedrich-Alexander-Universität
Erlangen-Nürnberg



W80
25

L
32

W80
DM
4200
R357

by Natalie Reid



UER 028028862079

NOVA

Norwegian Social Research

CONTENTS



Getting Published in International Journals: Writing Strategies for European Social Scientists

First published in Norway in 2010 by:

NOVA – Norwegian Social Research
P.O. Box 3223 Elisenberg
0208 Oslo
Norway

Tel +47 22 54 12 00
Fax +47 22 54 12 01
nova@nova.no
www.nova.no

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise without the prior permission of both NOVA and Natalie Reid.

First printing 2010

Copyright © 2010 by Natalie Reid

Cover and interior design by Judith Schwartz, Studio Six Graphics
Printed by 07 Gruppen a.s.

ISBN: 978-82-7894-338-0
ISSN: 0808-5013
R 03/10

Printed in Norway

Preface.....	v
Acknowledgments	vi
Dedication	viii

INTRODUCTION TO CONTENT AND FORMAT

Introduction to Content: Writing in English is Different.....	3
Instructions for Format: How to Use this Book	8

THE THEORY

PART I Why Writing in English is Different	13
1 The Theory of Contrastive Rhetoric: Why You Have to Think and Write Differently in English.....	14
2 Applying Theory to Practice: Working Definitions.....	22

THE STRATEGIES

PART II Editing for Strength: Less is More	29
3 Structure Words: The Shorter, the Better.....	32
4 Eliminating Deadwood: Cut, Cut—Then Cut Some More	36
5 Replace or Delete? Determining the Necessity of Both Content and Language	44

PART III Editing for Clarity: the Writer's Obligation	53
6 Avoiding Ambiguity: Using Pronouns Correctly.....	54
7 Active vs. Passive Voice: Converting Weak Language into Strong Writing.....	68
8 Placing Words Where They Belong: Using Modifiers Correctly	87
9 From Grammar to Style: Using Parallel Structure	104
10 Punctuating for Clarity in Both American and British English.....	118

PART IV Organization and Argumentation: Anglo-American Style.....	141
11 Paragraphing: Creating Coherent Units of Meaning.....	142
12 What Goes Where in a Paper: Organizing and Outlining.....	158
13 Anglo-American Argumentation: How to Develop and Frame a Logical Argument.....	184

CONTENTS

PART V Journal Analysis: Analyzing Journals for Elimination and Submission.....	199
14 Understanding Submission Guidelines: What They Mean and What Editors Want.....	202
15 Journal Analysis: Eliminating and Choosing Journals.....	210
16 Journal Analysis: Using Timesaving Ideas and Analysis Models	223
17 Journal Analysis: Analyzing and Writing Abstracts	231
PART VI Revision and (Re)Submission: Creating a Publishable Paper	249
18 Recognizing, Studying, and Developing Style	250
19 Revising, Revising—and Revising Again	267
20 Writing Submission and Revision Letters.....	274
CONCLUDING REMARKS	284
END MATTER	
Notes.....	286
Bibliography.....	294
Permissions	299
Index.....	300
About NOVA	303
About the Author.....	303

PREFACE

T

his book deals with one corner of the golden triangle of internationalization: to be able to publish internationally. The two other corners are the capabilities of building working relationships with distinguished scholars in other countries and of succeeding in raising funds for international research. All three capabilities are essential for ambitious scholars today. Moreover, these capabilities are strongly interrelated. Unless you have a fair number of international publications, researchers in other countries will not be aware of your accomplishments and invite you to join their networks. Similarly, reviewers of your applications for international research funding will find it hard to assess your academic merits unless you have a record of international publications. If you do not have such a record or a network of international colleagues you are unlikely to be asked to participate in applicant consortiums led by others. Conversely, being part of an international research group improves your chances of getting your work published internationally. Yet, in all these cases, the ability to use English effectively as an academic language is of fundamental significance.

Today English is the main language for international academic discourse. This situation creates some extra demands for scholars who do not have English as their mother tongue. As an institution highly committed to promoting the internationalization of Nordic scholarship, NOVA – Norwegian Social Research sees the need to offer systematic training in English academic writing. Over some years the institute has been able to engage Natalie Reid to give intensive courses in academic writing, tailored to the needs of non-native English speakers. The participants have found Reid's courses extremely helpful and inspiring—not only for their contents but also because of the energy, enthusiasm, and sense of humor she has brought to her teaching and supervision. Many of the participants have had their papers published in the most prestigious international journals in their disciplines.

When Reid indicated that she was interested in writing a textbook about English academic writing based on her courses, NOVA was delighted to offer to sponsor her work on the book. We are convinced that this book, built on many years of successful teaching and supervision of scholars in the Nordic and other European countries, will enable even more people to benefit from her skills. NOVA is grateful and honored to have the opportunity to publish this book.

BJØRN HVINDEN, PROFESSOR, HEAD OF RESEARCH
NOVA – NORWEGIAN SOCIAL RESEARCH

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A book of this complexity and scope owes much to many people. Starting at the beginning, I gratefully acknowledge and thank all of the gifted teachers whose instruction, inspiration, and impeccable criticism led me to this work. Among the many, I especially honor Dagmar Givant, David Littlejohn, Leon Litwack, and Edgar Widburg.

I am very grateful to NOVA – Norwegian Social Research, for support in making this volume possible. In particular, I thank Bjørn Hvinden, Head of Research, for his encouragement, insightful comments, and suggestions; Elsbet Vestvatn, Head of Administration, for the support she gave me while overseeing the project; and Lars Roar Frøyland, for his research and attention to detail at all levels of the process.

Many thanks and much gratitude go to the four people who read the earlier drafts, generously sharing with me their time and knowledge, and making both focused and detailed comments and contributions: Uschi Backes-Gellner, Prof. of Industrial Relations and Human Resource Management, University of Zurich; Bjørn Hvinden, Professor, Head of Research, NOVA; Jon Kvist, Prof. of Political Science, University of Southern Denmark; and linguist Ellen Rosenfield, Lecturer, UC Berkeley. All scholars should be so fortunate to have such friends and colleagues. My heartfelt thanks also go to Carol Vernon and Robert Turbin for their gracious gift of a secluded place for writing the first draft.

I am grateful to Garbi Schmidt, senior researcher at SFI – The Danish National Centre for Social Research, who was instrumental in bringing me to Europe. I am also indebted to attorney Sheila Levine for advising me on intellectual property rights; to Shira Cohen for her thorough and insightful copyediting work; to Barbara M. Traynor for reading the galley proofs with me; and to Carol Faulkner Peck for sage advice—along with needed encouragement—on voice and audience. For book designer Judith Schwartz I have high praise and gratitude for her professional skill and keen eye, as well as her amazing patience in meticulously rendering the very different constructions that I wanted for many of the chapters.

Finally, my wholehearted gratitude and respect go to the hundreds of M.A. and Ph.D. students, senior researchers, and professors who have participated in my “Academic Writing” and “Journal Analysis” courses. In particular, I am very grateful to Pernille Hohnen and Kathrine Vitus for allowing me to use some of their earlier drafts of published papers. I also thank the many students and scholars whose anonymous first-draft sentences exemplify specific teaching points, and whose observations and anecdotes enliven and enrich the text. In addition, I thank the following individuals for particular comments and contributions, both large

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

and small: Nabanita Datta Gupta, Turf Böcker Jakobsen, Jan Høgelund, Anika Liversage, Mai Heide Ottesen, Jean Louis Tarrou, Frederik Thuesen, Petra Ulmanen, André Vågan, and Arch G. Woodside.

In the collaborative processes of consulting, editing, and teaching, the “students” also become teachers. In this sense, this book is as much theirs as mine.

NATALIE REID
ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

TO MY PARENTS

GLORIA SCHLEIFER REID, for whom English is a third language and who taught me to write.

HAROLD REID (of blessed memory), who taught me that knowing the precise meaning of words is the key to success, and that the only way to do anything is to do it right.

INTRODUCTION TO CONTENT AND FORMAT

INTRODUCTION TO CONTENT: Writing In English Is Different

At first glance, writing in English should not be difficult. English is the *lingua franca*, the language of commerce, in the international academic community. You have studied English at school, you read books and papers in English, you speak English, you can discuss complex issues in English at conferences all over the world, and you may have already written a Ph.D. dissertation and one or more papers in English. So how hard can it be?

Simply put, English is different. First, it is a set of languages (American, Australian, British, Canadian, etc.), each with its own variations in grammar, punctuation, spelling, and vocabulary—and publishing in any one of these “languages” calls for your being able to both know and apply the differences among them. Second, and more important, English has a rhetorical tradition different from any in Europe. No matter how you learned in your first language to organize a paper, construct an argument, use your scholarly vocabulary, or consider your reader’s expectations, English does it differently.

The difference that I am describing here applies not to English, the language, but rather to the rhetorical conventions and expectations that have developed for both readers and writers within the rhetorical tradition of English-speaking countries. While some of the strategies and guidelines that this book presents may be familiar to you, many will not: these are the *unwritten rules* that native speakers of English learn so young—when they first study organizing and writing paragraphs—that they take them for granted as universal. You, too, have ideas about writing that you take for granted and unconsciously assume are universal. As the primary goal of this book is to help you get published in top-ranked international journals, a subsidiary goal must be for it to shake the foundations of your unconscious assumptions and topple any that stand in the way of your learning to write according to a rhetorical tradition very different from your own.

Getting Published in International Journals presents and analyzes the unwritten rules of English rhetoric, the ones you most likely never learned in academic writing courses. The book begins by explaining what every reader educated in the Anglo-American rhetorical tradition unconsciously expects from a writer. It then offers a series of carefully calibrated writing tools for meeting those expectations—tools for organizing, outlining, writing, and rewriting your professional papers. The book frames all of these tools as specific strategies within the context of what I call the “psychology of reading”—the way that people learn to read and to expect writers to

perform—in the Anglo-American tradition. For if no one has taught you how native English-speakers read, both consciously and unconsciously, how can you possibly know how most effectively to organize your argumentation or how best to convince those readers that your point of view or conclusions are correct, useful, or otherwise valuable? How, in this highly competitive academic market, are you to make sure that *your* papers get published?

The strategies in this book derive from a combination of theory and practice. I refer often to the concept of the psychology of reading in terms of the linguistic theory from which it derives: the theory of *contrastive rhetoric*. This theory, which conceives of both language and writing as “cultural phenomena,” provides writers with a framework for understanding the different—and often unconscious—sets of obligations and expectations accorded to readers and writers within the linguistic community of every language.¹ I therefore base the strategies in this book on the unwritten expectations of the Anglo-American reader and the unwritten obligations of everyone writing in English.

These strategies have a successful history, as I have been using them while teaching, consulting with, and editing the books and papers of social scientists throughout Europe since the early 2000s. Many of these scholars and researchers have since had papers published in highly prestigious journals, whereas previously they had received rejections; some are now publishing an average of one or more papers a year; and others report that they are now “addicted” to the process of thinking through and writing their papers in such a new way. In all of these cases, their success is a direct result of applying the unwritten rules of the Anglo-American linguistic community through strategies that I present in seminars and that this book now offers in print.

As an American, I write in American English and often refer to the American educational system, because I know it better than any other. Nonetheless, I differentiate between US and UK English wherever appropriate and know from experience that the principles and strategies in this book fully apply to writing—and to getting published—on both sides of the Atlantic.

As one young German sociologist told me, “Had I not spent a year in the States as an exchange student in high school and then done my Ph.D. in the UK, I would never have understood how to write in English. Frankly, as I look at my colleagues’ papers, I don’t know how any European who has not studied in an English-speaking country can possibly write well enough to get published in English.”

The purpose of this book is to fill that gap—the one between *knowing* English through academic schooling and reading, and *using* that knowledge in a way that will help you get your papers published. The term “strategies” in the subtitle is no accident: this book contains a set of pragmatic strategies and tools—both linguistic and organizational, both concrete and theoretical—for European social scientists to

apply when thinking about, outlining, writing, rewriting, and revising their papers.

This book comprises six parts, the first of which discusses the linguistic theory of contrastive rhetoric and its application to writing scholarly papers. The other parts present the five major strategies theoretically and pragmatically. The chapters within each part include—and make their points with—examples and practical guidelines. The five strategies are editing for strength; editing for clarity; organizing the argument “logically” according to Anglo-American norms; conducting journal analyses (a) to eliminate inappropriate journals and choose the right one for your paper and (b) to perform linguistic analyses of journal articles; and revising.

The first strategy, *editing for strength*, relies on the very Anglo-American principle that “less is more.” In our rhetorical tradition, the individual who can say the most with the fewest words shows the greatest intellectual sophistication. “Brevity is the soul of wit,” wrote Shakespeare, and the ability to be as brief as possible, without sacrificing meaning or clarity, is also the mark of a keen mind and a strong writer. (This approach to writing parallels the scientific norms of “parsimony.”) The chapters covering this strategy include hands-on techniques for eliminating redundancy, using fewer words, and using strong verbs in effective ways.

The second strategy, *editing for clarity*, connects directly to the theory of contrastive rhetoric. In English, the writer has total responsibility for making the writing clear, and the reader has *no obligation* to participate in deciphering what the words mean. The reader’s only job is to read clear, well-organized writing, and then consider his or her reaction to the content of the text. The reader should never have to work to comprehend the language of what he or she is reading, or to read into the text to fill in what the writer has left out. Thus editing your own writing for clarity is mandatory. As each sentence must be clear and complete on its own, this strategy dives straight into the heart of grammar. Grammar is the logic in, and of, every sentence; if an academic sentence is not grammatically correct, then by definition it is illogical—and will lead to confusion.

Therefore, the chapters for this second strategy cover the four major points of grammar relating most closely to clarity and to problems that even some native English writers have with clarity: pronoun reference, active vs. passive voice, modifier problems, and parallel structure. One chapter also covers punctuation, a code of meaning signifiers with critical importance in English. This chapter also covers the major differences between UK and US punctuation—differences quite crucial for getting published, as journals want one form of English or another but never a mix.

The third strategy, *organizing the argument according to Anglo-American norms*, returns us to the theme of contrastive rhetoric. Anglo-American rhetorical conventions emphasize the writer’s obligation to prove his or her point through the use of Aristotelian logic. This form of logic, which is based on proofs, calls for the writer to

show the reader, step by step, how he or she is proving a point or constructing an argument. This proof-focused style—much different from the descriptive or narrative style of so many European linguistic communities or the Hegelian “thesis-antithesis-synthesis” style of others—is essentially mathematical. The writer must first outline his or her argument, share it with the reader, and frame not only the entire paper but each section, each subsection, and each paragraph so that the reader knows at every turn the writer’s position in the argument, the direction that the argument is most likely to take, and so on.

This particular skill is taught to us so young in English-speaking countries that we are always shocked to find that scholars and researchers from other linguistic communities do not write in so “logical” a fashion.

The chapters covering this strategy discuss, among other things, paragraphing, outlining, organizing ideas, and creating an argument that meets the standards of the Anglo-American tradition. One chapter also examines argumentative pitfalls and mistakes common to European social scientists, and gives a sentence-by-sentence analysis of a six-paragraph introduction argued according to Aristotelian logic.

The fourth strategy, *journal analysis*, comprises the two major phases of analyzing prospective journals for content, focus, orientation, and style from the beginning of the research project (and certainly well before any writing starts). The purpose of journal analysis is for the scholar to learn to write a particular paper in the style of a particular journal, thereby maximizing his or her chances of publication. Yet I have seen too many European social scientists choose a journal for its name (“it’s the right subject for my paper”) or its prestige (“it would be good for my career if I could get published there”), with no sense of the appropriateness of either their paper or their writing abilities for the journal they have chosen.

The first phase of journal analysis is the process I call the “*elimination analysis*,” which allows the writer to discard all journals that are poor matches for the subject, theory, methodology, etc., of the paper that he or she plans to write. The chapters for this phase contain all the questions that the social scientist must ask about a journal before choosing one. These chapters also deal with the details of the first level of analysis, i.e., the things for which a writer must look before choosing a journal. The second phase of journal analysis consists of performing a *linguistic analysis* of the language and structure of articles within the journal that the writer has finally chosen. The chapters for this phase include discussions of journal submission guidelines and offer both long and short sample journal analyses. These chapters also cover various patterns—from vocabulary to structure—that the writer must search for and observe as part of the analysis.

The fifth strategy, *revision*, derives from the Anglo-American principle that “writing is thought made visible.” In English the writing must be as powerful as the

argument and as good as the research. Poor writing signals the reader to expect poor thinking. This strategy thus calls upon the writer to apply everything he or she has learned from the other four strategies. No European social scientist should ever submit a paper that has not undergone numerous revisions for vocabulary, clarity, structure, and style; for argumentation and journal appropriateness; and for the accuracy of every comma and quotation mark. The chapters for this strategy cover not only revision and proofreading but also the recognition and development of a good writing style. The final chapter discusses submission letters and offers strategies for responding appropriately to referee comments.

At this point I need to clarify what this book will do and what it will not. One of the many forms of defining is defining by negation (i.e., explaining what something is *not*)—a useful tool for dispelling any likely misconceptions. With so many books available on either academic writing or getting published, my defining by negation will help you better focus on the pragmatic purpose of *Getting Published in International Journals*.

This is a book of practical and conceptual strategies aimed at getting you published in today’s academic marketplace. It neither engages in theoretical discussions of international “Englishes” nor argues for or against changing the rules of English rhetoric to fit the preferences of non-native speakers. It does not defend the hegemony of English in the academic world, nor does it trace the entire history of Anglo-American rhetoric and its several centuries of following the principles of Aristotelian logic. It mentions but does not elaborate on developments in applied linguistics, such as discourse analysis or computer-assisted corpus analysis. Furthermore, while contrasting the Anglo-American rhetorical tradition with certain patterns common to the overall European tradition, the book refrains from analyzing the rhetorical traditions of any of the European languages.

Instead, this book contains pragmatic strategies for understanding and using writing tools that will lead to journal publication. It presents and analyzes the unwritten rules of English rhetoric and shows you how to apply them to your advantage. The next chapter will show you how to read this book in the most advantageous way.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR FORMAT:

How to Use this Book

Many academic books contain stand-alone chapters that one can read in any order, according to need or preference. By contrast, this book of writing strategies—which derive from two intensive academic writing courses—constitutes both a reference book and a textbook. With every principle and every rule building carefully on the previous ones, you therefore need to read the chapters sequentially the first time around. The “working definitions” in Chapter 2, for example, are critical for understanding the grammatical, linguistic, and stylistic discussions that follow throughout the book. Likewise, Chapter 13 on Anglo-American argumentation will not be fully meaningful without Chapter 12’s introduction to the influence of Aristotelian logic and the discussion of what goes where in a paper.

Moreover, this book has an unusual organizational framework: it begins where other books might logically end—with sentence structure and sentence editing. Given that, upon completion of one’s research, the most common writing process in the Anglo-American rhetorical tradition is outlining, writing, rewriting, and editing, why not begin with outlining? Certainly the structure must come before the fine details: no beautifully designed door can appear until the builder has laid the foundation and erected the walls.

At the same time, however, no worthy architect can design a functional, lasting building without knowing the strengths and weaknesses of all possible materials. He or she must be familiar with various sizes of nails and planks, know the different properties of hardwood and softwood, and the different uses of steel and copper, of slate and tile. These same details are similar to those with which all successful writers of English familiarize themselves—the phrases and clauses, the word choices and nuances, the sentence structures that can make or break a subtle point. A writer’s knowing when and how to use “which” or “that” is no different from a carpenter’s knowing whether to use a 10-penny nail or a cut nail.

I start with the editorial strategies for words, phrases, and clauses for two reasons. First, they constitute the tools of the writer’s trade. Second, and perhaps more important, when in later chapters I dissect various paragraphs and sections of papers, either to show the elegance of their construction or to expose the gaping holes in the writer’s argumentation, you need to be able to follow this analysis at every level—grammatical, semantic, connotational, and rhetorical. Thus beginning with the tools that you will apply at the end, and learning to understand and use them professionally before you begin constructing a book or an article, will serve you well through-

out the writing and rewriting process. Having these tools at your fingertips from the start will make the best use of your time—and your learning—as you progress through the book. In other words, I have constructed the book along the lines of my teaching.

Beyond the importance of reading the chapters in order, four more suggestions will help you get the most out of the book:

First, expect to return to it throughout all phases of the writing process, from journal analysis, outlining, and argumentation to editing for clarity and brevity and to analyzing and writing the abstract. Rather than being a “quick read” for new ideas, this book focuses on *application*—on taking a concept, whether new or old, and applying it in specific situations so that it works perfectly. For example, the chapters on editing for clarity—work that demands close attention to specific grammatical and stylistic structures—call for not only close reading but also careful rereading during the editing phase of the paper.

Second, while the strategies in this book are very clear in principle, their individual application may initially be time-consuming—because all good writing and rewriting is time-consuming. Nonetheless, the initial outlay of time will have huge payoffs down the road, not only in getting papers published but also in terms of your learning curve. Each time you make an outline, for example, the process becomes more familiar and therefore goes faster. The same holds true for both forms of journal analysis. So rather than reading this book in hopes of finding strategic shortcuts, read it as a long-term investment in new and productive ways of thinking about and arguing, writing, and editing in English.

Third, as this book applies to all social scientists, a few of the more general points may not apply to your specific discipline. (For example, while in most fields the results and conclusions almost never go in an introduction, in economics they do.) Nonetheless, as over 95% of the book’s contents apply to *all* English papers in the social sciences, continue reading even if you come across the occasional point that does not apply to your paper or your field.

Fourth, the concept of contrastive rhetoric is surprisingly little known outside linguistics—and may be very new to you. Therefore, for the best results, very consciously put the writing conventions of your first language aside and enter wholeheartedly into the idea of English as a linguistic culture with highly unusual rhetorical demands and conventions. The more you engage with what you learn here about writing in English, the better your chances for publication become.

So start with Chapter 1, and read through Chapter 20. When you have finished, you may easily return to any chapter you choose, knowing that your foundation for studying it is solid indeed. My hope is that you consult this book as seriously and frequently as you would a dictionary—and that your carefully applying its rules, guidelines, and suggestions leads you to publication in the journals of your choice.

THE THEORY

PART I

WHY WRITING IN ENGLISH IS DIFFERENT

Everything you read in this book is either based on or consistent with the theory of contrastive rhetoric.

The first chapter in Part I lays the foundation for the five strategies by introducing the theory and showing its direct application to academic writing in English.

The next chapter gives you the basic tools for putting theory into practice, starting with a set of necessary definitions. It also briefly outlines what you as a European writer need to know to become successful in English while competing for limited journal space with native speakers from some of the best universities in the English-speaking world.

chapter 1

THE THEORY OF CONTRASTIVE RHETORIC: Why You Have to Think and Write Differently In English

[E]very language is a vast pattern-system, different from others, in which are culturally ordained the forms and categories by which the personality not only communicates, but also analyzes nature, notices or neglects types of relationship and phenomena, channels his reasoning, and builds the house of his consciousness.¹

—BENJAMIN LEE WHORF

In addition to achieving coherence through textual structures...writers need to be sensitive to the different expectations of readers and writers across cultures.... English readers expect and require landmarks of coherence and unity as they read.²

—ULLA CONNOR

Anyone who has ever traveled to another country for business, education, or pleasure immediately notices cultural differences. Yet few people notice that writing—and what the rhetorical conventions of a particular language or country expect from its writers—can also differ greatly. For writing in general, but for academic writing in particular, English makes unusual demands of the writer, and out of this recognition came the theory of contrastive rhetoric.

Contrastive rhetoric developed in the United States in the mid-20th century within the area of applied linguistics known as teaching English as a second language (ESL). ESL teachers noticed that students had difficulty organizing their thinking or presenting their ideas according to English writing norms; moreover, the more difficulties the students had, and the harder they tried to please their teachers, the more they resorted to the learned strategies of their first language and the worse the problem became. Ultimately, teachers and theorists within both ESL and the wider field of applied linguistics realized that each linguistic community has its own culturally determined conventions for and approaches to writing.

These differences range from what an introduction needs to contain to whether papers should have conclusions, discussions, both, or none at all. They range from what voice (active or passive) the culture gives most intellectual weight to whether an author may cite his or her own research or use “I” to take credit for a new theory or method. These examples barely scratch the surface. Overall, academic writing is rife with unwritten cultural and rhetorical rules. The more you learn about the rules that apply to English, the better your chances of getting your papers published in the journals of your choice.

The submission guidelines of many international journals validate this point. For example, the formatting guidelines of the *Applied Economics Quarterly* stipulate:

English: If you are not a native speaker, please have your paper read carefully by one. This is crucial for the quality of both your work and our journal. Furthermore, even seemingly simple cases of incorrect usage (for example, wrong prepositions) can lead to serious misunderstandings and a general lack of clarity about your paper’s main points. Either UK or US English is fine, but please be consistent!³

While most European scholars are aware that British and American English differ not merely in spelling but also in vocabulary, punctuation, and grammar, few realize that learning and applying all of these differences is not optional but mandatory. This compulsory nature of the Anglo-American rhetorical tradition (i.e., what writers *must* do) constitutes one of the core points of this book.

Contrastive rhetoric, in brief, holds that the approaches to both reading and writing in different linguistic communities set up very different sets of expectations among their readers. Each community tends to believe that its way is reasonable and logical, and that everyone else’s is strange, inferior, or both. One American prejudice, for example, is that European scholars use too many digressions and are sloppy in the way that they present data and conclusions. One European prejudice, for example, is that Americans lack intellectual curiosity and are too positivistic, too simplistic, in their thinking. Both of these prejudices, and many others, come out of assuming that the way one does things in one’s linguistic community is the right way—and therefore the only way—to do those things. And neither group is right—or wrong.

However, given that English, for better or worse, is the *lingua franca* of the international academic community, the more you know about the unconscious expectations of English-speaking readers, the better you will be able to reach them—and have them think well of your work. Unfortunately, too many European scholars have learned a form of academic writing that involves an inaccessible style with little real relationship to everyday intellectual discourse among English-speaking readers. For example, those few American academics who have won the Pulitzer Prize in their fields (e.g., Leon Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery*)

have won the Pulitzer precisely because they do not write in an “academic” style. Instead, their focused and fluid prose makes their rigorous scholarship accessible to both academics and nonacademics alike.

As the discussion of contrastive rhetoric progresses, you will see that you can maintain full scholarly integrity in your writing while following the strategies, techniques, and approaches that this book offers. The issue is one of changing your organization and presentation, not of diluting the content.

Underlying any discussion of academic writing is the necessity of understanding the way that people read—the psychology of reading. Only when a writer understands how people read can he or she then write to them most effectively. The problem, however, is that people in different cultures have different psychologies of reading. The reason for this difference is that along with every language comes a “linguistic culture”—a way of not only speaking and reading but also thinking about, organizing, and presenting information. Therefore, while English may differ greatly from the UK to the US to Australia, an overall linguistic culture nonetheless exists among native English speakers. And within this linguistic culture, speakers have a very specific organizational framework: a way of approaching and apprehending the world, a way of analyzing and presenting what they find in it.

Every linguistic community has its own linguistic culture. Not surprisingly, speakers and writers in each community consider their framework for understanding the world “logical.” Therefore, when I speak of the “logic” of English, I do not necessarily expect you to consider it logical. But I ask you to recognize that what I present here is logical to native speakers of English. Indeed, a common English expression is “when in Rome, do as the Romans do.” To paraphrase this saying contextually, I offer the following advice: “When writing in English, write as the English linguistic community does.”

But what does the “logic” of the English linguistic community mean? Contrastive rhetoric holds the answers to this question, as it involves the study of cross-cultural differences in writing: differences in rhetorical approach, in organization, in emphasis, and in the obligations of readers and writers. While we may briefly define rhetoric itself as the way in which speakers or writers structure and use language to affect their audience, every audience has built-in expectations of rhetorical structure deriving from and contingent on the common forms of rhetoric in its own culture.

Finnish linguist Ulla Connor, in her classic book *Contrastive Rhetoric*, states:

Contrastive rhetoric is an area of research in second language acquisition that identifies problems in composition encountered by second language writers and, by referring to the rhetorical strategies of the first language, attempts to explain them.... Contrastive rhetoric maintains that language and writing are cultural phenomena. As a direct consequence, each language has rhetorical conventions

unique to it. Furthermore...the linguistic and rhetorical conventions of the first language interfere with writing in the second language.⁴ [italics mine]

In other words, if you are dancing with someone and stepping on his or her feet, you are doing the wrong dance. Dancing faster will not help. You have to learn to dance *differently*. Every time a non-native writer of English gets stuck and consciously or unconsciously thinks, “How would I do it in [my own language],” he or she ends up doing the wrong dance again.

Yet meeting the expectations of a different culture calls for much more than paying attention to vocabulary and grammar. The cultural expectations of the new audience may require the writer to change the sequence of information, use much different kinds of examples and introduce them differently, add or omit certain types of information, and so on. The writer has to make these changes to create the appropriate contexts for readers to absorb and understand what he or she is saying. Moreover, the writer may have to use highly structured rhetorical devices to avoid ambiguity or misunderstanding.

The rhetorical conventions of English, particularly academic English, contain a series of unwritten rules, the most important of which is that *the writer has to do all of the work*, so that the reader is essentially spoon-fed the information. The writer has to frame (i.e., introduce and contextualize) the entire paper, frame every section, frame every paragraph, so that the reader does not have to *think* as much as to simply *absorb* the information. The reader’s job is to receive and consider clear writing, not to struggle with the words themselves to decipher the meaning. In other words, for academic writing, *English is a completely writer-responsible language*.

The concept of writer responsibility does not apply to all cultures. In Chinese and Japanese, for example, indirection takes precedence over directness, with the understanding that the reader will play an active role in considering all the data and observations and thinking through all of the issues involved. As tradition is highly valued, scholars will give analogies and anecdotes from historical and other experts in the field, following which they will present their contribution—and then essentially stop. To draw a strong conclusion would be to insult the intelligence of the reader, who is expected to do all the thinking and concluding on his or her own. Chinese and Japanese are thus reader-responsible languages.⁵

The rhetorical traditions of most European languages fall between these two extremes. These traditions call for the reader to participate more actively when following the writer’s train of thought through any unframed digressions or anecdotes that the writer may present. These often unintegrated and highly theoretical digressions are acceptable, partly because the reader has a more active role to play. While theories and theorizing are always welcome in English, they are welcome only as long as the writer carefully introduces and presents them in a way that conforms to the

expectations of an English-speaking readership. In other words, in English a writer cannot take the words or ideas of a famous scholar and arbitrarily plant them in the middle of a paragraph with no explanation of why he or she chose *this* paragraph, why the theory is relevant *here*, and why the reader should know about it *now* and not three pages later.

Ironically, the purpose of English rhetoric used to be to sway the emotions of an audience. But changes on both sides of the Atlantic about 200 years ago led to the renewed popularity of Aristotle and Aristotelian thinking, which is based on proofs. The purpose of rhetoric then shifted from persuading people's emotions to convincing their minds—and to doing so with Aristotelian logic. Both speakers and writers had to not only prove their point but also show the reader that they had proved it and how they had done so.⁶

In the US, we have the following saying about writing: "*First you tell them what you're going to tell them; then you tell them; then you tell them what you told them.*" The writer introduces the paper by letting the reader know immediately, in the first few paragraphs, what the paper is going to cover. Next the writer covers what he or she promised to cover—no more, no less. Then the writer concludes by reminding the reader of what he or she said and by pulling all of the minor conclusions together into one clear conclusion—either by stating a position (and showing that he or she has proved that position) or by pointing the way towards future research.

In academic English, native speakers use sequential patterns to organize and present information. As readers, we construct meaning by making logical connections according to the sequential ordering of information, and we use both inductive and deductive reasoning to find out what is most and least important. However, we expect from our writers the deductive method, starting with a purpose statement telling us what the writer will cover or argue in that particular paper. If such a statement is missing, we find the structure deeply flawed.

Not surprisingly, then, of all the rhetorical styles in the world, English has the most linear approach, with a clear beginning, middle, and end—each following directly, clearly, precisely, and logically from the other. Logical progression is the key. Many European languages allow many more unframed digressions, and much Asian writing is circuitous (because going straight to the point from the outset is poor style in those traditions).⁷ But English demands an arrow-like trajectory: the writer aims at a target (the conclusion) and heads straight for it, looking neither to the right nor the left. The writer must carefully integrate everything—from the literature review to the theory, from the methodology to the findings—into that trajectory, so that the argumentation of the paper reads as smoothly and progresses as directly as a well-aimed arrow in flight.

This combination of nearly mathematically precise logic and the demand for clarity manifests in two often-quoted English sayings about writing: "Writing is thought

made visible" and "there is no such thing as good writing, only good rewriting." While researching the origins of these statements, I discovered how very deeply they affect the Anglo-American academic psyche. "Writing is thought made visible" appears in professional papers, in books on writing, and on the websites of writing programs at major universities—but almost never with quotation marks or citations. Most individuals or websites write as if those five words had sprung full-grown from their own minds, like Athena from the head of Zeus. Both an internet search and discussions with librarians led as far back as 1807, to Percival Stockdale's *Lectures on the Truly Eminent English Poets*: "Unfortunate must always be the reasoning of a critick, who...separates thought made visible from thought itself..."⁸ Yet merely 20 years later, the concept of "thought made visible" as applied to writing was already embedded in the common culture.⁹

Thus this crucial concept—that the quality of the writing reflects the quality of the thinking—is so basic to the Anglo-American rhetorical tradition that native speakers automatically accept and perpetuate it. The same holds true for "there is no such thing as good writing, only good rewriting"—a statement usually attributed to US Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis, known for rewriting his decisions as many as fifteen times.¹⁰

Despite no evidence that Brandeis made this statement, scholarly books and papers, as well as the websites of many universities, cite it because the principle it expresses has deeply permeated the culture, dovetailing with what "everyone knows" about writing in English: we write to discover that we mean to say. Then we rewrite it, again and again, until every word works—not for ourselves but for the reader we have in mind. From the very start of our education, we native speakers of English so completely absorb these principles that they remain cultural truths for the rest of our reading and writing lives.

Moreover, these "truths" extend to all readers of English. One counter-argument I often hear is that many journal referees are not native speakers of English and therefore do not share the same attitude towards clarity and precision. But the opposite is true, especially as second-language readers need more clarity, not less. Even more to the point, the many non-native English-speaking referees with whom I have spoken find unclear writing problematic. The following statement typifies the response of European referees:

For several years I have been refereeing over 10 papers a year for high-level journals in economics, so it is fair to say that I have accumulated quite a bit of experience. Nothing annoys me more than a poorly written paper. For me, the first publication threshold that a paper should clear is that it should clearly communicate its findings to the journal readership. Many authors are under the mistaken impression that as long as the analyses are correctly done, the way in which

they are written is a secondary issue. Actually, I have found that a poorly written paper is typically one that is also poorly executed, because if the authors do not bother to polish and perfect the language, they have probably not been very careful when doing their analyses. So my advice to non-native speakers of English would be to have their papers checked for errors by an English language expert. They are simply wasting their time submitting a poorly written paper, because it is going to be returned to them.¹¹

In other words, knowing that “writing is thought made visible” and doing “good rewriting” are essential to a writer’s chances of publication. Your paper must be sufficiently clear, concise, focused, and stylistically appropriate for an international publication to accept. A style that works well for oral presentations (with inflection, tone, pauses, etc.)—for a talk you might give at a meeting—needs rewriting if you want to get it published; and converting a graduate thesis into a readable book inevitably demands an organizational and linguistic overhaul. Because the key to good writing in English is *clarity of prose* (language) and *clarity of focus* (organization), the right combination of coherence and composition will greatly increase your chances of getting published.

The writer-responsible nature of English thus leads to the next important point: a good writing style never forces the reader to struggle with the reading process. From this principle comes the rhetorical strategy of *framing*. This strategy involves using purpose statements, topic sentences, and transitional words and phrases (e.g., *as a result, nevertheless, as discussed earlier*) to walk the reader through the writer’s thinking, so that the reader will understand the material only in the way that the writer intends. Writers need to frame each paper, section, and paragraph, and sometimes even sentences, so that the reader knows at every turn what the paper is about and how the writer is developing his or her argument.

In English-speaking countries, writers cannot and do not presuppose cultural homogeneity in their readers. Writers of English always assume that their reader will think or analyze differently, and therefore strive to allow no room for misunderstanding and leave no chance that the reader will arrive at a different conclusion. We always apply Murphy’s Law: “If anything can go wrong, it will.” Applied to writing, the amended law reads: “If the reader can possibly misunderstand you, the reader will.” Framing, therefore, is essential.

Thus the English-speaking reader will not wait for a writer to spend several pages introducing the field and reporting previous research before finally letting the reader know what the paper will cover or argue. By that time, the reader will have stopped reading the paper altogether. Simply put, we do not have a lot of patience for writing that does not put the reader first according to Anglo-American academic norms. We expect writers to give us constant signposts telling us exactly where they are in their argument and where it is heading. However, rather than judging this approach

negatively, remember that this culturally determined impatience in no way implies any lack of intellectual rigor or capability.

Returning to the psychology of reading in the Anglo-American academic tradition, we come to perhaps the most important principle—the “golden rule” (“do unto others as you would have them do unto you”) revisited: “Write unto others as you would have them write unto you.” In English, this principle involves allowing the reader to start at the upper left corner of the page and continue reading without ever once needing to (a) read a sentence again to understand it, (b) play yo-yo by following an “above” or “below” up or down the page and thus losing his or her place, or (c) question the logical progression of the argument. Accomplishing this goal means that every European writer must also learn to pay attention to such simple but critical concepts as word length, sentence length, paragraph length, active and passive voice, and grammar.

A letter that a European economist received from an editor in response to her resubmission of a paper exemplifies this point:

I am pleased to inform you that, subject to some revision, we are satisfied with your revision. Nevertheless, we ask you to make the following style changes [a page-long list follows].

Finally we have noticed that some of your expressions and sentences are ambiguous and not very articulate. For example, “Unfortunately, the results of the _____ cannot be transferred to the whole population immediately” (p. x). What exactly do you refer to with “the results of the _____” at this point in the paper? What is the meaning of “transferred” or “immediately” in this case? Moreover, “whole population” sounds strange.

Furthermore, you should check your punctuation, sentence structure, and grammar. For example [several examples follows]....

Therefore, we ask you to let your paper be proofread by a professional editing service. Otherwise, we cannot accept this paper for publication. Please also send us a document certifying that your paper has been edited....¹²

Even more than the average native speaker of English, editors take writing seriously. Whereas years ago they might have allowed some leeway for second language speakers, the proliferation and availability of online style manuals, editorial services, and ESL texts (combined with an increase in the number of social scientists) now make the competition much tougher. To get published in English, European social scientists have to write as well as, or even better than, their native English-speaking counterparts. For both European and native-English speaking social scientists, one standard applies: *your work is only as useful as the accuracy and clarity with which you present it*.

chapter 2

APPLYING THEORY TO PRACTICE: Working Definitions

The ability to think precisely, and thus to write precisely, cannot be achieved without observing grammatical rules.... Grammar has the same purpose as concepts. The rules of grammar are rules for using concepts precisely. Since sentences consist of concepts, the whole secret of grammar is clarity and the avoidance of equivocation.¹

—AYN RAND

Be obscure clearly.²

—E.B. WHITE

The concept of clarity is in no way limited to the English linguistic community, nor is the English insistence on conciseness. (Think of Blaise Pascal, writing in the 17th century, “I have made this [letter] longer than usual, only because I have not had the time to make it shorter.”)³ But the premium that the Anglo-American tradition places on clarity and conciseness, and its approach to accomplishing them, is different.

I often encounter criticism that scholars from country X make about the work of those from country Y or discipline Z, simply because the unwritten norms are different. For example, a Scandinavian scholar observed that Russian researchers “behave and write remarkably differently from the Nordic researchers: much more descriptive, less critical of the system, and even less analytical or explanatory (i.e., the ‘why’ questions were missing).”⁴ And many European researchers are puzzled by the French use of complex and obscure language: “Why do French theorists think that they must be almost incomprehensible to be considered intellectual?”

By the same token, the long sentences so common in German appear to annoy non-German readers. (Writer and writing teacher Ayn Rand refers to what she calls “the Germanic method of writing—making one enormous sentence out of what should be three or four.”)⁵ Meanwhile, some criticize the Scandinavians for being too tentative (“it seems/could be understood as”), whereas others think that the Americans lack subtlety in their forthright active voice. And Anglo-American conclusions are often too firmly stated for the tastes of those from rhetorical traditions of a more circumspect turn. The point here is that nobody is wrong and nobody is right. Each linguistic community has a different rhetorical tradition, much of it implicit and absorbed

from childhood, and therefore the members of each look askance at the traditions of the others, wondering why “they” do things so strangely.

For writing in English, what is most important for the writer is the reader’s need for clarity. As you write, and later, as you edit, always hold in mind the following definition of a good sentence: *a good sentence needs to be read only once*. Put another way, *a good sentence is clear on first reading for only one meaning*. Both definitions focus on the needs of the reader in a writer-responsible rhetorical tradition.

For example, is the following sentence clear for one meaning? “Sandra likes tennis better than her husband.” If you said yes, read it again. Three meanings are possible. First, Sandra likes tennis better than she likes her husband. Second, Sandra likes tennis better than her husband likes tennis. Third, for either of these interpretations, the reader still does not know whether Sandra likes watching tennis (in person or on television) or actually playing tennis herself. If such a seven-word sentence can be so difficult for a reader to decipher, what happens in academic writing, where the sentences are so much longer?

This chapter will help you begin putting theory into practice by giving you both the general outline and the specific definitions you need. As a popular American saying goes, writing involves “applying the seat of the pants to the seat of the chair.”⁶ To write clearly and effectively in academic English, you need to keep in mind that because grammar is the logic of the language, grammar is where linguistic clarity begins. Following are the five basic working definitions for this book, that is, the definitions you need to fully understand and work with all five strategies. Rather than considering grammar a “school-child” subject (a big mistake for anyone writing in English), memorize these linguistic definitions and use them as the building blocks for eventual publication success. Every native English speaker, whether consciously or unconsciously, uses them; you should, too.

The grammatical approach that I take is functional, not definitional. Knowing the name of every part of a sentence is meaningless if the writer does not know how each specific part functions within the sentence. As all skilled writers make conscious choices about words and structure, the following definitions therefore focus on function.

Working definitions

This section contains the five major definitions you need to understand all of the analyses that this book contains. In these definitions, the term “related words” simply means words that make sense when placed next to one another.

Phrase: a group of related words containing neither a subject nor a verb

- under the table
- with a list of projects
- waiting for your reply
- to answer the question

In the third and fourth bullets, “waiting” and “to answer” may look like verbs. But, in an English sentence, a verb is the word (or words) that goes with a subject (e.g., *they waited, she answered*). A verb form that does not pair with or accompany a subject is known as either a nonfinite verb or a “verbal”—a verb form not doing the actual “verb work” of the sentence. “Waiting” and “to answer” are verbals; but as the word clusters in which they appear have neither a subject nor a verb, these clusters are phrases.

Clause: a group of related words containing both a subject and a verb

- *We need* 15 copies by tomorrow morning.
- The *copies are* on your desk.
- *that you requested*
- while *you were* out of town
- Somebody’s *dog ate* all 15 copies.

Bullets three and four are obviously not sentences. But this definition covers the *clause*, not the sentence. Obviously, some clauses can be sentences themselves. Other clauses cannot stand alone as sentences. So clauses must come in at least two types:

Dependent clause: a clause beginning with a subordinating conjunction—a clause that therefore cannot stand alone as a sentence

- *that you requested*
- *while you were* out of town
- *until you calm down*
- *although it was my dog*

The italicized words are subordinating conjunctions, which are words that make a clause dependent. In other words, clauses are automatically independent unless someone places a subordinating conjunction (e.g., *unless, inasmuch as, even though*) in front of them. (A full list of English subordinating conjunctions appears on p. 120 in the chapter on punctuation.) These clauses are called “dependent” because, by themselves, they leave the reader hanging, wondering what is missing.

Independent clause: A clause that does *not begin* with a subordinating conjunction—a clause that therefore *can stand alone as a sentence*

- You requested 15 copies from me.
- Last week somebody’s dog ate all the copies.
- You became angry with me.
- We needed the copies at the meeting.

With these four definitions, you now have enough information to define a sentence:

Sentence: a group of related words containing at least one independent clause

- We need 15 copies by tomorrow morning.
- The copies that you requested are on your desk.
- While you were out of town, somebody’s dog ate all 15 copies.
- Christopher quit.
- You may go home when you finish your work.
- We had better finish our work, or the instructor will get mad and eat up all the copies.

These simple sentences contain not-so-simple implications. For example, the sentence in the second bullet—“The copies that you requested are on your desk”—contains two clauses, one independent (“the copies are on your desk”) and one dependent (“that you requested”). Placing a clause within a clause, a very common practice in academic writing, is known as *embedding*.

But what is the function of the embedded dependent clause? In this sentence, because it follows the noun “copies,” it functions the way all words that modify nouns function—as an adjective. It is therefore an adjective clause, even though its technical name is “*relative clause*” (because it positions the copies that “you requested” *in relation to* the copies that “you” did not “request”). Furthermore, the use of “that” and the absence of commas signals the reader that the dependent clause carries essential sentence-specific information, i.e., that not only these copies but others exist, and that, of those, only the copies that the person requested are on his or her desk.

Never underestimate the power of grammar and punctuation (as all the chapters in Part III will demonstrate) for helping you to achieve perfect clarity in your writing. With these five definitions, you are nearly ready to get to work. The only other preparatory advice I can offer, as you begin reading and working with the strategies, is that you always keep the following English precepts in the back of your mind:

- Be as concise as possible without sacrificing meaning.
- Keep your sentences reasonably short.
- Keep your paragraphs reasonably short.
- Write in the active voice.
- Avoid unnecessary jargon.
- Frame and contextualize everything.
- Always let the reader know what you are doing—and why.
- Never allow your reader to become confused, not even for one sentence.

- Anticipate your reader's questions, and answer them before the reader can even ask them.
- Anticipate objections and counter-arguments; frame and discuss them before the "opposition" can.
- Define all of your terms the moment you first mention them.

The rest of the chapters in this book will cover these principles, and many others, in detail. Read on—and enjoy the process. Then apply the seat of the pants to the seat of the chair, apply everything you have learned to the process of writing and rewriting, and produce a paper with the best possible chance of getting published in an international journal.

THE STRATEGIES

PART II

EDITING FOR STRENGTH: Less Is More

What can be said at all, can be said clearly.¹

—LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN

As Part I of this book makes clear, English demands that the writer do one hundred percent of the work. At the editorial stage, whether the writer is editing for content or for vocabulary, sentence structure, and style, the writer must always think of the reader's need for clarity. Clarity here applies to both the organization of the argument and the language and word choice that constitute the writing.

This part of the book focuses on editing the words themselves, choosing them carefully so as to minimize any chances of the reader's misunderstanding the writer or becoming bored. The fewer (but wisely chosen) the words, the better the writing. The less repetition (except where necessary), the longer the writer holds the reader's interest. Above all, the less cluttered the sentences and paragraphs, the easier the reader's access to the writer's meaning.

As Strunk and White wrote in *The Elements of Style* (a book as widely read and quoted today as upon its first publication in the US in the mid-20th century):

Vigorous writing is concise. A sentence should contain no unnecessary words, a paragraph no unnecessary sentences, for the same reason that a drawing should have no unnecessary lines and a machine no unnecessary parts. This requires not that the writer make all his sentences short, or that he avoid all detail and his subjects only in outline, but that every word tell.²

In many languages, including English, “to tell” sometimes carries the meaning “to count.” Every word must count. If a word or phrase is not necessary to the sentence, delete it. As Charles Caleb Colton wrote nearly 200 years ago, “That writer does the most, who gives his reader the *most* knowledge, and takes from him the *least* time.”³

This advice runs counter to many European traditions at both the conscious and unconscious levels. The rhetorical conventions of a number of European languages call for professionals both in and out of academia to write more, not less, as a way of proving their erudition, education, and intellectual sophistication. Indeed, the academic writing traditions of some countries call for writers to be almost unreadable,

that is, to use highly theoretical terms (that they themselves often invent) in sentences so complex in both verbiage and structure that constant rereading becomes a necessity. These styles work well in countries where language and rhetorical tradition intertwine to validate one another. But, as you will soon see, such a style does not work well in English.

Moreover, all upper secondary and university students throughout both Europe and the English-speaking countries repeatedly encounter a subliminal (i.e., unstated) message so powerful that it might as well be engraved in huge letters above the doors of these institutions: *the bigger the words and the longer the sentences, the higher the grades*. Students receive this message in various ways, from teachers and professors, for two reasons. The first is that part of the educational process is for students to improve both their vocabulary and their ability to produce an abundance of different sentence structures. The second is that the students' only way of proving their increasing knowledge and sophistication is to write long sentences full of large words.

What very few professors teach their students, however, is that after graduation the rules abruptly change. One of the many reasons that books on editing and writing proliferate in English-speaking countries is to counteract this corrosive subliminal message, to prepare the student for professional work outside the university. The English-speaking professional world (including the academic world) is one of busy people, none of whom have time to waste reading any more than they must. If the sentences are too long or the vocabulary too abstruse, they are likely to put the article down and never return to it. In American English this stage of reading has come to be known as "MEGO-reading," with the acronym standing for "my eyes glazed over."

Of one thing you can be certain: once a reader's eyes glaze over, that reader will never return to your article.

The English rhetorical tradition, as previously explained, is dramatically different from the European. Despite stylistic variations within the English linguistic community from country to country and from journal to journal, Anglo-American writing calls for clear writing that does not demand rereading. Writers focus on the needs of the reader: what does the reader need to know, and what is the clearest way to convey that information? These writers show their erudition by saying the very most with the fewest possible words.

This part of the book presents various strategies for **simplifying your sentences without sacrificing meaning**. This form of editing is often called *pruning*, from the verb for cutting deadwood and old branches from fruit trees and flowering plants so that they will be healthier and grow better. Pruning is a tremendously useful strategy, not only for clarifying your meaning but also for meeting the word limits of professional journals. Often in the "revise and resubmit" phase of the publication process,

editors or reviewers ask the writer to add a section or even some new tables. Such work may easily increase the paper's word count by 1,000 words or more. However, as the journal's word limit remains unchanged, the writer's problem then becomes what to cut from the original paper. Knowing how to prune is thus an invaluable skill.

William Zinsser, who taught writing at Yale, states in *On Writing Well*: "Look for the clutter in your writing and prune it ruthlessly. Be grateful for everything you can throw away."²⁴ The trick to using pruning as a strategy is to develop a sense of what to cut and what not to cut, of when a word is useful and when it is not. The following chapter will teach you to do just that. (Other chapters in this part of the book will take the pruning process further, past the level of the sentence to that of groups of sentences and the paragraph itself.)

chapter 3**STRUCTURE WORDS:**
The Shorter, the Better

Never use a long word where a short one will do.¹

—GEORGE ORWELL

Every Indo-European language contains both content and structure words. *Content words* deliver the actual content of your article: the nouns and verbs describing your subject, theory, data, methodology, findings, etc. These words give the reader the content of your argument, the specific data in your study, and the countries, ethnicities, statistics, or types of people involved in your research. Content words, not surprisingly, convey maximum information.

Structure words, by contrast, are the glue that holds sentences—or parts of sentences—together. Their purpose is to structurally frame the sentence, rather than convey actual content-rich information. While these words are often prepositions (*over, through, during*), I also include here adverbs and adverbial phrases (*increasingly, monthly, in a larger sense, more specifically*), because their content value is relatively low. Although structure words have meaning, they carry minimal content within the larger scope of the article. Because you want your reader to focus on the content of your article, you want the shortest structure words possible. Any complexity in your paper will thus involve only the content itself.

In English the writer has a limited number of words per sentence before the reader begins to forget what was at the beginning (and therefore has to start rereading). Given these limits, good writers always reduce the number of structure words to leave room for more content. The reader's focus will then be on the content—which is exactly where every academic writer should want it to be.

The first step in learning how to shorten your structure words is to recognize the longer ones that you habitually use. Here are some common examples:

- as a means of
- due to the fact that
- in a professional manner
- in the amount of
- in the event that
- in view of the above
- on a weekly basis

Each of these phrases uses four or five words when one or two would suffice. Why write “in the event that” when you can use the single word “if”? Why increase the word count with “as a means of [doing]” when you can write “by [doing]” or “to [do]”? Why waste valuable sentence space on “due to the fact that” when you have “as” or “because” as preferable alternatives?

As some English words have more than one meaning, your word choice is critical. For example, I suggested “because,” not “since,” as an alternative to “due to the fact that” because “since” has two different meanings: one is a slightly weaker form of “because”; the other has to do with elapsed time. In the sentence “since Franz left, the institute has become a much more pleasant place to work,” the word “since” could mean either *because* Franz left or *since the time that* Franz left. Applying Murphy’s Law to the writing process—that if the reader can possibly misunderstand the writing, the reader will—using “since” only as a time referent and using “because” or “as” for causation eliminates any chances of misunderstanding.

Following is a list of common structure phrases and their shorter replacements:

as a means of [doing]	by [doing], to [do]
at the present time	now
at this point in time	now
by means of	by, with
close proximity	near
due to the fact that	because, as
for a period of	for
for the purpose of [doing]	for [doing], to [do]
in accordance with	by, following, under
in an effort to	to
in a timely manner	on time, promptly
in conjunction with	with
in order that	for, so
in order to [do]	to [do]
in regard to	about, on
in spite of	despite
in the amount of [money]	for
in the course of	during, in
in the event that	if
in the [Swedish] context	in [Sweden]
in the near future	soon [be more specific if possible]

in view of	because
in view of the above	consequently, therefore
month of [name of month]	[name of month]
not later than	by
on a [monthly] basis	[daily, weekly, monthly, yearly]
pertaining to	about, on
pursuant to	by, following, under
relating to	about
the fact that	that
time period	[use one or the other, not both]
to a [large] extent	[largely]
until such time as	until
up to and including	through
with reference to	about
with the exception of	except for

Some of these structure phrases are simply too long. Others contain redundancies. For example, why write “for *a period* of two months” when time takes place in periods? “For two months” or “for a two-month period” (if you are contrasting different periods) works much better. And using a phrase such as “in *the month* of October” is not only redundant but silly—what else can October be?

As redundancy in structure phrases is a common problem in English writing, dozens of excellent books on editing and writing exhort their readers to avoid redundancy at all cost. I have never forgotten the first day of my mandatory English composition course at UC Berkeley, when the professor announced two rules. The first was that we were to learn and follow every principle in Strunk and White’s *The Elements of Style*. The second was that anyone writing the phrase “the fact that” would automatically fail the course. After pausing just long enough for our horrified gasps to subside, he continued: “If something is not a fact, calling it one will not make it one. If something is a fact, then calling it a fact is redundant.”

No social scientist need ever use “the fact that,” because substituting “that” or restructuring the sentence leads to a much more elegant version:

Poor: The fact that the data is limited creates two problems.

Good: That the data is limited creates two problems.

Another example of such overwriting is the use of “to a [great/large/increasing] extent” when the writer means “greatly,” “largely,” or “increasingly.” If a simple “-ly” adverb can replace a longer structure phrase, it should:

Poor: To a large extent the government has exaggerated the problem.

Good: The government has largely exaggerated the problem.

or

Overall, the government has exaggerated the problem.

These two sentences have slightly different meanings. By first changing “to a large extent” to “largely,” the writer can now see two possible meanings and choose the one that best fits his or her intended meaning.

A number of other structure phrases can also carry subtly different meanings. “In a timely manner,” for example, can mean either *on time* or *promptly*. Use the phrase that carries the meaning you intend. The more you train your ear to hear these differences, the easier you will find it to let go of clichés and long structure words.

Two other structure words you should avoid altogether are *above* and *below*—except for signaling meaningful directions (e.g., *above* the ceiling, *below* the legal minimum). The problem with using *above* to refer to material that a writer has discussed earlier and *below* to suggest information or ideas that are to follow is that such usage creates a yo-yo effect. The English reader, when encountering either *above* or *below*, unconsciously looks in the direction indicated, thus leaving the sentence that he or she was reading—and that unconscious movement away from the sentence interrupts the flow of the reading and the continuity of the argument.

Because the reader’s gaze should always stay on the sentence that he or she is reading, avoid phrases such as “as mentioned above” or “the proposed estimations are described below.” Instead, use the following substitutions:

Replace *above* with “previously” or “earlier”:

As previously mentioned, this theory has a long and honored history.

These discrepancies, *as discussed earlier*, lead to methodological problems.

Another good substitute is “this” or “these”:

[Researcher’s informant says, “_____.”]

This statement clearly reflects the conflicting viewpoints.

Replace *below* with “following”/“as follows”/“the following”:

Following are the conditions under which the theory holds.

We organize the data *as follows*:

The following results indicate the weaknesses in the government policy.

The next step after shortening structure words is eliminating all other unnecessary words, as the following chapter will explain.

chapter 4

ELIMINATING DEADWOOD: Cut, Cut—Then Cut Some More

Adjectives and adverbs are rich and good and fattening. The main thing is not to overindulge.... [T]he bakery shop of English is rich beyond belief, and narrative prose, particularly if it's going a long distance, needs more muscle than fat.¹

—URSULA K. LEGUIN

One basic principle for good writing in English is never to use two words where one will do. The trick is to decide which words to cut—and why. The best plan is to look at a sentence, and then a paragraph, word by word and phrase by phrase, to decide what needs eliminating.

Following are several strategies for cutting all the words you do not need.

Eliminate Redundancy

A good writer always wants to eliminate redundancy. The more you become accustomed to looking for it and rooting it out, the more of a sense of humor you will develop about words that do not fit—and the more you will enjoy the process.

Among my favorite redundant phrases is “invisible to the eye.” *To the eye?* As opposed to what else—the ear? “Invisible” means that one can’t *see* something. By contrast, “invisible to the *naked* eye” is acceptable because it suggests the necessity for an instrument such as a microscope (for tiny objects) or a telescope (for distant objects). Another such ridiculous phrase is “the true facts”—as opposed to what? The *false* ones?

Learning to ask “as opposed to *what*” about various adjectives and adjective phrases will help you eliminate a number of redundancies. *The field of economics*—as opposed to what, a non-field? The prime minister’s *personal* physician—as opposed to what, his or her “*impersonal*” one? Not surprisingly, redundancies most often appear in clichés—phrases so over-used that good writers always eliminate them from the final draft.

Examples of common academic clichés are:

each and every one	[pick one or the other]
first and foremost	first
tried and true	[find the right adjective— <i>commonly accepted? tested?</i>]
full and complete	[pick only one]
last but not least	last, finally

Typical examples of such redundancy in social science writing include the repeated use of the name of the only group being studied (e.g., long-term unemployed) or of a country’s name in an article about only that country. Here is an excerpt from the middle of a first-draft article:

Poor: Stressing the rule of subsidiarity, Poland clearly opposes any attempts at harmonizing social policy beyond its present frames. In particular, Poland is opposed to the idea of harmonizing tax and contribution rate burdens. The Polish position emphasizes that proposals regarding social policy should take into account the specific issues of....

Given that the article is only about Poland, the second “Poland” and “the Polish position” are redundant. After the writer has once specified a country as the only one under discussion, then naming it more than infrequently is overkill.

Better: Stressing the rule of subsidiarity, Poland clearly opposes any attempts at harmonizing social policy beyond its present frames. In particular, it opposes the idea of harmonizing tax and contribution rate burdens. It emphasizes that proposals regarding social policy should take into account the specific issues of....

Another typical redundancy is the relentless repetition of “in comparison with [group 2]” when only two groups are involved in a study. If, for example, an article is comparing the wages of similarly situated men and women in a particular industry, one common mistake is for the writer to add “in comparison with...” or “compared to...” after each comparative finding. But if only two groups are being compared, then the reader already knows that if the members of one group have “more” of something, then by definition they have “more” of that something than do the members of the comparison group. The following style, if repeated incessantly, grates on the English reader’s nerves:

Among full-time employees, the men receive 24% higher wages *than the women do*.

Part-time male employees make 4.3% more per month *compared to part-time female employees*.

In isolation, these sentences are fine. But when repeated sentence after sentence and paragraph after paragraph in the findings section of an article, they can bore the reader into a near-coma.

By contrast, some European writers carry the principle of avoiding redundancy too far. These writers come from rhetorical traditions that consider repetition of any kind to be poor style. Their tradition demands finding a new replacement word each time a subject appears, as a way of showing variety and sophistication in their writing. While the concept of variation is well accepted in English, the Anglo-American tradition calls for varying sentence structure more than changing vocabulary. Moreover, redundancy and *necessary repetition* are not the same. Sometimes the primacy of clarity will demand the repetition of a word or phrase within a sentence or paragraph, especially to replace an unclear “it” or “which.” (Chap. 6 offers specific guidelines for when such repetition is necessary.)

While Anglo-American writers certainly wish to avoid repeating themselves, the emphasis in English is on avoiding the repetition of adjectives, adverbs, or verbs—not the nouns crucial to the content of the article. *The English reader expects the writer to pick one primary noun for each person or category—and to remain consistent in using it.* If a writer begins an article about troubled teenagers under the care of the state, the reader thus expects to see the word “teenagers” throughout the piece. If the writer then uses *adolescents* in the next sentence, *young people* in the next, *youth* in the following paragraph, followed by *youngsters* (a term that actually refers to pre-adolescents), the reader is likely to become frustrated, annoyed, or both. When in doubt, a writer should consider the following advice from American grammarian James J. Kilpatrick, suggesting that the writer have “no unreasonable fear of repetition”:

The story is told of a feature writer who was doing a piece on the United Fruit Company. He spoke of bananas once; he spoke of bananas twice; he spoke of bananas yet a third time, and now he was desperate. “The world’s leading shippers of the elongated yellow fruit,” he wrote. A fourth banana would have been better.²

Eliminate all unnecessarily long words

Whenever a long and a short word have the identical meaning, prefer the shorter word. The one exception is in papers for journals that focus on the *discipline* of the field itself (e.g., anthropology), in which case you will have to use the jargon of the discipline.

Your reader, whom you should regard as having limited time and patience, is interested in *what* you have to say. That same reader has no interest in the size of your vocabulary or your ability to stuff five sentences’ worth of information into one sentence as if it were a sausage. The clearest route to the reader’s attention is through precise and unpretentious language. *Do not write utilize when you can write use, furnish when you mean give, or sanguinary when you mean bloody.*

This strategy in no way forces you to limit your vocabulary to an elementary school level or to condescend to your reader. What it involves is *discernment*: differentiating between whether a word is the right one for the particular content and audience, or whether it is pretentious or even unnecessary. Think of the many articles and books that you had trouble reading—or never finished reading—because of the author’s inflated language. (When I was a student, we learned to distinguish between people who wrote to “*impress somebody*” as opposed to those who wrote to “*express something*.”) As Ayn Rand cautions, “Memorizing the more obscure parts of the dictionary is not erudition; and erudition (or the desire to show it) is not part of style. The simpler the words, the better.”³

The key is to remember “the golden rule revisited”: *write unto others as you would have them write unto you.* If you would not enjoy reading certain words or phrases in someone else’s writing, you can be certain that your reader will not enjoy reading them in yours. Just as you would not want to read a sign stating “illumination of the room shall be extinguished upon final termination of the premises” instead of “turn out the light when you leave the room,” no reader wants to encounter *obumbrate* for *overshadow* or *veridical* for *genuine*.

Eliminate smothered verbs

English is a noun-centered but verb-driven language. A strong verb is the driver of a sentence, providing the energy and specifying the action. Generally speaking, the stronger the verb, the fresher and more convincing the sentence.

In English grammar, the term “smothered verb” refers to a verb whose strength has disappeared into a black hole of a “-tion” or “-ment” (or similarly abstract) noun inside a three- or four-word phrase. A simple example of a smothered verb occurs in the statement “they made an allocation of US \$5,000 to the project.” To *make an allocation of* (four words) is a smothered verb, because it has smothered the otherwise strong, clear verb “to allocate.” Instead, write “they *allocated* US \$5,000 to the project.”

The following sentences illustrate verbs both smothered and “unsmothered”:

Econometric studies call for the *inclusion* of other control variables.

Econometric studies call for *including* other control variables.

We *made an assessment* of the problem from three angles.

We *assessed* the problem from three angles.

They *have little knowledge* about the complexities of the issue.

They *know little* about the complexities of the issue.

Eliminate there is, there are, and it is:

Writers who use these phrases not only waste their reader’s time but also force the reader to go to the end of the sentence to find its true subject. No professional writer or editor allows more than a few (if any) of these phrases to remain in the final draft.

Rewriting without these phrases is simple. For phrases involving the word *there*, one approach is to reverse the order of the sentence and eliminate *there*:

Poor: There are 300 people in the study.

Better: Three hundred people *are* in the study.

or

The study *comprises* 300 people.

Another approach is to restructure and rewrite the sentence:

Poor: These are not comparative analyses, as *there is no* comparable data from other welfare states.

Better: *As no* comparable data from other welfare states *is* available, these analyses are not comparative.

As for *it is*, as in “it is not immediately clear what the results suggest,” the problem is that “it” has no meaning (see chap. 7 for a fuller discussion of “the meaningless *it*”). “It” is simply a place holder for the real subject, which the use of *it is* forces to the end of the sentence. One way of eliminating this uninformative phrase is by asking a simple question: what is doing what in this sentence? The answer will show you what you should place first—and the editing process almost always involves turning the sentence around:

Poor: *It is not immediately clear* what the results suggest.

Better: *What the results suggest is not immediately clear.*

Poor: *It is not reasonable to assume* that politicians always vote for the best interests of their constituents.

Better: *To assume/Assuming* that politicians always vote for the best interests of their constituents is not reasonable.

Poor: *It is obvious from Equation 3* that we can identify only [a specific] a and [a specific] b, not all the a's and b's.

Better: *Equation 3 demonstrates/makes clear* that we can identify only [a specific] a and [a specific] b, not all the a's and b's.

Poor: *It is difficult to understand and explain* what happened in the 1990s without taking into account the developments of the 1980s.

Better: *Understanding and explaining* what happened in the 1990s is difficult without factoring in the developments of the 1980s.

The indiscriminate use of *it is* leads to yet another problem—that of allowing sloppy thinking to substitute for the clear development of a logical argument. One common example, especially among younger writers, appears in the form of abruptly announcing the importance of a concept or argument:

It is important to note here that....

It is worth noting that....

The first problem is that whatever is “worth noting” is relegated to the end of the sentence, leaving the useless placeholder *it is* to take the lead. The other problem, of course, is that no writer should ever use this type of phrase, because everything in the book or article should be “worth noting.” The best writers always develop their argument carefully, so that the importance of every point is evident in context.

Poor argumentation also appears in the use of *it is* phrases in absolute statements that lack support. The cardinal rule of argumentation in English is that the writer must substantiate every fact, statement, finding, or conclusion that he or she presents. No unsubstantiated statements are permissible. What then is the reader to make of sentences such as the following?

It is obvious that the German model is applicable to all situations.

It is argued that the process of acquiring informational capital is affected by and mediated through social networks in different settings.

The first of these examples—“it is obvious that”—makes an absolute statement for the “obviousness” of something. An editor or reviewer will almost immediately ask: What is obvious to whom? Why is it obvious? On what data or proofs is the writer basing this statement? Has the writer previously demonstrated the “obviousness” of the argument? Moreover, if something is truly obvious, the writer has no need to say it.

With the second example—“it is argued that”—a bigger problem arises: *Who* is doing the arguing—the author or someone else? (Chap. 6, which focuses on pruning as a strategy for both eliminating ambiguity and highlighting meaning, further discusses this problematic use of *it is*.)

Eliminate hedge words

Within the large Indo-European language family, the rhetorical traditions of academic writing vary greatly. Some cultures expect their social scientists to make definitive statements based on expertise, while others expect their social scientists to merely hover near the margins of certitude. These cultural—and usually unwritten—rhetorical norms strongly influence the way that researchers and other professionals write.

To “hedge” in English, as in the phrase “to hedge one’s bets” (i.e., to place bets on both sides, thereby taking no chance of absolute failure), means to pull back from a statement even as one is making it. *Hedge words* leave room for the writer to wriggle out of a statement. For example, “welfare states *can be said to have* a dynamic aspect.” Is the writer stating that welfare states indeed have dynamic aspects, or is he

or she suggesting that they *might*, under certain as yet unspecified conditions? Or is the writer hinting that somebody else might think so—or even that he or she might think so, too, if...?

Hedge words are words and phrases such as *appear, seem, would [do], might be, could be, can be said to, would like to, and try to*. Even “indicate” in certain circumstances can be a hedge word, as it is far weaker than “show” or “demonstrate.” To be fair, I am not suggesting that you do away with these words and phrases entirely, as they have their proper usage. For example, the findings of a qualitative study of a small sample of informants might show a 53% trend toward a particular behavior. In that case, writing “the findings *indicate a slight* trend towards....” might be accurate, as “show” is too strong for such a small sample and “slight” may be the right word for 53%. But now consider the following sentence:

A number of empirical facts indicate that, for immigrants, social networks could be the key to the German labor market.

Here, both “indicate” and “could be” are hedge words. “A number of empirical facts” (as opposed to what other kind of facts?) shows real support for this position, not a “sort of, kind of” support. Furthermore, “facts” do not show that something “could be.” In addition, “the key” is a strong phrase, making the hedge words look all the weaker by comparison. A much stronger sentence with the same underlying meaning is:

Most research findings show that, for immigrants, social networks are the key to the German labor market.

Many of the European scholars with whom I work defend their use of hedge words by referring to usage patterns in their first language. For these social scientists, hedging represents a professional modesty or cautiousness that their culture demands. Others defend hedging in terms of professional purism: “How can I write that _____ is ‘true’ when some circumstance may exist, somewhere in the world, in some study I haven’t read, in which _____ is not true?” Yet every theory, finding, methodology, conclusion, etc., in a paper takes place within a context, and the writer has to limit himself or herself to what is “true” for that context, study, or argument.

Ultimately, no matter what the argument is or how valid it may be for another language, writing in another language means changing cultures. What to some European researchers is appropriate professional caution may to native English readers look like professional insecurity or inadequacy. We much prefer reading a professional article by a social scientist whose writing shows confidence about what he or she is presenting. From the Anglo-American cultural perspective, if the writer does not sound reasonably confident about his or her findings, why should the reader trust that writer’s expertise?

Even if the findings are ambiguous (e.g., from *this* perspective they are positive but from *that* perspective they are negative), the writer should be clear and straightforward about describing that ambiguity. For example:

Poor: If we try to elicit the “codes of choosing” that are reflected in the interviews, there seems to be quite some ambiguity concerning the rationalities and moralities of “legitimate choices.”

In this sentence the word “try” is not a hedge, because the writer is suggesting in the overall paper that such “eliciting” may not be as easy as it first appears. But “seems to be” and “quite” are vague and weak.

Better: If we try to elicit the “codes of choosing” that are reflected in the interviews, we find a lot of ambiguity about the rationalities and moralities of “legitimate choices.”

However, even within the Anglo-American linguistic community, differences exist—and I urge you to study the journal you have chosen for the obvious presence or absence of hedge words (e.g., some British writers use “I would argue” or “I would think,” whereas most Americans consider “would” a hedge). When you come to the journal analysis section of this book, include searching for hedge words as part of your linguistic analysis.

Following are two more examples to give you a better feel for what hedge words sound like and to show you what to edit out of your first draft writing:

Poor: *I would like* to suggest that the ambivalence rests on a more profound discrepancy in ethnography. *It would seem* that the notion of fieldwork is torn between a “romantic” understanding of what this mode of research entails and a “scientific” understanding of what is possible, practical, and expedient.

Better: *I suggest* that the ambivalence rests on a more profound discrepancy in ethnography. The notion of fieldwork is torn between a “romantic” understanding of what this mode of research entails and a “scientific” understanding of what is possible, practical, and expedient.

Poor: In this case it *seems* that the assessors do not consider the authorities or the politicians responsible for the management of inappropriate diet; instead it *seems* to be the consumer’s own responsibility to have an appropriate diet.

Better: In this case the assessors *do not consider* the authorities or the politicians responsible for the management of inappropriate diet; instead, the responsibility for an appropriate diet *falls* to the individual consumer.

chapter 5**REPLACE OR DELETE?****Determining the Necessity of Both Content and Language**

If it is possible to cut a word out, always cut it out.¹

—GEORGE ORWELL

One question facing the writer during the editing process is whether to replace an overly long expression or simply delete it. The choice almost always rests in its importance: does the reader need this information and, if so, does the reader need it in this sentence or paragraph? If the answer is no, deletion is necessary. If the answer is yes, then the writer has to consider the kind of replacement that fits best.

Cutting and condensing are key parts of the revision process. This chapter focuses on what to cut, when to cut, and how to cut not merely words but phrases, clauses, and even whole sentences. In most cases, poor language use, redundancy, irrelevancy, and ambiguity constitute the major reasons for this type of editing.

Poor language use

Most first-draft sentences are too long, because at this stage the writer is putting down everything he or she knows. However, as the writer always knows more than what can fit in one article, the writer must then decide where and how to begin cutting.

The first ideas or items to delete are those that the article has already mentioned or discussed. The strategy for editing more than one word or phrase in a sentence is to edit it word by word, cutting or rewording as you go.

The following example has three sentences and 32 words:

The data for the study is a survey. 1,000 persons were asked 19 questions in June 2007. Every person was asked about his/her own and his/her spouse's labor market affiliation.

Three problems are immediately evident to the native speaker. First, this information calls for one sentence, not three; it should efficiently introduce the survey, with the understanding that more details will follow. Second, in English one cannot start a sentence with Arabic numerals (e.g., 1,000); one must use written numbers (e.g., "One thousand..."). Third, one should never write "his/her" but instead recast the

sentence in the plural or write "his or her." The reason is that readers almost always sound out words in their heads—and the "/" is unpronounceable.

Given that surveys usually "ask" people something, you can now rewrite the three sentences as a 22- or 24-word sentence:

The data for the study is a June 2007 survey that asked 19 questions of 1,000 people about their and their spouse's labor market affiliation. (24 words)

The data come from a June 2007 survey, asking 19 questions of 1,000 people about their and their spouse's labor market affiliation. (22 words)

While the next sentence has only two clauses, it still needs some pruning:

In view of the increasing proportion of elderly, it is extremely important for the economic survival of the municipalities that resources are used efficiently in elderly care. (27 words)

The first phrase, *in view of*, is too long. Replace it with *given*. Then comes the meaningless *it is*. Something is "extremely important"—but what? The answer to that question will tell you what should come at the beginning of the clause: "economic survival." Yet another problem is the passive clause "that resources are used efficiently." Who is or will be using those resources? Again, the answer to that question shows you how to rewrite the sentence:

Given the increasing proportion of elderly, the economic survival of the municipalities clearly depends on their efficient use of resources for elderly care. (22 words)

Redundancy

Repeating the same information in two or three different ways is one of the most common first-draft problems. Once you learn to recognize the myriad forms of redundancy in your writing, pruning these phrases and clauses becomes increasingly easier.

The first three illustrations, typical of first-draft writing, show redundancy within a sentence:

To mention just one example, the notion of "culture" was reinvented in the 1980s, defining culture as a much more flexible and process-oriented concept than was conceived of earlier. (29 words)

"To mention just one example" takes five words, whereas "for example" takes two, and "much more...than was conceived of earlier" is redundant. Furthermore, ideas cannot be invented or reinvented in English, and a "notion" of anything cannot "redefine" itself. So a lot of pruning is in order here:

For example, the notion of "culture" was redefined in the 1980s as much more flexible and process-oriented. (18 words)

In addition, telling the reader who did the “redefining”—what field, what theorists, what anthropological or sociological scholars—would greatly improve the sentence.

Here is the second example:

As to the design of social policy in the MSs, in Germany it has been the definite position of any German government that all MSs are or should become social market economies, although the concept would be realized in different variants thereof. (42 words)

“In Germany” is redundant because of the phrase “German government,” and “although the concept would be realized in different” is redundant because “variants thereof” means the same thing. Thus a strong revision might be:

As to the design of social policy in the MSs, the definite position of all German governments has been that all MSs are or should become social market economies or variants thereof. (32 words)

The third one-sentence illustration brings up a new issue: when is “we” necessary, and when not?

In this part we give a brief summary of the main recent EU documents and initiatives and indicate the Dutch national political and policy-making reactions to these reports and issues. (30 words)

In some European linguistic communities, a paper or a section cannot “do” anything, because it is not animate. Writers from these languages always say “in this paper, I...” or “in this section, we....” But in English these nouns *can* do a great number of things. Articles, chapters, sections, paragraphs, etc., can *analyze, examine, explore, present, discuss*, and so on. (But they cannot do other things that animate beings do, such as run, walk, eat....)

Therefore, in this example, “in this part we give” is redundant, because the writer can convert “a brief summary” to “briefly summarize.” In addition, “to these reports and issues” is redundant, because they already appear in the first line of the sentence. Although the phrase “to them” will work, it may not be necessary. A clear, straightforward version is:

This section briefly summarizes the main recent EU documents and initiatives and indicates the Dutch national political and policy-making responses [to them]. (20 or 22 words)

The next example, also typical of first-draft writing, illustrates redundancy within two sentences:

Norway had by the turn of the century a high labor force participation rate compared to the average standard for OECD countries. By 1997 the overall participation rate of Norway was 80.9 percent compared to an OECD average of 70.6 percent. (41 words)

Here, repetition occurs in the name of the country, the OECD, and “compared to.” The two sentences appear parallel (i.e., as equal in informative status); however, the second sentence actually narrows down to specifics the more general first sentence. A good rewrite thus looks like the following:

By the turn of the century, Norway’s labor force participation was higher than the OECD average. For example, its 1997 participation rate was 80.9 percent, compared to 70.6 percent for the OECD. (32 words)

Next, the writer must question whether both sentences are necessary. If the first is the topic sentence, introducing the full paragraph, then it needs to remain. If, however, the more general “by the turn of the century” introductory sentence is not necessary, one sentence will suffice:

By 1997, Norway’s labor force participation rate (80.9 percent) was higher than the OECD average (70.6 percent). (17 words)

Length

A well-known English saying is that one can have “too much of a good thing.” In the same vein, having too many words in one written sentence creates too much of a bad thing. The cause can be redundancy, poor editing, or a learned behavior (from the writer’s first language) that the more one crams into a sentence, the more intellectual one is. But in terms of the psychology of reading in English, the reader should never have to read a sentence twice. If a sentence is far too long, then the reader will forget what was at the beginning and have to reread the sentence for total comprehension.

As one American editor wrote in a message to a European scholar whose paper he was editing:

The odd thing is that you write the way I think and the way I write my first drafts—with lots of ideas mixed in with other ideas (usually very grammatically and highly theoretically). We don’t want our readers to miss any little nuance.

But the reader needs to have one main point per sentence, not half a dozen, so we have to become ruthless editors during the second and third drafts.²

Overall, the simplest way to know whether your sentence is too long is to give it what I call the “breath test.” Without cheating (i.e., without taking an extra gulp of air before reading), read your sentence aloud. If you have to take a breath before you reach the end, it is too long. Rewrite it as two sentences, possibly more, depending on both length and structure.

Another guideline relates to the changing ways in which people are reading. The more that people read online, the less amount of text they want to see in a paragraph. I suspect that the same is true for sentences. Most academic sentences over 25-30 words are too long. Always keep in mind that an English sentence is supposed to hold one thought (and possibly two, depending on its structure)—but that it will collapse under its own weight if a writer tries to cram too many concepts and words into it.

For the next example, the reader does not need a word count to know that the sentence is too long, because a quick line scan makes the problem immediately evident. (Your eye can “move” much more quickly than your mind can process information, so that before you have even read half the sentence, your eye has already informed your mind that the sentence is *too long* and perhaps you should stop reading it and do something else....) I use this sentence to illustrate how pruning an unreadable sentence down to its bare bones makes its content fully accessible to the reader.

If an employer uses temporary jobs for the purpose of screening workers for permanent jobs, temporary jobholders who show high levels of effort (i.e., those who have low levels of work absence and/or those who work overtime) can be expected to have higher probabilities, all other things being equal, of being offered permanent jobs compared to temporary jobholders who do not reveal such effort. (65 words)

As this sentence comes from a paper discussing ways in which temporary jobholders can signal their willingness to become permanent employees, most of the information is necessary. Pruning therefore will involve strategies for delivering the same content in many fewer words. By now you know that “for the purpose of screening” should be “to screen.” You may have guessed that plural “jobholders” calls for plural “employers” and that “who show high levels of effort” can be reduced to “showing high effort.” The sentence will then read as follows:

If employers use temporary jobs to screen workers for permanent jobs, temporary jobholders showing high effort (i.e., those who have low levels of work absence and/or those who work overtime) can be expected to have higher probabilities, all other things being equal, of being offered permanent jobs compared to temporary jobholders who do not reveal such effort. (57 words)

The next step is to convert the passive “temporary jobholders...can be expected” and “of being offered permanent jobs” into the stronger, clearer active voice. (See chap. 7 for a full discussion of active vs. passive voice.) You do so by asking the question *who* is doing the “expecting” and the “offering.” For the “expecting,” you have the choice of two types of “we” (we, the plural writers, or we, the writer and reader) or “one” (if you are writing in UK English). As “can” is a hedge word, you can also eliminate it. For the “offering,” you will find it better to focus not on the employers (who are doing the offering) but on the jobholders (who are doing the *receiving*). While this rewrite reduces the sentence length by only two words, it strengthens the actors and makes the reading easier.

If employers use temporary jobs to screen workers for permanent jobs, *we expect* temporary jobholders *showing high effort* (i.e., those who have low levels of work absence and/or those who work overtime) to have higher probabilities, all other things being equal, *of receiving permanent job offers* compared to temporary jobholders who do not reveal such effort. (55 words)

Next, you need to shorten the phrase inside the parentheses. As it comes after the term *high effort*, it should illustrate effort, not types of jobholders. Knowing what the focus should be will help you drastically prune the phrase to six words:

If employers use temporary jobs to screen workers for permanent jobs, we expect temporary jobholders showing high effort (*high overtime, low absenteeism, or both*) to have higher probabilities, all other things being equal, of receiving permanent job offers compared to temporary jobholders who do not reveal such effort. (48 words)

Now reduce the “compared to” phrase to its essentials. One possibility is to shorten it. The other is to delete it altogether, given that this paper is comparing only two types of temporary jobholders—those who signal high effort and those who do not.

If employers use temporary jobs to screen workers for permanent jobs, we expect temporary jobholders showing high effort (high overtime, low absenteeism, or both) to have higher probabilities, all other things being equal, of receiving permanent job offers *compared to those who do not*. (43 words)

If employers use temporary jobs to screen workers for permanent jobs, we expect temporary jobholders showing high effort (high overtime, low absenteeism, or both) to have higher probabilities, all other things being equal, of receiving permanent job offers. (38 words)

With a few more pruning tweaks, the sentence is now nearly 50% shorter than the first-draft version.

If employers use temporary jobs to screen workers for permanent jobs, temporary jobholders showing high effort (high overtime, low absenteeism, or both) *are likely* to have higher probabilities, all *else* being equal, of receiving permanent job offers. (36 words)

Despite exceeding the recommended maximum length for an academic sentence, this sentence works because it is clear and focused. Every word fits.

Editing sentences word by word

I have saved the best technique for last. Most writers look at their overwritten first-draft sentences and start the editing process in the middle of one. But if a sentence is not readable to begin with, how can the writer (or worse, an editor) know where to begin? This section shows you how to break an extremely long or complex sentence down, word by word and phrase by phrase, to a readable level. From that point on,

you can edit it any way you wish, because by then you know what it means. The example here is a 47-word sentence:

The use of performance measurements is designed to provide all levels of management and eventually the Board with a device that will afford the criteria to make some determination as to the cost-benefit ratio effectiveness of any given activity—and consequently a determination of the funding level.

The trick is to consider each word or phrase before moving on. Watch the sentence become progressively shorter:

- “*The use of performance measurements*” phrase is really about “measurements,” not “use.” Delete “use of.”
- “The performance measurements *[are] designed to provide....*” Writers make the mistake of using “is/are designed to [do]” something when they mean “will [do]”—because however whatever-it-is is designed, it will or will not do something. Delete “are designed to” and substitute “will.” (If, however, you wish to specify that the measures were “designed” to do something that they actually do not do, you must completely rewrite the sentence to clarify that meaning.)
- “The performance measurements *will provide....*” But the word “provide” usually has to be followed by “with”—and “give” is shorter than “provide with.”
- “The performance measurements *will give all levels of management and eventually the Board....*” Does the writer need all of those words? This decision is not about pruning but about the writer’s audience: will the reader pay attention only if he or she sees the word “Board”? Is “all levels of” important, because the writer wants to stress front-line supervisors, not only top management? In this case, because we lack the information, I make an arbitrary decision to cut “and eventually the Board.”
- “The performance measurements *will give all levels of management a device....*” A “device” in English is a mechanical instrument. The writer probably means “tool” or “method.”
- “The performance measurements *will give all levels of management a tool that will afford the criteria to make some determination....*” No reader should ever have to look at such unclear overwriting. The only way to make “sentence sense” of this nonsense—that is, to have the writing fit the grammar—is to slightly rewrite it:

“The performance measurements will give all levels of management *a criteria-setting tool for determining....*”

By now you have the idea. By following this step-by-step method, you learn the real meaning of the sentence:

The performance measurements will give all levels of management
a criteria-setting tool for determining the cost-benefit ratio and
consequent funding level of every activity.

The sentence is now 25 words—and readable. Had the remaining sentence still been too long, perhaps with the “Board” information remaining, the writer would then have had to find a way to split the sentence into two clear sentences.

This technique, along with all the other pruning methods previously discussed, will go a long way towards helping the writer produce tightly focused writing in which “every word tells.”

PART III

EDITING FOR CLARITY: The Writer's Obligation

Good writing has an aliveness that keeps the reader reading.... It's a question of using the English language in a way that will achieve the greatest clarity and strength.¹

—WILLIAM ZINSSER

Nobody who thinks or writes is above grammar.²

—AVN RAND

In English, clarity is paramount. Given the writer responsibility of English, the reader has the right to assume clarity in every word that he or she reads. Clarity means no ambiguity, no possibilities of other meanings, and no need for the reader to read any sentence twice. Native speakers consider unclear writing a waste of their time. In the psychology of reading in native English-speaking academia, unclear or unedited writing signifies the writer's laziness, ignorance, or lack of academic sophistication. No matter which of these negative messages reaches the reader's mind first, the damage is done—and the paper's chances of publication begin to drop. Thus learning the linguistic "tricks of the trade" for being clear is an essential strategy for improving one's writing and eventually getting one's papers published.

Most unclear writing by European speakers of English comes from grammatical mistakes. As grammar essentially represents the logic of a sentence, an ungrammatical sentence is, by definition, unclear. Fortunately, correcting the most common forms of grammar mistakes is not difficult. The writer simply needs to know what the problems are and how to fix them. Individual chapters in this part of the book cover the major grammatical principles affecting clarity—unclear pronoun reference, passive voice writing, unclear modifier use, and lack of parallel structure. The last chapter deals with punctuation, which too many European scholars mistakenly consider inconsequential.

All the chapters in Part III give you sufficient explanation for understanding and successfully applying the grammatical rules and principles that they impart. These chapters work sequentially, because the explanations and principles build on one another. Therefore, start with Chapter 6 and read through Chapter 10 for the best results.

chapter 6

AVOIDING AMBIGUITY Using Pronouns Correctly

No word or phrase should be ambiguous....

The disastrous charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava in the Crimean War was made because of a carelessly worded order to “charge for the guns”—meaning that some British guns that were in an exposed position should be hauled out of reach of the enemy, not that the Russian batteries should be charged. But even in the calmest times it is often very difficult to compose an English sentence that cannot possibly be misunderstood.¹

—ROBERT GRAVES AND ALAN HODGE

As with many European languages, English varies greatly not only by region or country but also between the written and spoken forms. A speaker usually has great leeway, because the listener uses other cues to decipher meaning: intonation, facial expressions, hand and head gestures, etc. At worst, the listener can always say, “I’m sorry, I missed that, can you repeat it” or “I don’t understand—can you say it another way?” But the writer has only words and punctuation. If either is unclear or ambiguous, then Murphy’s Law, as applied to writing, kicks in: if the reader can possibly misunderstand the writer, the reader will.

Thus the first problem with ambiguity is the great potential for misunderstanding or confusion. The second is the double standard that exists between speaking and writing. If Speaker A says something of considerable length to Speaker B in a private conversation, Speaker B may later tell others what Speaker A said—but as a paraphrase, using his or her own words to recreate Speaker A’s. The message or information is more important in this context than grammatical correctness or Speaker A’s actual words (which Speaker B has not memorized). Those listening to Speaker B assess the value of Speaker A’s remarks strictly by the content as Speaker B relates it.

But as soon as Speaker A’s words are written down, a very different standard applies. Now the words themselves, along with the sentence and paragraph structures in which they appear, are open for analysis. Readers both consciously and unconsciously judge the writer not only by the content but also by the writing. With no intonation, gestures, humor, or inflection to guide them, English readers use *the*

writing itself to judge professionalism and intellectual sophistication. If the grammar is poor or the language ambiguous, the reader’s opinion of the writer takes a quick dive—and rarely resurfaces.

This chapter presents the important strategy of the clear use of pronouns: those tiny words—such as *he, she, him, her, it, they, this, that, these, those, which, that*—to which most European writers pay little attention. But misused pronouns constitute the surest path to ambiguity, and ambiguity is the surest path to reader confusion and dissatisfaction. Learning to use pronouns correctly will make both your writing sharper and your meaning clearer—and ultimately easier for the reader to grasp.

To create clarity in instances of potential ambiguity, both native and non-native readers of English often make instant—and often unconscious—assumptions about the meaning. Yet none of these readers believe that they are making assumptions—because they *assume* that they are reading, not assuming. Again, given Murphy’s Law, if the writer means X but the sentence as written could possibly mean Y, the reader will likely assume Y. In American English we joke that to “assume” anything means “to make an ass out of you and me” (i.e., *ass + u + me*). This joke is our way of reminding ourselves never to be unclear.

While the following rules for pronoun reference are easy to learn and apply, do not mistake their simplicity for irrelevance. Using them will improve the readability and publication chances of everything you write.

Personal pronouns and reader assumptions

The clear use of personal pronouns (*he, him, his; she, her, hers; they, them, theirs*) is simple: using *he* for a man or *she* for a woman is correct if only one man or one woman appears in the sentence.

Poor: Henry Jones told Robert Smythe that the paper on which he was working needed more citations.

Whose paper needed more citations—Henry’s or Robert’s? While you, the writer, may so clearly know whom you mean that you cannot imagine anyone reading the sentence differently, consider the reader’s situation. One reader will immediately assume that *he* means Henry, who must be referring to his own paper. Another reader will assume that *he* means Robert, because Henry is commenting on Robert’s paper.

Still other readers may pause to detect the ambiguity, asking themselves whether the writer intended the *he* to refer to Henry or to Robert. That pause interrupts the flow of the reading, taking the reader away from your argument, and inclines the reader to think less well of your writing—and thus of your thinking. Because writing is thought made visible, if a writer’s work shows any weakness in language, grammar, or argument, the reader will *assume* similar weaknesses in the writer’s thinking.

The question is how to fix the “Henry and Robert” sentence. Most European writ-

ers, because of their cultural prejudice against repeating, will never think of repeating the name of the man to whom the pronoun *he* refers. Neither will most American or British writers. We, too, learn not to repeat, although we are taught to **avoid repeating adjectives and adverbs more than nouns or verbs**. But the solution to vagueness (a major form of ambiguity) is *repetition*. Rather than remain confused, the reader would prefer the writer to repeat the noun. Remember, *the writer's first obligation to the reader is clarity. Style takes second place*. To quote Brander Matthews, an influential American literary critic and scholar in the late 19th and early 20th centuries: "To be clear is the first duty of the writer; to charm and to please are graces to be acquired later."²

Thus, depending on his or her intended meaning, a good writer rewrites the "Henry Jones told Robert Smythe" sentence as follows:

Better: Henry Jones told Robert Smythe that the paper on which *he, Jones*, was working needed more citations.

Henry Jones told Robert Smythe that the paper on which *Henry* was working needed more citations.

or

Henry Jones told Robert Smythe that the paper on which *Smythe* was working needed more citations.

Henry Jones told Robert Smythe that the paper on which *Robert* was working needed more citations.

Rather than finding any of these rewrites repetitive, the reader will be glad to have *who is doing what relative to whom* presented so clearly within the sentence.

Demonstrative pronouns

One of the most common words in academic writing is "this." But most readers hate to read it. Why?

This and *that* and their plurals, *these* and *those*, are called demonstrative pronouns, because to use them properly, the speaker needs to demonstrate, i.e., to point. The speaker says, "I want this" (pointing at a relatively nearby object)" or "I need that" (pointing at a relatively distant object). The essential difference between *this* and *that* is proximity to the speaker: *this* one is closer to the speaker, *that* one is less close. The same principle holds for *these* and *those*.

The problem inherent in transferring *this* and *that* to writing is that paper or computer screens are two-dimensional, not three. No finger is pointing to the object, person, or concept to which the *this* or the *that* refers. Unless the writer specifies the reference, the reader is forced to guess:

Poor: Many governments subsidize venture capital markets by investing tax money as venture capital. *This* makes investigating the pay-offs of these investments imperative.

What makes investigating imperative? Guesswork of this sort—or the need to reread the sentence to ferret out the meaning—exasperates the English reader. Fortunately, several solutions are at hand. The easiest (in most cases) follow *this* with the noun it refers to:

Better: Many governments subsidize venture capital markets by investing tax money as venture capital. *This capital outlay* makes investigating the pay-offs of these investments imperative.

Here is an example where several choices (and meanings) are possible:

Poor: Twins brought up together also share the same environment in infancy and childhood and *this* is assumed to have the same impact on both twins.

What presumably has the same impact—a *common upbringing? a shared environment? these shared formative years?* The writer's choice of phrase determines the way in which the reader not only understands this sentence but also internally contextualizes those to follow.

A more complex example is one to which a definite answer may not be immediately obvious:

Poor: Most studies of developed countries fail to establish a substantial causal effect of input-based policies, such as a reduction in class size, on education achievement. *This* has led many scholars to the following conclusion:

Again, *what* has led scholars to a particular conclusion? Here, the answer is less obvious than in the previous example. Does the *this* stand for *failure* or for *the apparent nonexistence of a causal effect*? If *this* means failure, then the sentence focus is on the failure of the studies. But that interpretation may not make sense, as the non-finding of a causal effect in and of itself does not make the studies failures. If *this* means *the apparent nonexistence of a causal effect*, the sentence may make more sense. The lack of clarity created by using *this* by itself calls for the reader to do far too much guessing and assuming than any one sentence warrants. [I do not include a "Better" version of this sentence, because I am not certain of the writer's intent.]

Another way of solving the "*this* problem" is to slightly revise a sentence, so that the use of different words allows you to make the pronoun reference clear:

Poor: Gerlagh et al. (2007) find that the efficient subsidy to an abatement sector may fall over time. They find *this* using a partial theoretical model for abatement and environmental quality with endogenous technological change.

Better: Gerlagh et al. (2007) find that the efficient subsidy to an abatement sector may fall over time. *They do so* by using a partial theoretical model for abatement and environmental quality with endogenous technological change.

or

Gerlagh et al. (2007) find that the efficient subsidy to an abatement sector may fall over time. They *arrive at/reach/obtain this finding* by using a partial theoretical model for abatement and environmental quality with endogenous technological change. [Any of the three verbs offered here will work.]

For highly complicated first-draft sentences, however, the best way of handling the “*this* problem” is to rethink and rewrite both sentences:

Poor: In contrast to *this*, the group of low-income parents do not have the means to save in order to insure themselves against future risks. Although such shortcomings can be directly linked to their limited financial resources, *this* is still regarded (by themselves and others) as an individual failure.

Better: *In contrast, the low-income parents do not have the means of saving* to ensure themselves *and their families* against [financial? medical?] risks. Although *their inability to purchase insurance* is directly linked to their limited financial resources, *both they and others nonetheless regard that inability as a personal failure*.

If, as a writer, you develop the habit of always putting the noun or noun phrase after *this, that, these, and those* (e.g., this discrepancy, that methodology, these implications), your reader will never have to suffer these tortuous problems of interpretation.

One final caution: even when you follow *this* or *that* with the correct noun, you must use the “*this* phrase” only (a) in the same sentence or (b) in the sentence immediately following the reference. If a “*this* phrase” is even two sentences away, the reader is not likely to understand the reference.

Poor: Similarly, [Famous Scholar] (2000) finds that introducing an actuarially fair benefit formula induces a shift of the cumulative distribution of retirement age to the right. The effects of this shift are most powerful for very early retirement. However, calculations...show that the marginal effects of *this introduction* are quite limited.

The phrase “this introduction” in the third sentence is too far away from the word “introducing” in the first sentence for the reader to quickly grasp the connection. In such cases, the writer must be more specific:

Better: Similarly, [Famous Scholar] (2000) finds that introducing an actuarially fair benefit formula induces a shift of the cumulative distribution of retirement age to the right. The effects of this shift are most powerful for very early retirement. However, calculations...show that the marginal effects of *introducing such a fair benefit formula* are quite limited.

***It and they* problems**

Much like *this* and *that*, *it* and *they* are often so vaguely used as to be meaningless. While Chapter 4 covered pruning “it is” from your writing, this subsection concentrates on the problems resulting from using *it* and *they* in circumstances where the reference is unclear.

“*It*” is a pronoun. Like all pronouns, its purpose is to replace a noun (e.g., this apple is ripe; *it* is delicious). “*They*” is the plural of “*it*” (these apples are ripe; *they* are delicious).

As with *he* and *she*, the reader can use *it* or *they* only when the sentence (or the one preceding it) has only one possible noun for the *it* or *they* to replace. As long as two possible nouns are present, the use of a replacing pronoun will not work.

Poor: These challenges mainly come from immigration, from Europeanization, and from the growing influence of a human rights discourse. In Denmark *it* has caused strong emotional reactions.

But what does *it* stand for: immigration, Europeanization, growing influence, human rights discourse—or all of them? In this case, only the writer knows, so only the writer can replace *it* with the appropriate word or phrase.

The same principle holds true for *they*, a word that the writer can use as long as it has only one possible reference:

Poor: Related studies put forward three possible explanations for this phenomenon. *They* start from two common premises:

Does *they* refer to *studies* or *explanations*? If the writer does not make the distinction clear, how can the reader know without having to read further, make a guess, and then reread the sentence?

Better: Related studies put forward three possible explanations for this phenomenon. *These studies* start from two common premises:
or

Related studies put forward three possible explanations for this phenomenon. *These explanations* share two premises:

When and when not to use *which*

One of the typical academic writer's most beloved pronouns is "*which*"—a word very easy to toss into a sentence. Too many writers use *which* to refer to something that they do not want to bother specifying or to allude to a meaning instead of doing the hard work of making their meaning clear. This section will show you when you can and when you cannot use *which*—and how to avoid *which* if you must do so in the interests of clarity.

The use of *which* and *that* differs slightly in the UK and the US. This section covers the use of *which* in nonessential (i.e., nonrestrictive) clauses, a usage consistent in all English-speaking countries. Knowing how to use *which* correctly is another strategy for avoiding ambiguity and making your meaning clear.

Short but necessary grammar review

In English, *which*, *that*, *who*, and *whom* are called relative pronouns. Writers use them to position certain data in relation to (i.e., "relative to") other data. For example:

The article, which I submitted yesterday, analyzes five aspects of the problem.

The "“*which* clause" (i.e., the clause beginning with *which*) positions this one article in relation to all other articles that the writer has written.

However, although they are formally called "relative" pronouns, *which*, *that*, *who*, and *whom* actually function like adjectives—words or phrases that give the reader extra information about a noun. While the one-word adjective almost always precedes the noun in English (e.g., professional paper, interesting article), adjective phrases and clauses immediately follow the noun:

His paper, *which I edited last week*, needs more work.

The professor, *both ill-tempered and arrogant*, tended to insult his students.

Solving “*which*” problems

To fully understand why the improper placement of *which* causes problems, ask yourself whether the following sentence is clear on first reading for only one meaning:

The day of the conference, *which ended badly*, was sunny and warm.

What ended badly—the day or the conference? The meaning is unclear: as the sentence is written, *which* can refer to either the day or the conference. On the one hand, the subject of the independent clause is *day*; thus, the reader may reasonably assume that *which* refers to *day*. On the other hand, the English grammar rule governing *which*, *that*, *who*, and *whom* is that these words must appear immediately after the word they refer to. Thus a reader may also reasonably assume that *which* refers to *conference*.

The cause of the common problem is the placement of *which*. It appears in a dependent clause following the object of the preposition *of* ("the day of the conference, *which...*"). The *which* clause thus comes after two nouns, *day* and *conference*, to which it can refer. The reader then faces two meanings, either of which is possible but neither of which is certain.

The simplest way to fix the problem is to remove the *which* clause from the middle of the independent clause. Then you have to rethink the relationship of the information in the *which* clause to the original independent clause. To do so, you need to know (a) the word that the *which* stands for and (b) the connection between the two statements.

As replacing the *which* with the word it stands for involves repetition, I reiterate a critical maxim: *the solution to vagueness is repetition*.

Here are some possible rewrites:

The day of the conference was sunny and warm, but the day ended badly. /
Although the day of the conference was sunny and warm, the day ended badly.

or

The day of the conference was sunny and warm, but the conference ended
badly. /

Although the day of the conference was sunny and warm, the conference ended
badly.

If your cultural bias against repetition makes this type of clear sentence distasteful to you, you can always rewrite the sentence (if you have time) with different words:

The day of the conference was sunny and warm, but a late afternoon storm
ruined the outdoor reception.

The day of the conference was sunny and warm, but a heated argument among
the afternoon panelists ruined the previously pleasant atmosphere.

Whichever approach you take, the strategy to take away from this section is clear: avoid the use of sentence structures containing "the [noun] of the [noun], *which...*"

Poor: His analysis of the article, *which I read yesterday*, was excellent.

Poor: His analysis of the article was excellent; *I read it yesterday*.

Neither *which* nor *it* specifies "analysis" or "article." The reader remains confused.

Better: Yesterday I read his excellent analysis of the article.

Solving more general “*which*” problems

As previously mentioned, the grammar rule governing *which* states that the word *which* must come immediately after the very word it refers to. Thus, being a pronoun, *which* can replace and follow only a noun—never a verb, adjective, or any other part

of speech. Certainly a good writer never uses *which* to refer to an entire idea or sentence. Any ungrammatical use of *which* will force the reader to reread the sentence and guess at its meaning.

For the examples that follow, the writer will need to use different editing approaches. In some cases, creating two independent clauses—connected either by a semicolon or a comma and “and”—will be sufficient. In other cases, the grammar of the sentence may be complex enough to necessitate a total rewrite. In yet other instances, the *which* clause may be so confusing that the writer has to rethink and reshape the entire sentence:

Poor: The predictive power of the model is high, *which* confirms the importance of workplace characteristics.

What confirms what? *Which* comes after an adjective, *high*—and that makes no sense. With work, the reader can ferret out the meaning—but the reader should not have to do so. A good writer will look at this first-draft sentence, see its flaws, and immediately rewrite it:

Better: The high predictive power of the model confirms the importance of workplace characteristics.

The predictive power of the model is high, thereby confirming the importance of workplace characteristics.

Poor: Employers may choose to pay a temporary worker monetary compensation instead of vacation, *which* might also explain the lower absence of temporary workers.

Which, here, does not refer to *vacation*, the word in front of it.

Better: That employers may choose to pay a temporary worker monetary compensation instead of vacation may also explain the lower absence of temporary workers.

Employers may choose to pay a temporary worker monetary compensation instead of vacation. This option may also explain the lower absence of temporary workers.

Poor: A recent survey of the attachment to the labor force discovered a search pattern for the immigrants *which* are similar in many respects to the one among ethnic Norwegians.

This sentence has a number of problems. First, *which* does not refer to *immigrants*, the word in front of it—and as *immigrants* is the only plural noun up to that point, the word “are” is incorrect as well. So this sentence needs editing not only for *which* but also for other grammar problems, for words out of order, and for pruning (“in many respects” is redundant).

Better: A recent survey of labor force attachment discovered among immigrants a search pattern similar to that among ethnic Norwegians.

Poor: If early retirement benefits are expected to be the most important income source when an individual retires, the probability of planning to retire at age 60 increases by more than 50 percentage points for men and women, *which* suggests that retirement income has a strong effect on early retirement in [country].

First, *which* here does not refer to *women* (or “men and women”). Second, this sentence is too long. Turning it into two sentences, with a clear subject for the second sentence, is the best approach:

Better: If early retirement benefits are expected to be the most important income source when an individual retires, the probability of planning to retire at age 60 increases by more than 50 percentage points for men and women. *This finding* suggests that retirement income has a strong effect on early retirement in [country].

Depending on the nature of the sentence, the writer always retains the option of rephrasing it to eliminate the *which* problem altogether. In many cases, either pruning or rethinking the sentence—or both—will provide the best solutions:

Poor: Several papers have been written in modern times, *which* may be regarded as small steps towards the creation of a synthesis of the two theories.

Better: Several recent papers may represent small steps towards the creation of a synthesis of the two theories.

or

Several recent papers may represent small steps towards the synthesis of the two theories.

When to use *which* and when to use *that*

As mentioned at the start of this chapter, the use of *which* and *that* is slightly different in the US and the UK. Nonetheless, they are alike in that English, in all English-speaking countries, distinguishes between *essential* and *nonessential* clauses—and use *which* and *that* to convey those distinctions. Although the formal names for these different grammatical functions are *restrictive* and *nonrestrictive*, I prefer using *essential* and *nonessential*, because every writer can learn to recognize what is essential to the meaning of a sentence and what is not.

Some European languages also distinguish between essential and nonessential information. But writers from languages that do not differentiate between the two often have trouble understanding the concept. The reason is simple: “essential” generally means *absolutely necessary*. A non-native speaker of English can therefore make the

mistake of thinking that an essential clause carries information that the reader *must* have, no matter what the circumstances. In grammar, however, “essential” has a more restricted meaning: an “essential clause” carries information that the reader needs to *make sense of the specific sentence in which the clause appears*.

In other words, the material is “essential” because the sentence will not be clear without it: the reader must have *this information in this sentence* for this sentence to make sense on its own. One of the primary functions of essential clauses in English is to help the writer be clear at every level of the writing, including that of the sentence.

By contrast, if a sentence is fully clear by itself and the “*which* clause” carries information that could easily come in a following sentence, the information in that clause—by definition—is *nonessential*. Both examples and reasons (e.g., “because” clauses) are always nonessential.

For example, here is a sentence that—without using *which* or *that*—illustrates the difference between essential and nonessential information:

I will meet you at 11:00 a.m., after the mail arrives.

As commas in English set apart nonessential information, the comma after “11:00” immediately tells the reader that “after the mail arrives” is nonessential. Why? The answer is obvious: “after the mail arrives” gives the writer’s reason for having chosen 11:00 as the meeting time. Once the reader knows that the meeting will be at 11:00 a.m., any additional time-related information is either redundant or nonessential.

Thus the underlying meaning of the sentence is as follows:

I will meet you at 11:00 a.m. My reason for choosing that time is that the mail will have arrived by then.

How much easier, in a short sentence, to use a nonessential clause! In a much longer sentence, of course, two sentences would be preferable. But now look at this next sentence:

I will meet you today after the mail arrives.

In this version, the absence of a comma after “today” signals the reader that “after the mail arrives” is essential. As it was not essential in the earlier sentence, why is it essential now? The reason is that “today” is too vague; therefore, “after the mail arrives” now defines the time. If the reader knows that the mail arrives every day between 10:15 and 10:45 a.m., the reader can then expect to see the writer between 10:30 and 11:00 a.m.

In applying the grammatical meaning of essentiality and nonessentiality to sentences using *which* and *that*, UK and US English agree on the use of *which* (with one or two commas, depending on its placement in the sentence) for nonessential clauses. The *which* clause gives nonessential information—that is, information not

essential to this particular sentence, information that could easily go in a following sentence:

The weekly report, which is due tomorrow, is almost finished.

The information that the report “is due tomorrow” is not essential to the meaning of the sentence. Were the writer to remove it, “the weekly report is almost finished” would still be clear on its own. Because this *which* clause is embedded in—or interrupting—the independent clause, it is surrounded by two commas. But when a *which* clause appears at the end of an independent clause, only one comma is necessary for separating them:

He has almost finished the weekly report, which is due tomorrow.

The *essential clause* is where US and UK English differ. Although both traditions agree on the absence of a comma for essential clauses, US English only uses *that*, whereas UK English tends to use *that* and *which* interchangeably. Therefore, because the US style will work for both US and UK English, your best strategy is to follow the US style of using *which* for nonessential clauses and *that* for essential clauses.

The trick to distinguishing essential from nonessential material is to be certain about what the reader needs in a sentence to avoid confusion. *Essential information is information without which the sentence cannot be clear: the concept of essentiality in grammar is always—and exclusively—sentence-specific*. To determine whether the information is essential, the writer should ask the following two questions:

“Does this information apply to *all* of the [nouns] in its class—and therefore is nonessential? Or is this [noun] the only one of its kind, so that any extra information is nonessential?”

If the answer to either is *yes*, the information is almost surely nonessential:

The *European Journal of _____*, which publishes articles only in English, has very high standards.

As only one journal called the *European Journal of _____* exists, then the information in the *which* clause is not essential to the clarity of the independent clause. *Which* (plus two commas) is thus correct.

But if both answers are *no*, the writer needs to ask a second question:

“Does this information apply *only* to the specific [noun] in this sentence, so that the information is necessary to distinguish it from all others in its class?”

If the answer to this question is yes, the information will certainly be essential—and will need *that* but no commas:

The statistics *that he has compiled* are not sufficient to support his argument.

In this sentence, “*that he has compiled*” is essential, *because it differentiates these*

statistics (i.e., that he has compiled) from all other statistics in existence (i.e., all those that he has not compiled). The easiest way to determine whether the information in a clause is essential (and that it therefore needs *that* and no commas) is to place a pen or your finger over the words in that clause—and then to read it *without being able to see them*. You need to take this action so that your eye cannot trick your mind; that is, as long as you can see the words, you are not seeing the sentence the way the reader would see it if the clause were removed. What you will now see is:

The statistics are not sufficient to support his argument.

If you were the reader, you would immediately ask, “*What* statistics? Which ones?” Thus you know that “that he has compiled” is essential to the clarity of the sentence.

However, suppose for a moment that you work in a research institute and that your research director has asked you for comments on someone’s paper. If you are putting your comments in an email, and if its contents are solely about this one person’s paper, then you could clearly write:

The statistics are not sufficient to support his argument.

In this context, only one person and one set of statistics are under consideration. Therefore, “that he has compiled” is extra information that you can either omit or put in another sentence.

The purpose of these examples is to show you that in each sentence calling for a possible *which* or *that*, you must carefully consider the full meaning of the sentence. The following example will further clarify the distinction between when to use *which* and when to use *that*:

We handle these problems by including a small number of immigrant groups, *which* have had a presence in Italy for at least two decades.

The “comma plus *which*” tells the reader that “which have lived in Italy for at least two decades” is nonessential. But is it really nonessential? If it is, the sentence becomes “we handle these problems by including a small number of immigrant groups.” In this case, “immigrant groups” becomes a general term encompassing *all* immigrant groups in the country; that they have lived in Italy for at least two decades becomes irrelevant, a side issue. *All* immigrant groups are thus covered here.

But if the writer’s meaning is to include a small number of *only* those immigrant groups *that* have lived in Italy for at least two decades, the information is essential—and the “comma plus *which*” must become “no comma, only *that*”:

We handle these problems by including a small number of immigrant groups *that* have had a presence in Italy for at least two decades.

Only you, the writer, can know what the real meaning is. And only you can cor-

rectly choose the *which* or *that* and use commas or no commas accordingly. You have two keys helping you to make such sentences clear. The first key is to remember that *the nature of the information itself determines whether it is essential to the clarity of the sentence*. The second key is to remember that *which* (with one or two commas) goes with nonessential information and *that* (with no commas) goes with essential information.

Poor: The modern ethnographer can no longer establish the kind of affiliation or interconnectedness (with the people he or she is studying), *which* occurs when working within a field that is not constantly changing.

The use of *which* is incorrect here, because the reader will ask, “establish *what kind of* affiliation or interconnectedness?” The writer needs to use *that* to make clear that only one kind of “interconnectedness” is under discussion—the kind “*that occurs when....*”

Better: The modern ethnographer can no longer establish the kind of affiliation or interconnectedness (with the people he or she is studying) *that* occurs when working within a field that is not constantly changing.

Know that by correctly choosing *which* or *that*—or by rewriting your sentence to avoid a *which* or *that* clause in the wrong place—you are meeting the foremost criterion of the Anglo-American rhetorical tradition: making your writing clear to the reader. This particular part of the overall strategy of “clarity above all” will serve you well with editors, reviewers, and—ultimately—readers of the journals in which your writing appears.

chapter 7

ACTIVE vs. PASSIVE VOICE: Converting Weak Language into Strong Writing

People often use the passive voice because it's indirect, polite, unaggressive, and admirably suited to making thoughts seem as if nobody had personally thought them and deeds seem as if nobody had done them, so that nobody need take responsibility. Thus the passive is beloved of bureaucrats and timid academics....¹

—URSULA K. LEGUIN

Never use the passive where you can use the active.²

—GEORGE ORWELL

In prioritizing writing strategies for creating strong, readable academic writing, every writer should place active voice writing and pruning at the top. By following both these strategies, the writer will also enjoy the good fortune of eliminating other writing problems that usually result from passive voice writing. Given that some journal editors refuse to accept passive voice writing, and that many reviewers report their dislike of reading long passive sentences, active voice writing serves the writer well on multiple levels.

Not everyone, however, shares this viewpoint, and the debate about the role of the passive voice in Anglo-American writing is often heated. Some scholars and writers find the passive voice weak, boring, and often confusing; others suggest that it is useful in certain circumstances; and yet others see nothing wrong with it and want to grant it equal standing with the active voice in scholarly writing. That the use of the passive voice is such a bone of contention among writing professionals is puzzling to many Europeans, especially those from linguistic communities in which the passive voice is part of the formal grammar of the language and very much a part of academic style.

Before discussing these various arguments, this chapter will first define and explain the passive voice in terms of functional linguistics (i.e., what it is and how it functions grammatically) and then discuss its effects and implications in terms of the psychology of reading. As a result of those implications, which are primarily nega-

tive, the chapter will unequivocally argue in favor of the strategy of converting as many passive sentences to active ones as the writer possibly can. While exceptions always exist, and while a writer may sometimes have to use the passive voice for a particular journal, the active voice is what gives life, strength, and clarity to English sentences.

But, you may be asking, what exactly is the passive voice? You hear arguments about it, you remember it from English classes—but what is it, and what is all the academic fuss about? To situate the issue of voice within its larger grammatical context, I start with a very short but very necessary grammar review. Even if you already know the information that the review contains, the angle from which I present it is critical to understanding the unusual way in which I explain the passive voice and its relationship to the psychology of reading in English. The few pages of this review, coupled with a focused linguistic explanation of active and passive voice, clarify the meaning for both native and non-native English speakers alike. Therefore, although the content of this part of the chapter may initially appear simplistic, the explanation will help you to understand, appreciate, and apply the strategy of writing in the active voice.

Grammar review—from a new angle

As in many European languages, every sentence in English demands a subject and a verb. Every subject must have a verb, and every verb must have a subject: *She retired. He quit. Wait for me!* (The obvious but implicit subject in this third example is what in English is called “you understood” or “the understood you”—i.e., “[You] wait for me.”)

But most English verbs demand more information if their full action is to be clear. Clauses such as *they analyzed* and *the government opposes* cannot stand alone as sentences, because they are incomplete: The reader keeps asking, “*What?* Somebody analyzed *what*, opposes *what*? ” Thus verbs such as *analyze* and *oppose* need the answer to the question “*what*” for their actions to make sense; e.g., they analyzed the *raw data*, the government opposes *military intervention*. The words or phrases that follow such verbs are known as the direct objects of the verb—commonly called the “object.”

Everyone who has studied English as a second or third language knows the term “object.” But what exactly does it do? The object of a verb is the word or phrase that answers the question “*what*”—what did she examine, what does the government oppose? In other words, an object always answers one of these questions:

- What did the subject do?
- What is the subject doing?
- What will the subject do?
- What [could/might/should] the subject do?

Remember these questions, because you will need to return to them time and again. In English, verbs that take objects are called “transitive” verbs (from the Latin *trans*, meaning “across”); verbs that do not are called “intransitive” verbs. American dictionaries abbreviate them as “v.t.” and “v.i.” The action of a transitive verb moves across time and space to include, affect, or otherwise involve something else (i.e., the object.) In the sentence “she edited her paper,” the editing action affects the paper. Unless we can name the object (i.e., that which was “edited”), we have no way of knowing that editing took place. Similarly, we cannot know that buying has occurred without naming that which was bought, or that selling has taken place without naming that which was sold.

By contrast, intransitive verbs take no objects. After reading an intransitive verb (e.g., “overslept”), the reader has full information about the action it names. The best English dictionaries give “v.i.” or “v.t.” (or both) for every verb, so that readers can learn not only the meanings, spellings, derivations, etc., of new verbs but also their grammatical usage. Without such essential information, a reader cannot take a verb straight from a dictionary and know how to use it properly.

About 70% of English verbs are transitive, i.e., they *must* take objects. In grammar, anything over 50% is the norm, and anything under 50% is the exception. Therefore, while all English sentences demand both a subject and a verb (S+V), the most common grammatical pattern in English is subject + verb + object (S+V+O):

They analyzed the raw data.

The government opposed military intervention.

Even when sentences become longer or more sophisticated (e.g., “the government opposed military intervention in its neighbor’s ongoing civil war for both economic and political reasons”), S+V+O remains the primary structure of the sentence.

The reason that you need to know S+V+O is that *the concept of active and passive voice applies only to transitive verbs—verbs that take objects*. Therefore, knowing how to recognize an object is a prerequisite for learning how to recognize passive voice writing, so that you can convert it into an active voice structure that will work to your advantage.

Because the direct object of the verb always answers the question *what* will the subject do, *what* is the subject doing, etc., recognizing an object calls for you to ask a “what” question. For practice, use the sentence: “She is analyzing the data.”

Q: *What* is she analyzing?

A: the data

If you can answer the question, the answer is an object. If you *cannot* answer the question, or if the question sounds strange, the sentence has no object.

S: She walked her dog.

Q: *What* did she walk?

A: her dog (“dog” is the object of the transitive verb “walk”)

S: She walked to her office.

Q: *What* did she walk? (Does this question even make sense?)

A: [no answer] (“walk” in this sentence is intransitive)

For this last sentence, you may have found yourself wanting to ask the question “*where* did she walk.” If so, your intuition is excellent, because “to her office” is a prepositional phrase, and prepositional phrases often answer the question “*where* did the subject go.” The major functional difference between the object of a preposition (e.g., *on, over, through*) and the object of a verb is simple:

The object of a preposition (OP) *usually* (but not always) answers the question:

Where or when or how did the subject *go*?

The direct object of a verb (O) *always* answers the question:

What did the subject *do*?

This latter question is the one you must always ask when converting passive to active sentences.

Active Voice and Passive Voice

Active Voice

Rather than give a highly abstract definition of “voice” in English grammar, I start with the sample sentence I use while teaching:

The participants asked excellent questions.

The structure is clearly S+V+O: subject (participants) + verb (asked) + object (questions). This sentence is clear and direct, with its meaning moving across the page in the same direction that our eyes move while reading. Indeed, instead of using the symbolic notation S+V+O, we could also use another one: S → V → O. This symbolic notation covers not only the grammatical structure of the sentence but also the direction of the movement of its meaning.

In English, as in many European languages, both reading and meaning move from left to right across the page. In the sentence “Joe hit John,” we know who did the hitting, because the name preceding the verb is the subject and the name following it is the object. Therefore, any sentence whose action moves in the same direction as the reader’s gaze (i.e., S → V → O) makes the reading process easier for the reader.

Returning to our original sentence, we now have:

The participants → asked → excellent questions.

The movement is from left to right: the subject completed an action that affected something or someone else.

The first question you should ask is: *who* is doing the action (“asked”) that the sentence names? As the answer here is “participants,” the subject itself is the “do-er”

of the action (i.e., the one doing it). Therefore, because this subject is *active* (i.e., actually doing the action), this sentence is in the *active voice*. In other words, whenever you see the structure S → V → O or S+V+O, you have an active voice sentence. In English, no sentence structure can be more clear, concise, or focused (all highly attractive qualities to the reader) than the active voice.

Nonetheless, some writers always want to take the object (e.g., “questions” in the preceding example) and turn it into a subject. In a sentence such as “the participants asked excellent questions,” doing so is not a wise move. In this sentence, questions don’t *do* anything. They are the product of the participants’ thinking. But some scholar, somewhere, always wants to take that object, for reasons unfathomable to me, and turn it into a subject. And the desire to make that change is where the passive voice comes into play.

Passive Voice

Given that the active voice entails a subject that is doing the action, the “passive” voice must mean that the subject of the sentence is passive—that it just sits passively in the sentence, doing nothing. If we take “the participants asked excellent questions” and move the object “questions” into the subject position, the turned-around sentence looks like this:

Excellent questions were asked by the participants.

The sentence is now two words longer, as the writer has had to add a form of the verb “to be” (in this case, “were”) to the verb and the preposition “by” after the verb. In English, longer does not mean better. Why make this change? (Hold that question. I shall return to it.) Meanwhile, as the subject of the new sentence is “questions,” we have to again ask the most important question: who is doing the action that the verb names?

Is it “questions”? Evidently not. So reframe the question this way: *Is the subject doing the action, or is the subject having the action done to it?*

Because “questions” is not doing any action, and the sentence begins “[Excellent] questions were asked,” the subject is clearly having something done to it by another actor. It is not an active subject; it is a passive one. You are now looking at the passive voice—a construction in which the subject, rather than doing the action, is being acted upon by some other force, entity, actor, etc. Thus we now have:

Excellent questions ← were asked by the participants.

Your next question must be: *who or what is doing the action that is being done to the subject?* The answer, of course, is “the participants.” You now understand the movement or direction of the action in this sentence structure to be as follows:

Excellent questions ← were asked ← by the participants.

If you put the active and the passive sentences next to one another, the difference in direction is immediately apparent:

Active: The participants → asked → excellent questions.

Passive: Excellent questions ← were asked ← by the participants.

The arrows—and therefore the meaning—in the active voice sentence move in the same direction as the reader’s eyes. The arrows in the passive voice sentence move in the opposite direction of the reader’s eyes, *against meaning* and *against reading*. While the reader is consciously reading “excellent questions were asked by the participants,” the reader’s mind is unconsciously reframing the sentence into the right direction, into the active voice, by thinking, “Oh, in other words, the participants asked excellent questions.” Passive voice writing thus forces the reader to use twice the mental effort to comprehend the material. A study by Fernanda Ferreira (*Cognitive Psychology*, 2003) demonstrates that for every sentence type, people comprehend the passive voice not only more slowly but also less accurately.³

The passive voice works against the natural flow of reading and meaning. As both a teacher and a writer, I still remember the day that I made this simple connection between the direction and movement of meaning and the direction and movement of the reader’s eyes. This realization explained all my years of reading textbooks that put me to sleep, wondering why I was becoming so tired while reading material that interested me. When I tell this story in the seminar, metaphorical light bulbs start winking over the participants’ heads as they recognize its truth in their own reading lives as social scientists.

The passive voice makes the reader work harder than necessary. Doing this harder work tires the reader. A tired reader who has to keep working hard to understand the writer’s material possibly understands it less well, has to reread it several times, or stops reading and skips the solid argument by rushing straight to the conclusion. Why, I ask my students—as I now ask you—would any thoughtful writer who wishes to get published want to tire or bore his or her first reader (an editor) and possible second readers (the reviewers)? How can such behavior possibly be in the writer’s best interests?

That articles in newspapers and popular magazines are predominantly in the active voice is not accidental. That journals as different as the *British Medical Journal* (BMJ) and the *Journal of Business Research* (JBR) insist on active voice writing is no surprise. (As the editor-in-chief of the JBR unequivocally writes, “Avoid the passive voice as much as you avoid death.”)⁴

Working with the baseball saying “three strikes and you’re out,” I have already named two strikes against the passive voice. First, it is unnecessarily longer. Second, it moves against the direction of reading and makes the reader do double the mental work to absorb the material. Before pitching the third strike, I want you to know

that I will later discuss the three circumstances under which the passive voice may be necessary or acceptable. In that regard I will also discuss some general stylistic differences between UK and US writing. But first we need to take a good hard look, from a pragmatic standpoint, at all the problems that the passive voice creates.

The third problem with the passive voice has to do with what I call the “by” phrase, i.e., the final part of a passive voice sentence in which the real subject is buried, the prepositional phrase always beginning with “by.” (For example, “the report was issued *by* the Ministry of Education” or “the meeting was conducted *by* external reviewers.”) Too often academic writers drop the “by” phrase, leaving the reader with incomplete information:

- Poor:** The relevance of a methodological “third way” *is proposed*.
- Poor:** Since the unemployed appear as a category, they *have been placed* in a position between deviants and normal working citizens in society.

In the first example, who is doing the proposing—the author? Perhaps someone cited in the previous sentence? In the second example, who is doing the placing? Perhaps government agencies, sociologists, or political opposition parties? Or perhaps the unemployed find themselves in that position, rather than having “been placed” there by anybody at all. Neither of these sentences is clear, because the absence of the “by” phrase forces the reader to guess at their meaning.

Adding the “by” phrase or, better yet, finding out who is the object of “by” and then converting the sentence to active voice, are the writer’s two best choices. Some possible rewrites are:

- Better:** These scholars propose the relevance of a methodological “third way.”
I propose/This paper proposes....
- Better:** Because the [____] agency put the unemployed in a category separate from the employed, the agency has placed them somewhere between normal working citizens and social deviants.

or

The category “unemployed” places unemployed workers somewhere between “normal” working citizens and social deviants.

To avoid these “three strike” problems, you must be able to recognize the passive voice and convert the sentence into the active voice *without changing its meaning*. The next two sections will show you how to do both.

Recognizing the passive voice

Every writer can recognize the passive voice in English in any one of three ways: subject-verb relationships, the passive voice verb form, and the “by” phrase. As all three apply to every passive voice sentence, read about them all before choosing the one you find easiest to use.

The first way to recognize the passive voice, as previously discussed, is to ask the question “is the subject doing the action or having something done to it?” If the subject is having something done to it, the sentence is in the passive voice.

This document was not approved by the Parliament.

The document does not do anything. Someone else is doing the approving—and doing it to the document. The sentence is therefore passive.

The second way to recognize the passive voice is to look carefully at the verb. A passive voice verb always has two components. The first part is a form of the verb “to be” (*am, is, was, were, are, be, been, or being*). The second part is the past participle of another verb (e.g., *spoken, written, acknowledged*). In the seminar, the phrase “past participle” usually makes participants’ eyes glaze over, until I remind them that they all learned their verbs in terms of three (e.g., *drink, drank, drunk*), and that the past participle is simply the last one—it’s the “drunk”!

Passive voice verbs, therefore, look like this:

<i>was criticized</i>	<i>is compiled</i>
<i>has been found</i>	<i>were written</i>
<i>could be reviewed</i>	<i>should be analyzed</i>
<i>is being examined</i>	<i>ought to be developed</i>

Be careful not to confuse the verb “to be” with a passive structure when it is functioning in a sentence by itself (e.g., “this data set *is unusually large*”). A passive voice verb is the *combination* of a form of “to be” and a past participle of another verb. Sometimes, however, because the verb “to be” will be implicit, not explicit, you need to know how to recognize the signs of a passive construction. Following is a typical example:

A well-specified model should reduce any bias caused by endogenous covariates.

The independent clause is active: “A...model should reduce [something].” But underlying “any bias caused by endogenous covariates” is the passive grammatical structure “any bias that *is caused* by endogenous covariates.” Thus a good writer learns to recognize the passive voice in both its explicit and implicit (i.e., past participle alone) forms.

The third way to recognize the passive voice is to look for a “by” phrase. Does the sentence have one? If it does, the sentence is almost certainly passive. However, even if the sentence does not contain a “by” phrase, could you legitimately add one, with the sentence still making sense? If so, the sentence is also passive. For example:

The reaction is caused *by* the low settings of some important market variables.

As soon as you see the “by” phrase, double-check the first part of the sentence for a passive voice verb (“*is caused*”) or for a subject that is having something done to it

(“reaction”). Now you are certain that this sentence is in the passive voice.

But what if the “by” phrase is implicit, as in the following sentence:

It was found that the vocationally trained in Germany and Denmark fare better than the unskilled on each of three attainment measures.

If we ask, “was ‘it’ found by *somebody*,” the answer is yes. A “by” phrase is implicit here. The writer first needs to find the object of “by” (i.e., who the “somebody” is), and then convert the sentence into the active voice.

Initial analysis: It was found by [the study? the writer? another researcher in a different study?].... By whom?!

As an editor, whether of your own writing or of someone else’s, you now see the problem that the absence of the “by” phrase causes. Without knowing the object of the preposition “by,” the writer (or professional editor) will never have enough information to convert the passive voice sentence to an active one. If you know the answer to the question “by whom,” put it in.

It was found by _____ that the vocationally trained....

While this sentence is still in the passive voice, at least it will be clear—not well written, but clear. So if you do not know the answer to “by whom” (and even if you do), your wisest course is to rethink the sentence and give it a different subject—certainly not the meaningless “it.”

Better: [I/this study/(“Famous Scholar”)] find(s) that the vocationally trained....

This second rewrite works under two conditions: if the writer is certain of the subject and if the writer wants to mention a name here. Otherwise, the writer or editor moves to the next editorial stage:

Best: [The/their/my] findings show that the vocationally trained....

Knowing the object of the “by” phrase is crucial to converting passive voice sentences to active ones, for reasons we saw earlier in this chapter: the subject of the original active voice sentence is the object of “by” in the passive “by” phrase. I purposely use the word “original,” because from years of teaching I have come to see that the active voice is the natural, original voice of English, whereas the passive voice is *derivative*. Look again at these two sentences:

Active: The participants → asked → excellent questions.

Passive: Excellent questions ← were asked ← by the participants.

The active voice moves in the direction of speech, meaning, and flow of the action. The passive voice is backwards, reversing this natural flow. The passive subject

(“questions”) is derivative and unnatural, because questions cannot do anything unless they are placed in an active voice sentence (e.g., “the *questions sparked* a lively debate”). Likewise in the passive voice, the true subject—the subject of the active voice sentence—is buried in an object position, following “by” and often omitted.

The main point here, at this nearly final stage of the analysis, is that without knowing the object of the preposition “by,” the writer cannot convert passive sentences to active ones.

Converting passive sentences to active ones

Making the conversion from passive to active voice calls for three sets of skills: the ability to reframe a sentence, the ability to overcome past training and bad habits, and the application of a simple conversion formula. Remember that the true subject of an active voice sentence will appear in a passive sentence as the object of “by,” and that the true object of the active voice sentence is masquerading as a subject in the passive voice version. To convert passive to active, simply reverse their positions—while keeping the verb tense the same.

Here is the conversion formula, using the sentence “this factor will be discussed in the following section”:

- IF** this factor will be discussed,
- THEN** it will be discussed **by somebody**.
- IF** this factor will be discussed **by somebody**,
- THEN** **somebody** will discuss this factor.

While making this conversion looks easy, one aspect of it sometimes trips up non-native writers: that of maintaining the same verb tense (past, present, etc.). Most of the time, the conversion is easy:

Passive: The success of the process was evaluated from two perspectives.

Active: We/I evaluated the success of the process from two perspectives.

As the verb “to be” in the passive voice sentence is in the simple past tense (“*was evaluated*”), the active voice sentence must be in the past tense. In other words, whatever form “to be” takes in a passive sentence will become the form that the past participle verb takes in the active sentence. My experience is that most European writers have no trouble with simple past tense sentences. But as “to be” takes on other forms, the problems begin:

Passive: Few country-specific variables are included in the analysis.

Active: The analysis *includes* few country-specific variables.

The active voice sentence must be in present tense (“*includes*”) because of the present tense (“*are*”) in the passive sentence. Too often I see “*included*” instead of “*includes*.”

For a more complex example, consider the following sentence:

When your credentials have been received, we will determine your status.

The first problem with this sentence is that it mixes active and passive voice within the same sentence. Mixing them is extremely poor style, because it forces the reader to have to switch voices in the middle of a sentence. The second problem shows up at the time of conversion. Most writers try the following edit:

When we have received your credentials, we will determine your status.

The conversion appears fine, because “have been [received]” becomes “have received.” However, an exception in English grammar is that dependent clauses having to do with future time (i.e., starting with words such as *when, until, before, after*) take the present tense. Therefore, the correct sentence should read:

When we receive your credentials, we will determine your status.

Pay attention to tense: “will be analyzed” becomes “will analyze,” and “could be perceived” becomes “could perceive.” But always be alert for those few pesky exceptions.

With the grammar segment of this chapter finally over, the next section will cover the passive voice conversion strategies and the thinking underlying them.

Passive voice weaknesses and useful conversion strategies

Converting the passive voice to the active voice calls for the writer to put the “true” subject first—the subject of the active voice structure that always underlies any passive voice sentence. Thus “details of the applied Swiss data are presented in Section 4” becomes “Section 4 presents the details of the applied Swiss data.” All the writer has to do is to consistently ask, “Who is doing what? What is doing what?” The answer will give him or her the genuine subject and will lead to the writing of active voice sentences.

While this approach is very simple, among European scholars it also generates arguments about what should go first in a sentence. One common defense of the passive voice is that it allows the writer to begin the sentence with the subject on which he or she is focusing. Such a belief leads to unnecessary passive constructions such as “the document was not approved by the Parliament” instead of “the Parliament did not approve the document”—a rewrite that loses none of the intended meaning.

Nonetheless, a writer who follows this “emphasis” precept and wants to focus on, say, “questions” and their quality rather than on “participants” is likely to use the passive “excellent questions were asked by the participants.” Ironically, the negative effect of making “questions” a passive voice subject *cancels out* any positive effect of placing it in the subject position. Rather than emphasizing a subject, the passive

voice weakens it. Therefore, if the writer wants to emphasize “questions,” that writer needs to tell the reader what the questions actually do or did—that is, make “questions” the subject of an active voice sentence. For example:

The participants’ excellent questions *led to* a complete revision of the document.

Excellent questions *form* the start of a good learning experience.

Unlike in some European languages, *in English the principal noun—the one on which the writer wishes to focus—does not necessarily need to come first*. What matters most is that the information is clear, sequential, and contextual, and that the sentence tells the reader what he or she needs to know. For example, in a paper on gender segregation in Nordic labor markets, the writer wanted to emphasize this subject in the middle of a paragraph that included the following first-draft sentence:

The labor markets of Norway and Sweden *were ranked* as the most gender-segregated by occupation and industry in an OECD study from the early 1980s (OECD 1984) [italics for passive voice will always be mine]

To a native English speaker, this structure is tortuous—it is all over the map, moving from here to there and back again, just so that the writer can put “labor markets” first. Given that previous sentences had already made clear the primacy of this subject, a much better version would be the following active voice sentence:

An OECD study in 1984 ranked the Norwegian and Swedish labor markets as the most gender-segregated by occupation and industry.

Let’s look at another example, in which the writer wished to emphasize a draft:

A draft of the principles of pension reform *has been prepared* by the special government task force [that was] *established* by the government and [that was] *composed* of the representatives of the whole spectrum of political parties, experts, and civil servants in 2007-2008.

In placing the draft first, the writer created a sentence with three passive voice clauses and too many words. The intended emphasis gets lost in the passive voice and the excess verbiage. The same message comes across much more clearly, with no real loss of emphasis, in the following rewrite:

A special government task force, comprising representatives of the whole spectrum of political parties, experts, and civil servants in 2007-2008, prepared a draft of the principles of pension reform.

So far, as we have seen, one clear strategy for converting passive to active is to put the true actor, not a derivative one, in the subject position. Another is to take the object of an active sentence and make it the subject of a very different active sen-

tence. A third strategy is to take a sentence using the meaningless “it” and give it a real, active subject:

Passive: In an earlier paper (ref.), *it has been shown* that there is the same factor structure in all the countries.

Active: An earlier paper (ref.) has shown the same factor structure in all the countries.

In “it is” sentences that include “assumed” and “expected,” rewriting becomes trickier. Consider the following two sentences:

Passive: Because of a possible problem with _____, *it is assumed* that....

[Your reader will wonder who is doing the assuming: you or someone else?]

Passive: Because of a possible problem with _____, *it is expected* that....

[Your reader will wonder who is doing the expecting: you or someone else?]

But if you convert these sentences, with yourself as the active subject, you will have:

Because of a possible problem with X, I assume....

Because of a possible problem with X, I expect....

These two sentences, however, have very different meanings.

The first—“I assume...”—tells the reader that you are making an assumption directly from the existence of a probable problem. The second—“I expect...”—tells the reader that the existence of a possible problem leads you to hypothesize a certain type of (probable) outcome. In other words, the first tells the reader about an underlying assumption relative to the problem; the second tells the reader that you are making a causal assumption or hypothesis. Therefore, because converting straight from passive to active without careful thinking can lead to writing one type of sentence when you should have written the other, *avoid the passive voice*. Instead, write in the active voice, and always choose the word that says what you mean.

Some other strategies call for even more creativity, as the writer has to reconstruct his or her intended meaning and add or change words to make that meaning clear. A fourth strategy involves changing the language, removing the passive verb altogether and replacing it with a different verb that will work in the active voice. That way, for example, if you wish to emphasize “findings,” not “Table,” you can easily do so:

Passive: The findings *are presented* in Table 3.

Active: The findings *appear* in Table 3.

Passive: The idea that the French social model may no longer be functioning or may not be a model for other European countries is *just starting to be discussed in France*.

Active: That the French social model may no longer be functioning or may not be a model for other European countries is an idea *just entering French discourse*.

Sometimes, when you ask “who is doing what” in a particular sentence, the subject is missing. If you have no way of knowing what it is, you will have to rewrite the sentence from scratch. But in certain instances the subject is implicit (to you, as the writer), so that you can use a fifth strategy of plugging that subject right into an active sentence:

To facilitate the entry of young people and women without professional experience into the labor market, incentives *were set up* for the expansion of part-time work in the public sector, social insurance contributions for unskilled workers *were lowered*, while the employment of young people *was subsidized*.

This sentence has three passive voice clauses. It is also missing the right subject for “to facilitate...” to modify. *Who* is doing all of this action? The sentence does not say. However, if the writer of this first draft sentence knows that the subject is the government of Greece, then the sentence becomes easy to rewrite:

To facilitate labor market entry for young people and women without professional experience, the Greek government *created* incentives for expanding part-time work in the public sector, *lowered* social insurance contributions for unskilled workers, and *subsidized* the employment of young people.

Here is another example of the “missing subject” problem:

One possible approach to influencing this probability is to signal factors that *might be perceived* as positive from the view of the employer, such as productivity, loyalty, work interest, and motivation.

Who, you may reasonably ask, is doing what? Who are the actors here? You, the reader, cannot make sense of the sentence as it stands. But if the researcher is writing about temporary or part-time employees who wish to signal their desire for full-time employment to the employer, aha—then the writer knows enough to edit his or her own sentence:

One possible employee approach to influencing this probability is that of signaling factors that the employer might perceive as positive, e.g., productivity, loyalty, work interest, and motivation.

A sixth strategy comes into play when you ask “who is doing what” and cannot come up with a clear answer from either the sentence or your own mind. At this point, you must toss the sentence out completely and start from the beginning, asking “who is doing what?” Here is an example of this kind of problem sentence:

Brussels' recommendations for Spain were cited by underlining Spain's very unfavorable demographics.

Who did the citing and the underlining? Spain? Brussels? Somebody else? Even if you know from reading the paper that the context is certain EU policies and the reactions of the national governments of member states, you as the reader still cannot guess whether the writer intended Spain or Brussels to be the actor.

The [Spanish] government cited Brussels' recommendations for Spain by underlining Spain's very unfavorable demographics.

[Can this be it? But what does it really mean?]

or

Brussels underlined Spain's very unfavorable demographics when citing....?

[No, that doesn't make sense.]

or

When citing Brussels' recommendations for Spain, the Spanish government referred to and emphasized Spain's unfavorable demographics.

[But, still, what does this mean?]

At this point the writer should either hit "delete" or, if working with hard copy, turn the page over—and start the sentence over again, with completely different words. One of many possibilities (depending entirely on the meaning, which I am now inventing) might be:

In the national debate over _____, the Spanish government cited Brussels' recommendations, which included welfare reform as a way of redressing the demographic problem in Spain.

Even out of context, this active voice version is easy to understand. The active voice focuses the sentence, moving it in a clear direction and containing specifics that the passive voice sentence lacked.

In essence, the passive voice resembles a bog full of quicksand. Passive voice sentences constitute easy places for meaning to become trapped (and even dissolved), and these traps lead to reader confusion, annoyance, and frustration. Consequently, writing in the passive voice serves no useful purpose. To the contrary, it often harms writers in their quest for publication. So why do academic writers keep using it?

Justifications for the passive voice—and my rebuttal

The movement against the use of the passive voice appears much stronger in the US than in the UK. Nonetheless, as mentioned previously, some UK journals insist on active voice writing, while some US journals—particularly those filled with jargon—use a great deal of passive voice. As a pragmatic observer, I can only re-emphasize the importance of studying the journal you have chosen and following its style. To that end, if the journal uses the passive voice exclusively, then follow the

old saying, "if you can't lick 'em, join 'em." (A well-published American economist who writes exclusively in the active voice told me that a journal once sent his paper back for him to rewrite in that journal's style—the passive voice. He said it was the most painful experience of his writing life. But he did it, and the journal published his paper.)

Style aside, those who defend the passive voice name at least four circumstances in which they insist that the passive voice is permissible. I will now explain and rebut them one by one.

First, the passive voice is presumably acceptable when it softens sentences that might otherwise be too assertive or strong. For example:

"Soft": The relevance of an early diagnosis to the further course of the disease should have been outlined more clearly.

"Hard": [He] should have more clearly outlined the relevance of an early diagnosis to the further course of the disease.

The idea behind this way of thinking is that naming someone or saying that they "should" or "must" do or not do something is too prescriptive, too harsh. Yet a third way exists between the two, in clear active voice sentences:

Active: The relevance of an early diagnosis to the further course of the disease needed clearer outlining.

or

A clearer outline would have better shown the relevance of an early diagnosis to the further course of the disease.

Second, the passive voice is presumably acceptable when the subject of the sentence (the one doing the action) is unknown. A classic example is:

A woman *was attacked* while jogging by the lake yesterday afternoon.

Nobody knows who mugged the woman. Yet compare the sentence to its active rewrite:

An unknown assailant attacked a woman yesterday afternoon while she was jogging by the lake.

The active sentence tells the reader by the second and third words that somebody attacked somebody but that no one has either identified or apprehended the assailant.

However, a complex academic sentence can present more rewriting difficulties:

The field of consumption, as [ref.] has shown, *can be understood* as an important arena where individualized forms of government *are being enacted* and where specific normative assumptions about economic practices *are being promoted*.

Two of the three passive clauses are easy to reframe and rewrite:

The field of consumption, as [ref.] has shown, *is* an important arena in which individualized forms of government *take place*....

But fixing the third clause, “where specific normative assumptions about economic practices are being promoted,” is not easy. The question “being promoted by whom” leads down a blind alley. Who “promotes” normative assumptions—the government, the advertising industry, the film industry? We may not be able to name the real subject, and we may not be able to find any words to substitute for “are being promoted.” On the one hand, the writer cannot let the passive voice remain, because now it would no longer be grammatically parallel with its revised active companion (see chap. 9 for parallel structure). On the other hand, while leaving the sentence in its original form may be “acceptable,” the reader will have to read it more than once to absorb its contents. The writer should therefore rewrite the sentence completely, using very different words and being very clear in his or her own mind about who or what is doing what.

Third, the passive voice is presumably acceptable if the subject (the one doing the action) is obvious or irrelevant. For example:

American presidents *are elected* every four years.

If we ask, “are elected by whom,” the obvious answer is “the voters.” But the passive voice remains stylistically weak. Why not say the same thing in a stronger way?

Americans *elect* a president every four years.

American presidential *elections take place* every four years.

The same holds true for “Jane was promoted.” If she was promoted, she was promoted by someone—her boss, her department, the organization. The active subject here is irrelevant. Nonetheless, leaving the passive “Jane was promoted” implies that Jane herself is a passive object having no influence on the outcome. Why not say “Jane *received/earned* a promotion”?

My point is that the writer has no valid excuse for using the passive voice in these instances. With a little creativity, any good writer can convert a weak passive sentence into a better sentence—an active one. The only exception that makes sense is for writers with a very specific subject involving no people at all:

Coal *is mined* in West Virginia and Pennsylvania.

We all know that miners mine coal. If the paper is about miners or about local people whom mining affects, then the passive voice is unacceptable. But if the paper is highly technical, covering only the chemical composition of coal and the places and depths in the earth where miners find it, then the passive voice *may* be permissible.

Fourth, the passive voice is presumably acceptable if the person or organization doing the action is better left unnamed. I hoped that this option in no way applies to you or your work, because as a professional you should have nothing to hide.

In the end, you will have to become your own best judge of when the passive voice is acceptable or not. I highly recommend starting the practice of automatically converting all passive voice sentences to active, at least for a full month, to discover for yourself the power of the active voice and the confusion that the passive voice too often causes. Do not believe the academic myth that writing exclusively in the active voice creates a staccato style. A good style, as a later chapter will show, relies even more on the juxtaposition of dependent and independent clauses—and on word choice, clause embedding, and the use of transitional adverbs—than on some sort of knee-jerk need to vary active and passive sentences.

Once you begin to write in the active voice, you will also begin to find your best voice as an academic writer. Only when you have that voice will you be able to recognize those rare occasions for which you need the passive voice.

Creating a Strong Active Voice

The active voice works best when the writer follows the subject with a strong verb carrying both clear meaning and robust energy. Words like “appear” and “seem” are very weak. However, as you sometimes need them, make sure to use “appear,” not “seem.” While they mean the same thing in the dictionary, “appear” has a more academic flavor, while “seem” makes the writer look unsure of his or her findings or position. Similarly, the verb “to be” is stylistically weak, especially in the passive voice. When it stands alone (e.g., “these findings *are* the basis of...”), you should consider substituting a word like “form” or “constitute” wherever possible. Likewise, as I discuss elsewhere, “indicate” is weak (although sometimes you need it), whereas “show,” “demonstrate,” “reveal,” and “prove” are strong.

Strong, precise verbs will strengthen your active voice writing. Instead of repeating “analyze,” use “assess,” “evaluate,” “examine,” “study,” or “explore.” If your analysis is comparative, consider verbs such as “compare,” “contrast,” “differentiate between,” or “distinguish between.” Rather than over-using “for example,” use “exemplify” or “typify.” Instead of using verb phrases such as “move [something] forward,” consider “advance.” Vary “have” with “contain,” “comprise,” and other such verbs, as appropriate. In addition, use highly specific verbs that precisely describe your meaning: “abrogate,” “aggravate,” “buttress,” “disabuse,” “exacerbate,” “extrapolate,” “legitimate,” “nullify,” “obviate,” “rebut,” “rupture,” and many dozens of others.

Although these examples hardly scratch the surface of English vocabulary, these verbs are in common use, to varying degrees, in top-ranked journals. (For word lists, see, for example, the Academic Word List [AWL] online at the School of Linguistics

and Applied Language Studies at the University of Wellington, Victoria, New Zealand.) Not surprisingly, however, some of the verbs I suggested are words that native speakers of English may understand and use quite differently from non-native speakers from different cultures. The denotative (dictionary) meanings and connotative (cultural, emotional, suggestive) meanings in your linguistic community may vary from those in mine.

For example, the head of research at a large European institute notes that the “ideal” for some researchers in anthropology and sociology is to go into the field free of all preconceptions, calling their approach “explorative.” His observation is that this approach too often serves as a justification for sloppy intellectual work and poor preparation for the costly and time-consuming collection of data that the researchers later cannot use. He thus prefers that they replace “explore” with “examine,” “investigate,” or “analyze” (or even with “test _____ hypotheses”). Similarly, he has seen researchers use “highlight” in the vague (and possibly misleading) sense of “throwing some light over” or “adding to knowledge about” something.⁵

These observations beautifully illustrate the problem that non-native writers face. In English, “explore” usually means much the same as “examine” or “investigate.” And to “highlight” something—far from meaning “to shed light on”—means to emphasize, stress, or show its relative importance.

One verb that needs mentioning here is “claim,” which many European social scientists misunderstand and therefore misuse. Given that words in any language have positive, negative, or neutral connotations, a good writer always wants to use positive words for a positive meaning. However, I commonly see “claim” where the writer should have used “say,” “write,” or “argue,” because in English “claim” *almost always carries the negative connotation that whoever is doing the “claiming” is lying or untrustworthy*. In other words, “claim” is an insult. Therefore, be sure to write “[famous scholar] argues/writes/states....” (Nonetheless, the noun “claim,” when used correctly, remains an excellent academic word.)

Use strong verbs to help you create vibrant, engaging active voice sentences. Again, because English is noun-centered but verb-driven, the stronger your verbs, the stronger your sentences. The more active your voice, the stronger your writing—and the better your chances of getting published.

chapter 8

PLACING WORDS WHERE THEY BELONG: Using Modifiers Correctly

[T]o know what we're doing with our language...involves avoiding ungrammatical...usages that stick out painfully in written prose.¹

—URSULA K. LE GUIN

Placing modifiers properly is essential to unity in content and construction.²

—DONALD HALL AND SVEN BIRKERTS

T

To *modify* means to change. Modifiers are thus words, phrases, or clauses that give readers more specific information about other words in the same sentence. They convert otherwise vague nouns (*house*) into ones that the reader can visualize (*three-story white Victorian house*), or turn general words (*vocabulary*) into more crisply specific ones (*outdated Cold War vocabulary*). Adjectives (an *excellent article*) are modifiers, as are adverbs (a *largely inconsequential finding*). The guiding principle for the use of modifiers in English is that the writer should place them next to the word or words that they modify. Whenever a modifier is not where it should be, the reader will likely come away from the sentence with a very different meaning from the one that the writer intended.

Three major types of modifier problems commonly occur in English. Of the three, two are difficult to recognize in our own writing but easy to fix. While the third is much easier to recognize, the writer has to completely rewrite the sentence to make it clear.

As with all the other grammar problems in this part of the book, incorrectly placed and incorrectly constructed modifiers cause problems in both clarity and logic. This chapter defines and explains the three major modifier problems—squinting, misplaced, and dangling modifiers—and offers concrete strategies for eliminating them from your writing.

Squinting modifiers

A squinting modifier is a modifying word or phrase placed between two words that it could possibly modify. Just as we have to squint to see when the summer sun

is shining directly in our eyes, so the reader has to “squint” at the sentence to figure out which of the two words the modifier applies to.

Wrong: The researchers said on Wednesday they would attend the meeting.

“On Wednesday” is a squinting modifier, because it could modify either “said” or “attend.”

Writers find squinting modifiers very difficult to identify in their own writing, because they know so clearly in their own minds what they mean that they cannot imagine any other interpretation of their words. Modifier problems are one of the reasons that I highly recommend having a colleague read or proofread your paper before you give it at a conference, let alone submit it to a journal. If something looks or sounds funny (or confusing) to someone in-house, how much funnier or more confusing it will sound on the outside! Having an “I’ll read your papers if you’ll read mine” relationship with a colleague is invaluable, particularly for squinting and misplaced modifiers.

Once you have recognized a squinting modifier in your own writing, fixing it is simple. Move the word or phrase next to the word it modifies—on the side that is away from the word you do not want it to modify. In other words, if it modifies the first of the two words, put it *before* that word. If it modifies the second of the two, place it *after* the second one.

Right: *On Wednesday the researchers said* that they would attend the meeting.

or

The researchers said that *they would attend the meeting on Wednesday*

The researchers said that *they would attend the Wednesday meeting*.

Here is another example of the squinting modifier in action:

Wrong: The editor agreed after the paper was accepted to rewrite the abstract.

To what did the editor agree—to rewrite the abstract at some future time, if the paper was accepted? Or did the editor first accept the paper and only afterwards agree to rewrite the abstract?

Right: The editor agreed to rewrite the abstract if the paper was accepted.

The editor agreed to rewrite the abstract if he or she accepted the paper.

or

The editor accepted the paper and then agreed to rewrite the abstract.

Upon accepting the paper, the editor agreed to rewrite the abstract.

After accepting the paper, the editor agreed to rewrite the abstract.

Remember Murphy’s Law: if the reader can possibly misunderstand you, the reader will. Always proofread and edit your sentences for squinting modifiers.

Misplaced modifiers

A misplaced modifier is exactly what it sounds like—a modifier in the wrong place.

Poor: Professor Grabowski has resigned as head of research after having worked here for 20 years to the regret of the entire staff.

Oops—even if the entire staff regrets the professor’s former tenure, you would never put that in writing! But of course what the writer meant to say was that the staff regretted the resigning, not the working. The problem is that the modifying phrase “to the regret of the entire staff” is near “worked,” when it should go near “resigned.” Furthermore, the phrase must definitely have done its modifying task before the word “worked” even appears in the sentence.

Better: To the regret of the entire staff, Professor Grabowski has resigned as head of research after having worked here for 20 years.

Professor Grabowski, to the regret of the entire staff, has resigned as head of research after having worked here for 20 years.

Professor Grabowski has resigned as head of research, to the regret of the entire staff, after having worked here for 20 years.

The entire staff regrets the resignation of Professor Grabowski as head of research, after his 20-year career here at the institute.

As with the squinting modifier, the misplaced modifier is difficult for the writer to spot but easy for him or her to fix. It simply needs moving to the right place. While the “staff regrets” sentence has at least four good rewrite options, some sentences have fewer. The writer’s choice in such cases is either to move the modifier or to rewrite the sentence:

Wrong: The effect of working in a physically demanding or stressful job on the planned retirement age is insignificant.

“On the planned retirement age” is in the wrong place. It goes with “effect,” not with “job.”

Right: Working in a physically demanding or stressful job has no significant effect on the planned retirement age.

Among the most commonly misplaced modifiers in professional papers are *mainly*, *nearly*, and *only*. Most European writers tend to place these three words in front of the verb rather than where they actually belong:

Wrong: The interviewed families *mainly consisted* of single mothers and couples.

Right: The interviewed families *consisted mainly* of single mothers and couples.

Wrong: The county administration is *nearly classified* as efficient.

Right: The county administration is classified as *nearly efficient*.

The next example has two misplaced modifiers:

Wrong: Unfortunately, the database only contained register information up to and including 1997 at the time the analyses were conducted.

“Only” is misplaced, as is “at the time the analyses were conducted.”

Right: Unfortunately, at the time the analyses were conducted, the database contained register information *only through* 1997.

or

Unfortunately, at the time we *conducted the analyses*, the database contained register information *only through* 1997.

[This second version is correct only if the writers themselves conducted the analyses.]

Eliminating misplaced modifiers, like eliminating squinting modifiers, is relatively easy once you recognize the problem. What you want to avoid at all costs is for your reader to start laughing when you did not intend to be humorous. When teaching, I often write “Found: a purple man’s coat” on the whiteboard. Even though the seminar participants all know that the coat—not the man—had to be what was purple, they cannot help laughing. So keep in mind that one unintentionally funny misplaced modifier can have the double effect of interrupting an otherwise strong argument and having the reader consider you and your work less than fully professional.

Dangling modifiers—how to recognize and eliminate them

Dangling modifiers are the downfall of most academic writers, including native speakers of English. By secondary school, my classmates and I knew that the words “dangling modifier” in a teacher’s handwriting in the margin of any homework paper meant that we had made a big grammatical mistake. Yet few of us were certain what that mistake entailed or how we were to fix it. Meanwhile, changes in the educational systems in both the UK and North America in the late 1960s and early 1970s led to a decline in the teaching of grammar in elementary and secondary schools, to the point where younger teachers could no longer teach what they themselves had not been taught. Awareness of the confusion created by the dangling modifier has thus all but disappeared from common cultural consciousness. Dangling modifiers now appear in newspapers, popular magazines, and—sadly—in professional academic journals.

This brief background is to caution you that of all the grammatical problems that this book discusses, the dangling modifier may be the most difficult for you to grasp,

for two reasons. First, you have probably never learned about it in your English classes; second, you are accustomed to seeing it in writing and therefore have no idea that anything is wrong. However, as something is very wrong indeed with sentences containing dangling modifiers, articles in the top-ranked journals tend to have the fewest of these unclear constructions. The rest of this chapter will show you how to recognize and eliminate dangling modifiers, in the interest of your becoming the most sophisticated, precise, and clear writer possible.

In grammatical terms, a dangling modifier is a modifying phrase, often introductory, with no noun present for it to sensibly refer to. It therefore “dangles” in the sentence, because the word that it is supposed to modify is missing. I often think of it as being “all dressed up with nowhere to party”: the modifier is all dressed up, ready to do its modifying, but without an appropriate word to modify. The sentence is thus ungrammatical—and therefore illogical.

While this explanation is conceptually sound, it works best with an example. The simplest way of explaining how the presence of a dangling modifier destroys the logic of a sentence is to begin with a startling sentence such as the following:

Entering the room quickly, the corpse was found.

“Entering the room quickly” is a dangling modifier. It is dangling because whoever did the “entering”—the person that the phrase “entering the room quickly” was supposed to modify—is not in the sentence. Nonetheless, because the job of a modifier is to modify, “entering the room quickly” attaches itself to the first available noun—in this case, the corpse. But as a corpse cannot enter a room (except, perhaps, in horror films), the reader immediately knows that *something is very wrong with this sentence*.

What the sentence is missing is a true subject, that is, the person who did both the entering and the finding. That person is missing because the independent clause “the corpse was found” is in the passive voice. Because the “by phrase” that identifies the true subject of the passive action is missing, the reader has no way of figuring out who the subject is:

Entering the room quickly, the corpse was found [but *by whom?*].

Only the writer can make sense of this sentence by rewriting it in the active voice, thereby returning the missing subject to its proper place:

Entering the room quickly, [the detective] found the corpse.

Unfortunately, many academic papers by all but the very best writers are riddled with such confusing and meaningless constructions. Most of you are so accustomed to seeing dangling modifiers that when you read them, you believe that you are simply reading the sentences containing them. However, rather than merely reading

these sentences, you are actually first reading, then assuming, and finally “translating” very unclear writing to make sense out of it in your own mind.

Here are some typical examples:

Using occupational segregation, the gender wage gap is decomposed into an intra-occupational part and an inter-occupational part. [Who is doing the using?]

Turning to the three-year transition probabilities in Table 4, quite a few differences are found. [Who is doing the turning?]

The discussion in the previous sections can be extended to *include* several complicating factors. [Who is doing the *including*?]

Perhaps some of you are thinking, “Well, even if the writing isn’t perfect, we still can tell that the writer is probably doing the ‘using,’ ‘turning,’ or ‘including.’” However, lack of clarity always takes the reader’s precious time and attention away from reading your article for content and forces him or her to read it for comprehension. The dangling modifier is therefore more than bad grammar and poor form: it is inexcusable. If you want to compete with well-educated native speakers of English for limited space in the top-ranked journals in your field, then your grammar must be as good as theirs—or better.

Before returning to these three sentences and their corrected versions, we need to briefly consider the concept of *generative grammar* (also known as “transformational grammar”), developed in the 1950s by American linguist Noam Chomsky. To focus the discussion on dangling modifiers, I am greatly simplifying this introduction to Chomsky’s complex linguistic theory. In essence, Chomsky suggested that underlying all formal grammatical structures are what he called “deep structure” constructs that give us the genuine grammar of each language—a “generative” grammar that allows the brain to constantly transform simple basic constructions into much more complex ones and to constantly generate new sentences. According to Chomsky, by studying the deep structure of every complex sentence, we can uncover the real structure underlying the formal rules of any language.³

In English, the deep structure takes the form of very simple independent clauses: *she said this, I wrote that, they reviewed this, we examined that*, etc. Chomsky’s theory posits that our brains, in a fraction of a second, transform these simple deep structure sentences into the more complex ones that we eventually think, say, or write. The following sentence exemplifies the process at work:

The woman who lives next door is an economist.

If we break the sentence down to its deep structure (i.e., the simple independent clauses underlying it), we find:

The woman is an economist.

The woman lives next door.

To create “the woman who lives next door is an economist,” our brain has to put these deep structure pieces through three transformations:

<i>The woman</i> lives next door	→	<i>she</i> lives next door
<i>She</i> lives next door	→	<i>who</i> lives next door
who lives next door	→	[is embedded in the original independent clause, right after “woman,” the word it modifies]

And thus we have:

The woman who lives next door is an economist.

Following the 1957 publication of Chomsky’s ground-breaking work, *Syntactic Structures*, linguists all over the world spent the next two decades attempting to prove his theory right or wrong. However, whether Chomsky’s deep structure theory applies to all languages, or whether or not it accurately describes neurocognitive processes, transformational grammar provides a superb tool for recognizing and understanding dangling modifiers, as well as for rewriting sentences to eliminate them.

The original “corpse” sentence—“entering the room quickly, the corpse was found”—made no sense because the subject (the person who did the *entering* action) is missing. If we supply a subject (for example, *the detective*), we have this sentence:

Entering the room quickly, *the detective* found the corpse.

Clearly, the detective did both the entering and the finding. If we now break this sentence down into its deep structure parts, we get the following two short sentences:

The detective entered the room quickly.

The detective found the corpse.

No social scientist would ever write such simple sentences, not only because they look painfully childish but also because such simplistic structural repetition would eventually put the reader to sleep. Nonetheless, the two deep structure sentences bring up a crucial question: how does a writer combine simple clauses to make the sentence structure more complex and interesting, while maintaining grammatical consistency in the final product?

For these two deep structure sentences, we can delete the first “the detective” and change “entered” to “entering”—but only, it turns out, *on two conditions*. First, we see that the independent clause “the detective entered the room quickly” is no longer

an independent clause; it is now an introductory modifying phrase, “entering the room quickly.” Thus Condition 1 is to replace the original period with a comma:

Condition 1: Entering the room quickly, [etc.]

Second, so that this modifying phrase does not “dangle” in the sentence (all dressed up with no one to modify), the subject that we originally deleted (i.e., “the detective”) must now reappear *immediately after the comma*. Thus Condition 2 is that the subject of the “entering” action must be the first noun to appear after the comma:

Condition 2: Entering the room quickly, *the detective* found the corpse.

In other words, “the detective” in “the detective found the corpse” is not a new subject at all; instead, it is the subject we deleted from the underlying deep structure sentence. In English the writer must always ensure that the deleted subject reappears as the subject of the final independent clause.

From this angle, avoiding dangling modifiers is simple: as long as you always meet these two conditions, you will have no dangling modifiers in your sentences. Yet dangling modifiers still appear in articles by writers whose grammar is otherwise correct—because they use the passive voice. The problem is that, as the previous chapter explained, the passive voice uses a derivative subject (an object in disguise) rather than a true subject (an active subject). Whenever a writer persists in following an introductory modifying phrase with a passive voice construction (e.g., “the corpse was found”), that writer will continuously create dangling modifiers.

Underlying the passive voice problem is the overriding rule of English grammar that every subject must have a verb and every verb must have a subject. What many writers do not realize is that “verb” in this case also includes verbals. As defined in Chapter 2, *a verbal is a verb form*—infinitives such as “to [do]” or participles such as “[do]ing”—*that is not the main verb of the sentence*. A simple but critical rule rarely taught in English courses is that *every verbal must also have a subject and the sentence must include that subject*.

If we return to “entering the room quickly, the corpse was found,” we now see that the verbal “entering” does not have a subject. For the sentence to be accurate, the true subject of both “entering” and “found” must be in place, in the active voice:

Entering the room quickly, *the detective* found the corpse.

The same rule that applies to modifying phrases using participles (e.g., “entering”) also applies to modifying phrases using infinitives (e.g., “to enter”):

To enter the building, a badge is required.

When we apply Condition 1 (that a comma must follow an introductory modifying phrase), we see that this sentence indeed meets that condition. Condition 2, however, is that the first noun following that comma must be the subject that did the action (in

this case, the *entering*). The noun following the comma is “badge.” Can a badge enter a building by itself? How? With wings—or on little feet, like a mouse? As a badge cannot enter a building by itself, the sentence thus fails to meet Condition 2. Again, the only way of eliminating the dangling modifier problem is for the writer to rewrite the sentence, using the active voice and adding the correct subject:

To enter the building, employees must have badges.

To enter the building, one needs a badge.

To enter the building, visitors have to have badges.

To enter the building, you need a badge.

Only the writer can know who the subject is; therefore, only the writer can make clear who needs a badge. Otherwise, despite our seeing sentence structures such as “to enter the building, a badge is required” in professional journals (and therefore believing that they are clear and correct), we will always be guessing at or assuming the writer’s meaning, without ever knowing whether we are right.

Given the problems that the passive voice creates, why do some writers continue to use it as much as they do? Their habit most likely stems from an old-fashioned academic style of writing in the passive voice to avoid the use of the then-dreaded words “I” or “we.” Not being allowed—or, at best, not encouraged—to write in the active voice leads writers to combine introductory modifying phrases with passive voice independent clauses. The result? Dangling modifiers. Yet a quick survey of most journals reveals that both “I” and “we” are in common use to varying degrees. Indeed, some journals (both British and North American) specify in their submission guidelines that they want their contributors to write exclusively in the active voice.

You can avoid dangling modifiers by taking one of two (or both) approaches to sentence editing. The first is to meet Conditions 1 and 2; the second is to make sure that you follow all introductory modifying phrases with independent clauses in the active voice.

With these guidelines in mind, we can return to the three sentences presented earlier in this section:

Using occupational segregation, the gender wage gap is decomposed into an intra-occupational part and an inter-occupational part. [*Who* is doing the *using*?]

Turning to the three-year transition probabilities in Table 4, quite a few differences are found. [*Who* is doing the *turning*?]

The discussion in the previous sections can be extended to *include* several complicating factors. [*Who* is doing the *including*?]

In the first two sentences, a passive voice sentence follows the introductory modifying phrase. To eliminate the dangling modifier, the writer needs to convert the passive voice to the active voice:

doing the *comparing*, but the reader is the one who is supposed to be *paying attention* to the table. Not surprisingly, the writer needs to rethink this sentence from the beginning:

Better: *The amounts on the right side of Table [3] allow us to compare the social backgrounds of students in different fields of study.*

or

To compare the social backgrounds of students in different fields of study, I used the amounts on the right side of the table.

Both of these rewrites have done away with the weak “it is important” phrase. The first rewrite eliminates the introductory modifying phrase and reframes the entire sentence, with “amounts” as the subject and “allow” as the verb that lets either the multiple writers or the writer-plus-reader do the comparing. The second rewrite keeps (and prunes) the introductory modifying phrase but reframes the independent clause. This time, the subject is “I” (the writer), and the writer is describing the way in which he or she used the “amounts” to do the comparing.

The following sentence illustrates a dangling modifier with a similar “it” problem:

Wrong: *The data set on employers and employees makes it possible to analyze the correlation between the previous workplace characteristics and the risk of becoming long-term unemployed.*

[Who is doing the *analyzing*? And who is doing the *becoming*?]

Better: *The data set on employers and employees allows us to analyze the correlation between the previous workplace characteristics and the risk of *an individual's becoming* long-term unemployed.*

or

*Using the data set on employers and employees, I can analyze the correlation between the previous workplace characteristics and the risk of *an individual's becoming* long-term unemployed.*

In the previous two sets of sample sentences, I use “better” rather than “right,” as the dangling modifier creates such uncertainty that no one but the original writer can know which version is correct. For this reason I again stress the importance of carefully editing your own writing before showing it to a native speaker or a professional copyeditor for a final editing. Even they are subject to Murphy’s Law; they, too, can misunderstand your sentence and rewrite for the meaning that you did not intend.

Rewriting with participial phrases

Participles are verbals using “-ing” (e.g., *demonstrating, analyzing*). Participles differ from gerunds—verbs plus “-ing” acting as nouns, as in the sport called “skiing”—because participles retain the action-related attributes of a verb. The same guidelines for rewriting infinitive phrases apply here. If you can, either keep

the participial phrases at the beginning of the sentence or move them there, while converting the passive voice to the active. If not, reframe and rewrite the entire sentence.

Wrong: *A large and growing literature estimates the elasticity of reported income *using tax return data*.*
[Who is doing the *using*?]

Right: *Using tax return data, an increasing number of researchers are estimating the elasticity of reported income (references).*

Wrong: *Studying our sample of 25 schools, the coefficient of correlation at the school level is lower than expected.*
[Who is doing the *studying*?]

Right: *Our sample of 25 schools shows that the coefficient of correlation is lower than expected.*

This rewrite deletes “studying” and frames the sample itself as the subject. For this sentence, using “studying our sample of 25 schools, we find...” is not as helpful a rewrite as the one given, even though “we” is always acceptable for multiple authors. Nonetheless, the fewer the self-referential comments, the better. Here, using “we” would focus the reader unnecessarily on the writers, rather than on the findings.

Wrong: *Applying this new methodology to the analysis of apparently uninformative interview data, insight into local discursive practices is created.*
[Who is doing the *applying*?]

Right: *Applying this new methodology to the analysis of apparently uninformative interview data, we gain insight into local discursive practices.*

or

Applying this new methodology to the analysis of apparently uninformative interview data yields insight into local discursive practices.

The second rewrite takes a new approach, one that is stylistically sophisticated. It converts the modifying phrase with the participial “applying” into a noun clause, making “applying” a gerund (i.e., a verb plus “-ing” acting as a noun). Thus the gerund phrase “applying this new methodology to the analysis of...interview data” is now the *subject* of the sentence—and “yields” is the verb that goes with it.

Another problem with modifying phrases using participles arises when these phrases come at the end of a sentence, creating even more confusion about who is doing what:

Wrong: Their conclusion is that disregarding interaction terms may lead to a potential misspecification, hence producing a bias when *estimating* the effects of this kind of investment on productivity growth.
[Who is doing the *estimating*?]

The writer cannot merely turn this sentence around, starting with “estimating,” because the sentence is describing a cause-and-effect relationship. But to whom is “estimating” referring—the “they” mentioned at the start of the sentence, or all researchers in the field? And how is the reader to know? Two possible rewrites follow:

Right: Their conclusion is that disregarding interaction terms may lead to a potential misspecification, hence producing a bias *when one estimates* the effects of this kind of investment on productivity growth.

or

Right: Their conclusion is that disregarding interaction terms may lead to a potential misspecification, hence producing a bias *in estimations of* the effects of this kind of investment on productivity growth.

The first of the rewrites specifies a person (“one”), thus implying any social scientist who performs these kinds of estimations. The second not only avoids making a choice but also eliminates the dangling modifier problem by turning the participial phrase into a prepositional phrase (i.e., with the verbal “estimating” becoming the noun “estimation”). Both versions work, and both exemplify good style.

Dangling modifiers—“based on” problems

Another extremely common dangling modifier problem relates specifically to the use of “based on,” a term that appears in almost every professional paper. Yet most academic writers use the term incorrectly—and create dangling modifiers while doing so. To use “based on” correctly, the writer needs to both understand and visualize the concept of *something being based on something else*. As the derivation of the term is one of two nouns—“base” (e.g., a base of operations) or “basis” (e.g., the basis on which a methodology rests)—good writers always conceive of “based on” in literal terms.

Literally, if I hold out my hand, palm upturned, and place a glass of water on it, then the base on which the glass is resting is my hand. The glass is thus temporarily “based on” my hand. The question now becomes whether I can extrapolate from this use of “based on.” Consider the first of two possibilities:

Based on my hand, I am ready to catch the glass if it begins to fall.

This sentence is clearly *incorrect*. I, a human being, am not “based on” my hand. The only thing (in this context) that is based on my hand is the glass. From this simple example comes an important lesson: *Never follow a “based on” phrase with a human subject*. For example:

Wrong: Based on our review of the findings, we agree that the researcher should reconsider his conclusions.
[“We” are not “based on” our review of the findings.]

Before considering how to rewrite this last example, let’s look at the second “based on” possibility:

Based on my hand, my fingers are ready to catch the glass if it begins to fall.

This sentence is also incorrect. My fingers are not based on my hand; they extend from it. The only thing in this context on which the glass can be based is my hand.

By now many of you are realizing that you have been using “based on” incorrectly (as have many of the writers whose published papers you have read). You may also be asking why you should bother learning to use “based on” correctly, given that native speakers often use it incorrectly yet have their papers published. The theme running throughout this book contains the answer: to compete with native speakers, you need to write as well as they do—or better. Your best strategy as a writer is to model your work on the best writers. Besides, help is at hand: rewriting your sentences to solve the “based on” problem is not as difficult as you may think.

Solving the “based on” problem

The writer has three possible ways of solving the “based on” problem. Let’s return to the example I just offered:

Wrong: Based on our review of the findings, we agree that the researcher should reconsider his conclusions.

The first of the three possible solutions calls for the most linguistic sophistication. It demands that the writer name specifically what is “based on” “our review of the findings”:

Right: Based on our review of the findings, *our decision is* that the researcher should reconsider his conclusions.

or

Based on our review of the findings, *our position is* that the researcher should reconsider his conclusions.

In each of these rewrites, the writer chooses the right word to specify what is actually based on what. However, as finding the perfect word to follow “based on” is not always easy, other approaches are available.

The second possible solution is to keep the “we” in the independent clause and specify exactly what “we” did:



Right: *After reviewing the findings, we agree that the researcher should reconsider his conclusions.*
or

After having reviewed the findings, we agree that the researcher should reconsider his conclusions.

What did we do with the findings? We *reviewed* them. By converting the “based on” phrase into a modifying phrase with a participle, the writer can not only keep “we” but also maintain the straightforward momentum of the original sentence.

The third possible solution is a shortcut that will work in most sentences that use human beings as the subject. This solution simply replaces “based on” with “given”:

Right: *Given our review of the findings, we agree that the researcher should reconsider his conclusions.*

An example of when “given” will not work is the following:

Wrong: Based on written material from Spain, she suggests that the field of consumption has become both politicized and morally and culturally invested.
[“She” is not based on written material....]

“Given” will not work here, because the reader might mistakenly believe that “she” was “given written material,” i.e., that somebody handed it to her or sent it to her as a gift. In this and similar cases, the writer has to apply the second solution and find the right verb with which to do it:

Right: *Drawing on written material from Spain, she suggests that the field of consumption has become both politicized and morally and culturally invested.*
or

Using written material from Spain, she suggests that the field of consumption has become both politicized and morally and culturally invested.

Here is a final example of a poor “based on” sentence in need of correction:

Wrong: Based on modern theories of endogenous innovation and growth, technology transfer is seen as a course of productivity growth for less technologically developed countries or industries.
[What is based on “modern theories of...”?]

No matter how hard the writer tries, he or she will not be able to make “based on” work for this sentence. Upon making this discovery, the writer should toss out “based on” and reframe the sentence. Either of these rewrites will work well:

Right: *According to modern theories of endogenous innovation and growth, technology transfer is a course of productivity growth for less technologically developed countries or industries.*
or

Modern theories of endogenous innovation and growth describe technology transfer as a course of productivity growth for less technologically developed countries or industries.

The choice is yours: either use “based on” correctly or replace it.

Dangling modifiers revisited

Ultimately, dangling modifiers hurt the writer’s credibility, because they cause at least one of the following problems:

- They force the reader to read the sentence more than once (and still remain confused).
- They make the reader guess at or make assumptions about the writer’s intended meaning.
- They exasperate the reader.
- They convince the reader that the author cannot write or think well.

Of the four, the last is the most dangerous. Remember, “writing is thought made visible.” By eliminating dangling modifiers, you increase the odds that editors and reviewers will find your thinking clear and your work both professional and publishable.

chapter 9

FROM GRAMMAR TO STYLE: Using Parallel Structure

Word-carpentry is like any other kind of carpentry: you must join your sentences smoothly.¹

—ANATOLE FRANCE

The principle of parallelism in writing (what Strunk and White call “express[ing] co-ordinate ideas in similar fashion”) straddles the gap between grammar and style.² While using parallel structure—for words, phrases, clauses, sentences, paragraphs, and even sections of a paper—is definitely part of good English grammar, it also constitutes an important part of the category of good English style. Not using parallel structure, for a skilled writer in the Anglo-American rhetorical tradition, is unthinkable.

Two or more words, phrases, concepts, etc., are considered parallel when they occupy grammatically and semantically parallel (or equal) positions within a sentence, paragraph, or larger piece of writing. For example, if a sentence has two parallel verbs (e.g., connected by “and” or “or”) and the first verb is an infinitive (“to [do]”), then the second verb must also be an infinitive. In the sentence “the reviewers liked the paper’s abstract and introduction,” both “abstract” and “introduction” are in the object position. They therefore hold parallel (equal) positions within the sentence. For the sentence to have proper parallel structure, the two words must also be in the same grammatical form—and they are: both are nouns.

The same principle holds true for all other parts of speech, as well as for much longer phrases and clauses, extending into entire paragraphs, subsections, and sections of a paper. This chapter analyzes and explains the strategy of using parallel structure for two purposes: first, as always, to make your writing clear; and, second, to strengthen both the style and the organization of your argumentation.

The primary purpose of writing parallel ideas in parallel structure is to maximize the ease of absorption on the part of the reader. Just as a song of many verses, with a common refrain between each, can easily lead a listener to begin humming or singing along, parallel structure sets up a rhythm that allows the reader to easily absorb a long or complex series of information. Paying attention to parallel structure is part of paying attention to the psychology of reading. In the English linguistic community, all good writers use parallel structure—and all readers expect it.

The four most common problem areas for parallel structure within sentences involve meaning, grammar, or both. These four areas are (1) parallel words and phrases, (2) lists where one or more of the items may not belong, (3) vertical lists that complete an initial part of a sentence, and (4) short lists connected by correlative conjunctions (e.g., “either...or”). This chapter briefly introduces these four problems before examining more complex types of academic sentences.

Parallel words and phrases

Whenever two or more items are in parallel positions, whether “horizontal” within a sentence in a paragraph or “vertical” in a bulleted list, the principle of parallel structure applies. Here are some examples of good parallel structure in a series of three or more:

All individuals in the sample are in either the unemployed, low-wage, or high-wage group.

All individuals in the sample are in either the unemployed group, the low-wage group, or the high-wage group.

All individuals in the sample are either unemployed workers, low-wage workers, or high-wage workers.

While each of these sentences presents the same information slightly differently, all use correct parallel structure. The first uses three adjectives (unemployed, low-wage, high-wage) to modify “group.” The second uses three similarly structured noun phrases (the unemployed group, the low-wage group, the high-wage group) in the same grammatical position. The third has the same structure as the second, using different words (unemployed workers, low-wage workers, high-wage workers)—and thus subtly changing the emphasis.

By contrast, consider the following sentence (better yet, read it aloud, to hear it): “I like swimming and to jog.” This sentence both looks wrong and sounds wrong (most readers hear words in their minds as they read). The problem is that while “swimming” and “to jog” are both objects of the verb “like,” they are not in the same grammatical form. “Swimming” is a gerund (a verb plus “-ing” acting as a noun) and “to jog” is the infinitive form of the verb. Thus the sentence lacks parallel structure. Both its grammar and its style are unacceptable. Instead, the writer should use either “I like swimming and jogging” or “I like to swim and (to) jog.” (The second “to” is optional in such a short sentence.)

I chose this very nonacademic sentence to introduce problems with parallel structure because the structural faults of simple sentences are obvious. After a few more relatively simple examples, the sentences begin increasing in complexity, the better for you to grasp the full range of the uses and abuses of parallel structure.

Parallel meaning

One aspect of parallelism has to do with meaning. Having three parallel words—whether in a sentence or on a vertical list—that are all nouns, all “-ing” verbs, or all prepositional phrases is correct *only* if all three belong on the same list. Grammatical parallelism in itself is not always enough.

Take, for example, the series “dogs, cats, and poodles.” While all are nouns, the first two are generic nouns, whereas the third is a specific noun within one of those generic categories. Therefore, the list is not properly parallel. The writer must decide whether to write “dogs, cats, and birds” or “poodles, water spaniels, and golden retrievers.” The writer may also choose to make only dogs and cats parallel and reframe “poodles” into a different part of the sentence, e.g., “although he likes all cats and dogs, he is especially fond of poodles.”

Sometimes, which words or concepts are parallel with others escapes the writer’s initial notice. In lists, the missing word or phrase often turns up in a sentence beginning with *also*. One never begins an English sentence with *also* but rather with *in addition, additionally, moreover, or furthermore*. A sentence beginning with *also* is almost always a sign of a first draft, indicating that the information following *also* belongs in the previous sentence:

Poor: We need coffee and tea for the meeting. Also we need water.

Correct: We need coffee, tea, and water for the meeting.

Parallel sentence completion in lists

In lists, whether vertical or horizontal (i.e., in a sentence within a paragraph), every listed item must be in the same grammatical form. If the first item on the list is a complete sentence, then all items that follow must be complete sentences. If the first item begins with an “-ing” verb, then all of the following items must begin the same way.

Often the items on a list are continuations of the initial part of one sentence. A very simple example is the following:

All good papers in the social sciences must have clear writing, logical organization, and complete information.

Each of the three items is an adjective followed by a noun, and each of these adjective-noun combinations completes the meaning of what these papers *must have*. The sentence reads smoothly for both meaning and style, signaling the reader that the writer is a good thinker who can organize his or her ideas well.

The next sentence, however, is still in the first-draft stage:

The municipality is legally obligated to:

- Conduct a personal interview about the individual’s CV to check

whether it contains all relevant information, and decide how to support the individual’s job search;

- The personal interview should be held no later than one month after the individual registers with the public employment services;
- Assist the individual in placing his or her CV in the job bank.

Leaving issues of capitalization and punctuation aside (especially as both are matters of style and differ from journal to journal), we have at least one clear problem: while both the first and third bulleted items (*conduct* and *assist*) complete “obligated to,” the second does not. As it is not parallel with the others, it sets the grammar of the sentence completely awry. It is, in a word, unacceptable. (However, the parallelism within the first bulleted item—“to check...and to decide”—is correct.)

A properly parallel rewrite might thus be:

The municipality is legally obligated to:

- Conduct a personal interview about the individual’s CV to check whether it contains all relevant information, and decide how to support the individual’s job search;
- *Conduct that interview* within one month of the individual’s registration with the public employment services;
- Assist the individual in placing his or her CV in the job bank.

Of course, while editing the sentence for parallel structure, the good writer also does all necessary pruning, as well as making any other editorial changes. Thus, in the second bulleted item, “no later than one month after” is now “within one month of.”

This sentence was easy to fix because two of the three listed items had a recognizable structure to which the writer or an editor could adapt the one that was not parallel. But what about this next sentence?

Site acquisition issues include the lack of suitable sites, rejecting sites submitted for departmental review, site or design mitigation’s being needed, and land purchase problems.

In this sentence, each of the four listed items is in a different grammatical form. When you encounter this kind of problem, whether in your own writing or that of others, always consider whether you can make every item begin with “to [do]” or with “[do]-ing.” If so, you can quickly create an easy rhythm for the reader. However, this sentence does not lend itself to that form: “the lack of suitable sites” cannot become “to lack...” or “lacking...” without sounding stilted or forced.

In such instances, your best approach is to take the most difficult grammatical form—in this case, “lack of suitable sites”—and make it the pattern for all the others. From an analytical standpoint, its structure is “noun (*lack*) + prepositional phrase

(*of suitable sites*).” Using this pattern for the other three items, you will end up with this rewrite:

Site acquisition issues include *lack of* suitable sites, *rejection of* sites submitted for departmental review, *need for* site or design mitigation, and *problems with* land purchase.

Reading these two versions aloud alerts your ear that while the first sounds horribly wrong, the second flows smoothly, making the writer look properly professionally organized. Furthermore, if the journal to which you plan to submit your article uses vertical lists (some journals do not), and if this information is extremely important, you can present it in a vertical list:

Site acquisition issues include:

- lack of* suitable sites
- rejection of* sites submitted for departmental review
- need for* site or design mitigation
- problems with* land purchase

Vertical lists have the psychological advantage of making the writer look more organized and professional than he or she does when delivering the same information in a sentence. Whenever you can, for material that you wish to strongly emphasize in a series of four items or more, use a vertical list. The one caution about this psychologically advantageous tool is to use it sparingly.

Parallelism with correlative conjunctions

Conjunctions are words that join parts of a sentence with other parts. Some are coordinating (e.g., *and, but*); some are adverbial (e.g., *however, indeed*); and some are subordinating (e.g., *although, if*).

The correlative conjunctions come in pairs: when you hear or see the first of the two, you know that the second will not be far behind. The most common correlative conjunctions are:

either	...	or
neither	...	nor
both	...	and
not only	...	but also

Because correlative conjunctions show the relationship between parallel items, the writer must always double-check for perfect parallel structure when using them. If the *either* is in front of a noun, then the *or* must be in front of a parallel noun; if the *neither* is in front of a past tense verb, then the *nor* must also be; and so on. The word(s) following a correlative conjunction must always be parallel, so that the reader can understand precisely what the writer is comparing. Thus the writer must first make clear in his or her mind, and then on the page, what two things or actions are in relationship with one another.

But for some reason that I have yet to fathom, first-draft writers always put the second of the two (*or, nor, and, but also*) in the correct place, while putting the *either, neither, both, or not only* helter-skelter in the sentence, almost as if not thinking.

Wrong: She *not only* reviews articles in anthropology *but also* in ethnography.

In this sentence, the *not only* is in front of a verb (*reviews*), whereas the *but also* is in front of a prepositional phrase (*in ethnography*). The question is whether the writer intends to compare two actions or two fields. While the *not only* before “reviews” sets the reader up to expect a comparison of two actions, the sentence has only one verb but two fields of study. In this case, the reader can probably figure out that the sentence should read:

Right: She reviews articles *not only in anthropology but also in ethnography*.

Nonetheless, analyzing and correcting poorly written sentences should never be the reader’s job. The writer must fix all of these problems before submitting his or her paper to a journal. One of the main reasons is to avoid giving the editor or reviewer two ways of interpreting the sentence, especially when each is potentially accurate:

Poor: We must ensure that the staffing pattern includes individuals not only with academic degrees but also those that have business experience and a demonstrable sensitivity to our particular kind of client.

This sentence places *not only* in front of a prepositional phrase (*with academic degrees*) and *but also* in front of the pronoun *those* (i.e., *individuals*). This lack of parallelism forces the reader to decide whether the writer meant to suggest two types of people or one type of person with two kinds of qualifications. If the writer does not make the sentence perfectly parallel for his or her intended meaning, the interpretations that the reader may give the sentence will be very different indeed.

If the reader chooses to put both *not only* and *but also* in front of *with*, the sentence will stress hiring individuals with two sets of qualifications:

We must ensure that the staffing pattern includes individuals *not only with academic degrees but also with business experience and a demonstrable sensitivity to our particular kind of client*.

But if the reader chooses to put both *not only* and *but also* in front of *individuals*, the sentence will emphasize hiring two very different types of people:

We must ensure that the staffing pattern includes *not only individuals with academic degrees but also those with business experience and a demonstrable sensitivity to our particular kind of client*.

Simply moving the *not only* or *either* to a different place in the sentence will not suffice for the more complex sentences most often found in professional papers. For these sentences, the writer has to rethink what he or she means, using different

words—and possibly a very different sentence structure. The next section deals with these kinds of parallel problems.

The need to rethink

In a book dealing with grammar (whether framed as rules or as a writing strategy), readers reasonably expect to find both problem sentences and clear, well-defined solutions to those problems. But in the real world of self-editing, many first-draft sentences defy simple solutions. In these instances, the writer has to rethink his or her meaning and rewrite the sentence very differently indeed. The following sentence illustrates this point:

Poor: It is assumed that the unobserved individual factors such as ability or earning capacity that affect wages are the same as the ones that affect the planned retirement age by leading to e.g. increased motivation and enjoyment of working life.

What is parallel with what in this sentence? After one or two readings, two sets of parallel concepts emerge: “factors” and “ones” (i.e., factors), and “such as” and “e.g.” Given two sets of parallel concepts that need to be kept distinct from one another, a good writer will often use parentheses to set off the examples from the main points. He or she then needs to consider what goes where. For instance, the example “such as ability or earnings capacity” belongs after “wages,” not after “factors.”

After reading this sentence several times, I rewrote it as follows:

Better: I assume here that the unobserved individual factors affecting wages (such as ability or earning capacity) are the same as those affecting the planned retirement age (such as increased motivation and enjoyment of working life).

or

My assumption is that the unobserved individual factors that affect wages (e.g., ability or earning capacity) are the same as those that affect the planned retirement age (e.g., increased motivation and enjoyment of working life).

But wait—perhaps these rewrites are not what the writer intended. Perhaps the writer meant to show cause and effect:

Because both the unobserved factors affecting wages (e.g., ability or earning capacity) and the factors affecting the planned retirement age lead to outcomes such as increased motivation and enjoyment of working life, I assume here that all these factors are the same.

This troublesome sentence exemplifies what happens when the reader struggles with an unclear sentence. Ironically, when the very writers of such first-draft sentences

take the academic writing seminar and hear the other participants’ interpretations and rewrites of their sentences, they, too, begin to wrestle with their own sentences. They soon realize either that they no longer know what they meant to write or that what they meant to write is entirely different from what they wrote. I included this last sentence—with no clear interpretation and without its creator present to explain his or her intention—to illustrate the importance of double-checking your writing for parallel structure. *That we know what we mean when we write a sentence is never enough:* every sentence must be so clear that it offers the reader only one meaning.

The rest of the examples in this section will follow the usual pattern of “poor” and “better”; that is, they will all have reasonable solutions, and accompanying each will be a different approach to solving the parallel problem.

Rethinking vocabulary

Sometimes not only the listed items but also the introductory words need changing:

Poor: This solution must have the properties of restoring missing money, recovery of the new investment, and strong price-based performance incentives.

The most obvious problem here is the lack of a parallel style for the three items. But a closer look at the introductory part of the sentence reveals that “have the properties of” is not the appropriate introduction for the list. Changing the introductory verb phrase to “be able to” or “to help [somebody]” and converting the list into infinitive phrases allows the writer to say what he or she means:

Better: This solution *must be able to restore* missing money, *recover* the new investment, and *provide* strong price-based performance incentives.

or

This solution *must help [somebody? some organization?] to restore* missing money, *recover* the new investment, and *provide* strong price-based performance incentives.

Rethinking presentation style

While sometimes the problem is more grammatical than substantive, the writer still needs to change his or her wording without changing the meaning.

Poor: As explanatory variables in the models we include (i) a set of socio-economic variables such as educational level, marital status, dependent children and age; (ii) a set of job characteristics such as part-time work, union membership, labor market sector, and industry sector; and (iii) to control for the influence of the economic activity, we include variables for unemployment regions and yearly indicators.

The first two items follow the introductory verb “include” with the phrase “a set of....” But the third follows “include” with “to control for...”—a grammatically unacceptable, and certainly unparallel, choice of structure. Here the writers are both giving item (iii) and explaining their inclusion of it at the same time. Unless they also explain why they included items (i) and (ii), they cannot explain the third, because such an explanation is not parallel and therefore does not belong on that list.

Here are two possible rewrites, the second of which offers another way of including the explanation:

Better: As explanatory variables in the models, we include (i) a set of socio-economic variables such as educational level, marital status, dependent children, and age; (ii) a set of job characteristics such as part-time work, union membership, labor market sector, and industry sector; and (iii) *a set of variables* for unemployment regions and yearly indicators.

or

As explanatory variables in the models, we include (i) a set of socio-economic variables such as educational level, marital status, dependent children, and age; (ii) a set of job characteristics such as part-time work, union membership, labor market sector, and industry sector; and (iii) *a set of variables* for unemployment regions and yearly indicators (to control for those regions and indicators).

The use of parentheses at the end of the latter version shows the reader that the “controlling” modifies or explains only item (iii), not the entire list.

Rethinking the presentation of columns, tables, etc.

In paragraphs introducing or explaining tables and charts, readers in the Anglo-American rhetorical tradition expect both simplicity and repetition. They want each sentence of parallel ideas to appear in parallel structure, so that they can grasp the information quickly and easily. Of all the places where the writer might consider being stylistically creative by using different grammatical structures for each sentence, this kind of paragraph would be the worst of choices.

Poor: Table 2 is divided into three different sections. The first section, which is the two first columns, lists the OLS estimates of the relationships between twins and singletons in average scholastic achievement, with two different sets of specifications. The second section, columns three and four, shows the OLS estimates of the relationships between twins and the group of twins’ non-twin siblings, also with two different sets of specifications. Finally we have the “within twin-family” fixed effect estimations, where twins are compared with their own non-twin siblings and shared family factors and shared genetic endowments are held constant.

This paragraph introduces each of the three sections differently. Although it starts the second and third sentences with “the first section” and “the second section,” it also gives “which is the first two columns” for the first section and “columns three and four” for the second section. This lack of parallelism, especially in this kind of paragraph, is inexcusable. Moreover, the last sentence, for the third section, appears to have wandered off into new territory altogether. For a much more focused improvement, read on:

Better: Table 2 is divided into three different sections. *The first section (columns one and two) lists* the OLS estimates of the relationships between twins and singletons in average scholastic achievement, with two different sets of specifications. *The second section (columns three and four) shows* the OLS estimates of the relationships between twins and the group of twins’ non-twin siblings, also with two different sets of specifications. *The third section (columns five and six) shows* the “within twin-family” fixed effect estimations, where twins are compared with their non-twin siblings and shared family factors and shared genetic endowments are held constant.

Rather than being boring or dull, the pattern repetition in the three “section” sentences is extremely helpful to the English-speaking reader. The same principle holds true for the framing paragraph so common to the professional journal article—a paragraph that should be as concise, straightforward, and parallel as possible:

Poor: The structure of the paper is as follows. In section 2 and section 3 we describe the institutional setting and date, respectively. Our empirical strategy is laid out in section 4, and in section 5 we present the main results. Additional evidence and sensitivity analyses are presented in section 6. Section 7 presents concluding remarks.

Better: The structure of the paper is as follows. Sections 2 and 3 describe the institutional settings and give the [fieldwork] dates. Section 4 details our empirical strategy. Section 5 presents the main results, and section 6 offers additional evidence and sensitivity analyses. Section 7 concludes.

Never waste your time (or the reader’s) by being “creative” in such paragraphs. Their purpose is to give the reader an overview of the paper’s organizational or argumentative strategy—not to showcase the writer’s ability to use different kinds of sentence structure. Unless the journal to which the writer is submitting the paper uses only passive voice (see later chapters on journal analysis), this type of paragraph should be in the active voice, with no embellishment. The only exception is either (a) when journal guidelines explicitly tell prospective contributors not to write such

a paragraph, or (b) when the writer chooses to develop the information into a series of more detailed paragraphs.

Having a great many parallel elements

Just as too many cooks spoil the broth, having a lot of parallel elements puts great demands on a sentence: either it works perfectly, or it causes major confusion. The following sentence illustrates the challenge:

The first approach explains educational disadvantage and failure in terms of deficit, the second in terms of cultural differences, and the third approach examines the notion of failure as constructed.

Six parallel problems appear in this relatively short sentence:

- The word “approach” appears for the first and third items but not the second.
- Verbs (*explains, examines*) appear for the first and third items but not the second.
- The phrase “in terms of” appears for the first and second items but not the third.
- The first two items focus on “educational disadvantage and failure” (although the second does not explicitly use the phrase) but not the third.
- The first two items use “explains” as the verb (although, again, it is implicit in the second item) but not the third.
- The structure of the second item appears to be a shortened imitation of the first, whereas the third has a different structure.

To fix all of these elements—or to fix some and eliminate others—the writer must first decide whether he or she is comparing two things or three. In other words, is the writer positioning all three approaches as parallel, and therefore as belonging on the same list? Or is the writer contrasting the third item (about “the notion of failure as constructed”) with the first two (about “educational disadvantage and failure”)? Only when the writer has made that conscious decision can he or she begin editing the rest of the sentence. Thus the final overall sentence structure will be either:

Approach 1 does A, Approach 2 does B, and Approach 3 does C.

or

Whereas/While Approaches 1 and 2 do A and B, Approach 3 does C.

Another option for the second model is:

Approach 1 does A, and Approach 2 does B. By contrast, Approach 3 does C.

If the writer views all three as belonging on the same list, then three complete independent clauses become necessary:

The first approach explains educational disadvantage and failure in terms of deficit; the second approach explains them in terms of cultural differences; and the third approach examines the notion of failure as constructed.

or (pruning the unnecessary words)

The first approach explains educational disadvantage and failure in terms of deficit; the second explains them in terms of cultural differences; and the third examines the notion of failure.

However, if the writer decides to contrast the first two items with the third, then a new stylistic option opens up—one that the writer unsuccessfully attempted in the first draft. This style option, which the next sentence will illustrate, works well for two clauses that are short and structurally similar, and that share one or more words in common:

She teaches political science; he, sociology.

This sentence is an abbreviated form of two parallel independent clauses: “She teaches political science. He teaches sociology.” When such sentence patterns occur, the writer may omit a repeated word or phrase as long as he or she connects the two clauses with a semicolon and replaces the deleted word with a comma. Thus, in the case of the sentence with the three approaches, a writer comparing the first two to the third may present the first two as follows:

The first approach explains educational disadvantage and failure in terms of deficit; the second, in terms of cultural differences.

The comma now takes the place of the understood “explains educational disadvantage and failure.” A complete comparison of the first two to the third can take any of the following forms (or permutations thereof):

The first approach explains educational disadvantage and failure in terms of deficit; the second, in terms of cultural differences. By contrast, the third approach examines the notion of failure.

The first approach explains educational disadvantage and failure in terms of deficit, and the second explains them in terms of cultural differences, whereas the third examines the notion of failure.

The first approach explains educational disadvantage and failure in terms of deficit; the second, in terms of cultural differences. The third approach, however, examines the notion of failure.

As a language, English has sufficient flexibility for any number of styles to work—and work well. The trick for the writer is to pick one and use it correctly.

Seeing parallel structure as a jigsaw puzzle

Parallelism has a far reach. It encompasses not only parts of speech and their various forms but also active and passive voice. For example, the verbs in a list must be all in the active voice or all in the passive voice (although preferably active). The reach of parallelism also includes the organization and presentation of concepts. The best strategy is treating a sentence with parallel problems like a jigsaw puzzle: will this piece fit here? or that one? no? maybe this one over here? In other words, the writer will have to take the sentence apart, trying out different styles until he or she finds the one that works best. Sometimes, if the writer is lucky, other words in the sentence or vertical list will provide the necessary clues:

Poor: Respondents in the topmost quadrant are characterized as

- In favor of “weak” government
- Makes their own traditions

Respondents in the bottommost quadrant are characterized as

- Being attached to traditions
- Considering themselves religious

A glance at the first two bullets shows not only that they are not parallel but also that the second does not complete the initial part of the sentence. However, rather than immediately trying to rewrite them, the writer should check the second set of bulleted items for clues—and, sure enough, the third and fourth bullets both use “-ing” verbs. The writer now can save time by simply rewriting the first part to read:

Better: Respondents in the topmost quadrant are characterized as

- *Favoring* “weak” government
- *Making* their own traditions

In other cases, using pruning tools will provide the missing “jigsaw pieces” for clarifying a sentence:

Poor: First, it is assumed that fieldwork necessarily entails involvement in the life of the same group of people for a continuous period of time. Second, it is taken for granted that the obvious crux of ethnographic attention is represented by the common cultural ground that the people in question are supposed to share.

Better: The first assumption is that fieldwork necessarily entails involvement in the life of the same group of people for a continuous period. The second assumption is that the common cultural ground that the people in question supposedly share is the crux of ethnographic attention.

The rewrite, which eliminates the passive voice, focuses the reader’s attention on the two assumptions by framing them as assumptions.

Sometimes the writer needs to reverse the items on the list to prevent misunderstanding:

Poor: The organization of the group provided an effective framework for the sharing of knowledge and skills development.

By putting “sharing of knowledge” before “skills development,” the writer inadvertently implies that “sharing” applies to both knowledge *and* skills development. But as skills development is not something that any two people can share, reversing the two (so that the “of” phrase comes last) is the solution:

Better: The organization of the group provided an effective framework for *skills development and the sharing of knowledge*.

In sum, parallel structure straddles the divide between grammar (clarity) and style (sophistication). The ability to create parallel structure, particularly for complex concepts or material, distinguishes the amateur writer from the professional.

chapter 10

PUNCTUATING FOR CLARITY IN AMERICAN AND BRITISH ENGLISH

[English] is a language in which punctuation is particularly crucial.... [T]he other two languages I know—Russian and French—are not quite so prone to equivocation or double meaning. English is very condensed and exact...but those very qualities make possible sentences that can be read in two different ways, according to whether you insert or omit a comma.¹

—AYN RAND

If you aren't interested in punctuation, or are afraid of it, you're missing out on a whole kit of the most essential, beautiful, elegant tools a writer has to work with.²

—URSULA K. LEGUIN

If you think of punctuation as relatively unimportant, think again. Punctuation—from commas to quotation marks, from semicolons to dashes—serves a critical function in English. In writing, it is the only substitute for all the messages that the spoken word can convey through intonation, pitch, pauses, volume, sarcasm, humor, and gesticulation. Although perhaps an inadequate substitute for those nonverbal cues, punctuation nonetheless delivers those messages.

As a result of the total “writer responsibility” that characterizes writing in English, punctuation is crucial to the process of letting the reader know how one part of a sentence relates to another. The absence or presence of a comma in a particular position can not only change the meaning of a sentence but sometimes reverse it. In other instances, the absence of a comma tells the reader that *more than one* of a certain thing exists in the context of the sentence, whereas the presence of a comma in that same place would tell the reader that *only one* of that thing exists for that context.

For instance, in British English, in which writers often use “which” and “that” interchangeably for essential information, the two commas in the example “the article, which she read yesterday, was brilliant” tell the reader that “she” read only one article, and that her having read it yesterday is incidental. By contrast, the absence of

commas in “the article which she read yesterday was brilliant” tells the reader that she has read more than one article, and that the brilliant one is specifically the one she read yesterday. Given that the purpose of punctuation is clarity, follow the best advice of all good writers, which is to choose your punctuation carefully, never leaving it up to a copyeditor. As Ayn Rand notes, “For the purpose of clarity, it is advisable to know the purpose of your punctuation—to know what you want to separate from what.”³ This chapter will tell you how to do so.

Unfortunately for the European social scientist, one of the differences between US and UK English is punctuation. In general, US writers use more commas—especially to set off nonessential or “interruptive” words, phrases, and clauses—than do writers in the UK. But other differences exist as well. Part of the punctuation problem facing most European writers is that English style manuals differ even within countries. In addition, an American style manual from the early 1990s may now be nearly useless, as more recent editions reflect the increasing stylistic changes resulting mostly from continuing technological developments and partly from the inevitable tendency of languages to change over time.

In North America, two style manuals stand out. In Canada, the indispensable guide to good writing and editing in Canadian English is *The Canadian Style: A Guide to Writing and Editing*, 2nd Edition. In the US, of the many excellent style manuals—among them the *New York Times Manual of Style and Usage*, the *AP (Associated Press) Stylebook*, and the *U.S. Government Printing Office Style Manual* (helpful for US government terms, abbreviations, etc.)—the one with “canonical” stature is what editors commonly call “Chicago.” Its official title is *The Chicago Manual of Style: The Essential Guide for Writers, Editors, and Publishers*, 15th edition. (It is also available as the “Chicago Manual of Style Online.”)⁴

In the UK, *New Hart's Rules: The Handbook of Style for Writers and Editors* (R. M. Ritter, Oxford University Press, 2005) is the updated version of a classic reference work that was in print in England in nearly 40 editions over almost 100 years. It appears to be to UK English what *Chicago* is to US English. Oxford University Press also publishes other excellent style manuals (e.g., the *Oxford Style Manual*), and the *MHRA Style Guide* is in wide use as well.

In addition to style manuals, any US dictionary labeled “collegiate” will contain all the major punctuation rules. Nonetheless, to make finding these rules easier for you, this chapter contains the major US punctuation rules for commas, semicolons, parentheses, dashes, quotation marks, hyphens, and vertical lists. Following these rules is a section presenting the major differences between US and UK punctuation. However, even where that section suggests no differences, your wisest course lies in learning the rules and referring to whichever style manual you need. Above all, follow the journal submission guidelines.

One last introductory comment: some European social academics, unused to English style manuals, tend to treat punctuation loosely, if at all. But if a US journal says that its style manual is *Chicago*, you must make certain that everything from punctuation to capitalization and from spelling to the use of numerals is consistent with *Chicago*. The same holds true for UK journals that specify a particular dictionary or particular spellings (e.g., use “-ize” endings). Punctuation in English is serious business—and if you do not take the submission guidelines seriously, the editor is likely to treat your behavior as a lack of both professional courtesy and written English ability.

US Punctuation Guidelines

These are general guidelines, relying primarily on *Chicago*. To use them easily, you need the definitions of three types of conjunctions: coordinating, subordinating, and adverbial.

Coordinating conjunctions combine like words, phrases, or clauses.

and	or	for	so
but	nor	yet	

Subordinating conjunctions, as discussed in Chapter 2, make the clauses that follow them dependent:

after	before	so that	when
although	even if	that	whenever
as	even though	though	where
as if	how	unless	whether
as long as	if	until	which
as soon as	inasmuch as	what	while
because	since	whatever	why

Adverbial conjunctions—also known as conjunctive adverbs, transitional adverbs, or transitional words—introduce independent clauses:

accordingly	hence	moreover	still
besides	however	nevertheless	then
consequently	indeed	nonetheless	therefore
furthermore	likewise	otherwise	thus

Commas

Use the comma to separate independent clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction:

He does qualitative research, *but* he does not do quantitative research.

She studies nuclear families, *and* she studies extended families.

Their first drafts are much too long, *yet* they refuse to edit them.

[With very short clauses such as these, most style manuals allow the omission of the comma. However, such short sentences rarely occur in academic writing.]

[If “and” connects any other two things—two words, two phrases, or two dependent clauses—do not use a comma.]

Use the comma to set off a nonessential adjective clause:

Dr. Wilson, whose hands are becoming unsteady, should stop practicing dentistry.

This analysis, which I have been working on for weeks, is highly complex.

Use the comma to set off a nonessential appositive or appositive phrase (i.e., a noun or pronoun renaming the preceding noun or pronoun):

Been in the Storm So Long, Leon Litwack’s second book, won the Pulitzer Prize.

The Lincoln Memorial, an American landmark, attracts scores of visitors daily.

Use the comma to set off an introductory dependent clause:

When you get home, make my dinner. If you don’t, your goose is cooked.

[“Your goose is cooked” is an English saying meaning “you are in big trouble.”]

Use the comma to set off a nonessential dependent clause when it follows an independent clause:

The editor rejected the manuscript, because its argument was weak.

I will see you at 3:00 p.m., after the mail arrives.

But: I will see you today after the mail arrives.

[In English, neither reasons nor examples are essential. The difference between the second and third example is that, in the second, “3:00 p.m.” defines the time—so “after the mail arrives” is not necessary. By contrast, in the third example, “after the mail arrives” defines the time.]

Use the comma to set off an introductory prepositional phrase of four or more words, or an introductory phrase that you wish to emphasize:

According to the law, he is guilty.

In spite of his guilt, his friends will stand by him.

On the other hand, he should not count on them to post bail.

Omit the comma after very short prepositional phrases, unless the absence of the comma would force the reader to read the sentence twice:

On Friday they held the final planning session.

After four months the project remained at a standstill.

But: In short, books are useful to the children we are interviewing. [Without this comma, the reader is likely to first read “in short books,” then have to reread and reframe the sentence.]

Use the comma after all introductory adverbial conjunctions except *then* and *thus*:

Therefore, this form of analysis is incomplete.

Finally, during the 20th century, neutrality or membership in the western alliance was an issue for a number of years.

Use the comma to set off an interruptive (i.e., a nonessential word, phrase, or clause interrupting the flow of a clause):

We may, of course, come to a different conclusion.

He, however, can see only one side of the issue.

His inflexible attitude, they believe, is prolonging the negotiations.

Use the comma before the final coordinating conjunction to separate coordinate things or concepts in a series of three or more:

They had to remove all notepads, laptops, and coffee cups from the table.

Do not write articles containing squinting, misplaced, or dangling modifiers.

Use the comma before and after such expressions as *i.e.*, *e.g.*, *that is, namely*, and *for example only* if the break in continuity is minor (that is, a continuation of the clause): [For major breaks in continuity, see the semicolon rules that follow.]

She discussed her favorite American authors, i.e., Ursula LeGuin and Sherri Tepper.

Eight departments, e.g., procurement, personnel, and research, were involved.

[The meaning of “i.e.” (*id est* in Latin) is *that is*. If you think of it as meaning “in other words,” you will always use it correctly—to restate *exactly* what you just said, using different words. By contrast, “e.g.” comes from the Latin *exempli gratia*, meaning *for the sake of example*. In addition, as “e.g.” means *for example*, and “etc.”—from the Latin *et cetera*—means *and others* or *and the rest*, never use both for the same list. The best writers use “e.g.” to let the reader know immediately that examples will follow.]

Use the comma to set off addresses, titles, and dates:

She lived in Oakland, California, while attending UC Berkeley.

The Director, Research and Development Division, requested the proposals.

Our email of March 8, 2010, outlined our basic agenda.

[In the first two examples, the first comma takes the place of missing words:

“Oakland *in the state of California*” and “Director *of Research and Development*.” In the third example, the purpose of the first comma is to separate two numbers. If the numbers are already separated (8 March 2010) or if only one number is involved (March 2010), no commas are necessary.

[The following important principle explains the need for the second comma, the one after “2010” or “California”: *When you begin to set something off* (with one comma), *you must finish setting it off* (with a second comma).]

Use the comma for all Arabic numerals of four digits or more (depending on the journal style) to indicate thousands:

Despite a decrease from 95,000 long-term unemployed in 1996 to 68,000 in 2001, the long-term unemployed still make up 2.5 percent of the workforce.

Use the period, *not a comma*, for fractions: 2.5, 5.75, 11.2.

Semicolons

The semicolon functions as a weak period; in most instances, writers use it where a period would be grammatically appropriate, as in joining two independent clauses not connected by a coordinating conjunction. The semicolon is preferable when two independent clauses are so closely connected—e.g., by a cause-and-effect relationship—that the writer wants them within the same sentence.

For the first two rules that follow, you may use a semicolon or a period. However, keep in mind that if the two clauses you are connecting are very short, a period will make your writing look choppy or childlike. For the third rule, however, the semicolon is mandatory.

Use the semicolon to separate independent clauses not joined by a coordinating conjunction:

It has been a long day; let’s go home.

This is a rough draft; it is really only an outline of the major sections.

Use the semicolon to separate independent clauses joined by an adverbial conjunction:

I wish I could help you with the project; however, I am planning to be on vacation that week.

The tram broke down; therefore, she was late to work.

Use the semicolon to separate coordinate segments in a series in which the segments already have internal commas:

At the conference were engineers from the University of California, Berkeley, California; Rice University, Houston, Texas; and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Overview of comma and semicolon usage:

dependent clause	,	independent clause.
independent clause	,	nonessential dependent clause.
independent clause	,	essential dependent clause.
independent clause	;	independent clause.
independent clause	.	independent clause.
independent clause	;	adverbial conjunction, independent clause.
independent clause	;	[start] independent clause, interruptive, [finish] independent clause.
independent clause	,	coordinating conjunction independent clause.
long introductory prepositional phrase	,	independent clause.

Quotation marks

Use quotation marks to enclose spoken words (i.e., direct quotations):

“Thank you,” he said.

“Why,” she asked, “did you say that?”

Use quotation marks to distinguish words, sentences, or paragraphs that you are quoting verbatim from an original source:

The “unalienable Rights” specified in the US Declaration of Independence are
“Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.”

But if the quotation is used as a subject or as an appositive, omit the comma before the second quotation mark:

“There is no such thing as good writing, only good rewriting” is a saying usually attributed to early 20th century US Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis.

Use quotation marks to enclose the titles of all works that are complete but unpublished, e.g., papers, reports, and dissertations:

Have you read Reese’s report “Analysis of Conversion Potential of Cellulosic Feedstock for the Production of Gasohol”?

Use quotation marks to enclose the title of a published work that appears within a larger published work, e.g., an article within a journal or a chapter within a book. (For the names of the books or periodicals in which these quoted titles appear, use italics.)

A Collection of Essays by George Orwell contains such famous pieces as “Politics and the English Language” and “Shooting an Elephant.”

“The Church Versus the Mall” appeared in the May 2008 issue of the *Quarterly Journal of Economics*.

Use quotation marks to emphasize a word or phrase that is under discussion:

“Uninterested” and “disinterested” are not synonymous.

Use quotation marks to indicate an uncommon word or phrase, a misnomer (i.e., the wrong word), or slang:

American plumbers often call the toilet apparatus the “closet.”

Use quotation marks to enclose words or phrases being defined, even when these words or phrases are not preceded by “the term” or “the expression”:

The “net national product” (NNP) is the “gross national product” (GNP) minus an allowance for the depreciation of capital goods.

The term “functional illiterate” refers to someone whose reading and writing abilities are inadequate for the demands of his or her situation.

Use quotation marks to suggest irony in the use of a word or phrase:

After he bungled the job twice, we decided that we needed no more of his “help.”

[Be very careful not to abuse this rule. Too many “clever” words in quotation marks—like this use of “clever”—can destroy the professional tone of a paper.]

When quoting several paragraphs, place quotation marks at the beginning of each paragraph but only at the end of the final paragraph being quoted:

“

“

_____.
”
_____.”

Quotation marks with other punctuation

In American English, commas and periods *always* go inside the quotation marks, whether or not they are part of the quoted material:

“I don’t understand,” he said.

Although her ideas sound “off the wall,” they work.

All other major punctuation marks—semicolons, colons, question marks, and exclamation marks—go outside the quotation marks unless they are part of the quoted material:

“We Must Unmask the Maskable”; that was the first title of his article.

“Are you serious?” she asked.

Use an ellipsis—which consists of three periods with no spaces between them or on either side of them (...)—to show that you have deleted material from a quotation. If the ellipsis occurs at the end of a sentence, then a fourth period stands for the actual period of the sentence, and you will need to add a space after it before beginning the next sentence. If the deletion is from the end of the quotation, add a terminal punctuation mark—usually a period but sometimes a comma—to the ellipsis:

“The allegedly libelous article...was reported missing from the files.”

“The allegedly libelous article was reported missing....”

Colons

Use the colon to introduce a *formal* statement, question, or quotation. In such instances, begin the formal element with a capital letter. (In addition, use a capital letter after a colon for informal statements of more than one sentence.)

Use the colon to introduce a series or list of items within a sentence:

The five newly elected committee members come from northern European countries: Belgium, Denmark, Ireland, the Netherlands, and Switzerland.

She considers three types of crowd activities in her analysis: mass movements, student movements, and religious movements.

If, however, the list or series is preceded by “e.g.,” “namely,” “for example,” “that is,” or other such expressions, use two commas—not a colon:

The five newly elected committee members all come from northern European countries, namely, Belgium, Denmark, Ireland, the Netherlands, and Switzerland.

Use the colon to introduce a series of items on a vertical list when those items follow an independent clause:

The box of supplies includes the following:

- 25 workbooks
- 10 boxes of pens
- 2 dictionaries

Within a sentence, do not use a colon to introduce a series that is a direct object or complement of a verb or preposition in the introductory sentence:

The Industrial Revolution included capital accumulation, capital growth, redefinitions of social hierarchies, and changes in the distribution of income.

For vertical lists, you *may* use (depending on the journal) either a colon or no punctuation at all to introduce a series that is a direct object or complement of a verb or preposition in the introductory sentence. (See also “punctuating vertical lists” at the end of this chapter.)

The meetings took place in:

or

The meetings took place in
Iron County, Michigan
Yellow Medicine County, Minnesota
Sweet Grass County, Montana

You *may* use the colon to separate two independent clauses when the second clause explains, amplifies, extends, or illustrates the first clause. (The semicolon and the period, however, are in more frequent use in contemporary academic writing.)

The position he described sounded excellent: it would give me more money, greater responsibility, and a chance for promotion within eight months.

Use the colon after such terms as “the following,” “as follows,” and “these” when a list or series follows immediately or when the introductory statement would be incomplete without the items that follow. In addition, use a colon for such lists even when an anticipatory expression such as “the following” is not explicitly stated:

These are the tasks we need to organize: data collection, data evaluation, and data dissemination.

The building has three exits: one on the north side, one on the south side, and one on the west side.

Use the colon to separate the title and subtitle of a publication:

Papers in Southwest English IV: Proceedings of the Conference on the Sociology of the Languages of American Women.

Use the colon to separate the publisher’s name from the place of publication in a bibliography, endnote, or footnote (depending on journal style):

Schmidt, Garbi. *Islam in Urban America*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004.

Use the colon to separate the volume number from the page number(s) in a footnote, endnote, or bibliography (depending on journal style):

New England Journal of Medicine 27:137-158

Use the colon to separate parts of a citation (e.g., chapter and verse), to separate hours from minutes, and to express ratios:

Leviticus 7:8 10:40 a.m. 2:1

Parentheses and Dashes

The writer’s choice of when to use commas [,], parentheses [()], or dashes [—] is often difficult. While some specific rules apply to each, many of these same rules are riddled with exceptions. Most important is not to put any commas inside of another

set of commas, parentheses inside of another set of parentheses, or dashes inside of another set of dashes, because the reader will not be able to make sense of your meaning. Having the other two forms of punctuation as options—e.g., parentheses inside of commas, dashes inside of parentheses, commas inside of dashes—makes both the writer's and the reader's life easier. In general, use parentheses or dashes in sentences that already have so many commas that adding more would create too many for easy reading.

Stylistically, parentheses allow the writer to use a comma after the final parenthesis, to indicate the end of, say, a nonessential modifying phrase, whereas dashes offer no such option. The writer can also use two sets of parentheses within one sentence, whereas the only option for dashes is one set—or one dash alone before the final element of the sentence. The following example shows both principles at work:

Poor: To compare refined liquids—e.g., methanol and ethanol—with unrefined liquids—e.g., crude oil, shale oil, and syncrude—we used the following methodology:

In this version, the reader has to pay more attention to the writing than to the content. He or she has to decide which dashes go with what elements and where the “to compare” phrase ends.

Better: To compare refined liquids (e.g., methanol and ethanol) with unrefined liquids (e.g., crude oil, shale oil, and syncrude), we used the following methodology:

Dashes, however, have their own assets, as they give the writer more latitude for emphasizing material within a sentence—especially nonessential material.

Generally speaking, the major usage difference between parentheses and dashes is as follows: use parentheses for *essential* material that does not fit the grammar of the sentence; by contrast, use dashes when you wish to emphasize *nonessential* material. Both of these guidelines notwithstanding, exceptions exist, and you will soon see some overlapping between the two.

Parentheses

Use parentheses to enclose material that is not a grammatical part of the sentence but is still too relevant or important to omit:

The data (see appendix B) reflects the most recent three years of statistical analysis.

These challenges come mainly from immigration (including refugees), from Europeanization, and from the growing influence of a human rights discourse.

Use parentheses to enclose a nonessential part of a sentence when dashes would be too abrupt or emphatic, and when commas would be potentially confusing:

The entire project staff will meet three times a week (Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays) through August, September, and October or until the project is completed.

Use parentheses to enclose any explanatory item that is not a part of the statement:

Are you interested in subscribing to the Moscow (Idaho) *Idahonian/Palouse Empire News*?

[Never wait until the “next” sentence to tell the reader that this particular Moscow is in the US state of Idaho, because by then the reader will already be confused. Parentheses serve the purpose here of immediately identifying what the reader must know so as not to become confused.]

Use parentheses to enclose numbers or letters that designate specific items in a series within a sentence:

The analysis options have been (1) the need for two factors, (2) the use of primary component methods, and (3) Varimax rotation.

Use parentheses to enclose a numerical figure that is added to confirm a spelled-out number that precedes it:

You must return this form with thirty (30) days.

[These “repeat numbers” are most common in legal documents such as contracts.]

Use parentheses to enclose the first mention of an acronym that will afterwards replace the full phrase or title that precedes it:

Active labor market (ALM) policies constitute an important part of the European Employment Strategy (EES) on which this paper focuses.
[Do not introduce an acronym *unless* you plan to use it at least twice more within the same document.]

You *may* use parentheses to enclose expressions beginning with “that is,” “namely,” “i.e.,” or “e.g.” if you have a break in continuity greater than that for which you would use a comma or a semicolon:

Herbs and spices from almost every country (e.g., *shiso* from Japan, *zatar* from Jordan, and dittany of Crete) found their way into Lee’s kitchen.

When enclosing two or more paragraphs within parentheses, place the opening parenthesis at the beginning of each paragraph. Place the closing parenthesis only at the end of the final paragraph being enclosed. (Think twice, however, before placing that much material within parentheses. If so much material is relevant to your paper, why is it parenthetical?)

(
 _____.
 _____.
 _____.)

Do not use parentheses inside of another set of parentheses.

Wrong: In another paradigm, participation (as advocated by Adler & Adler (1987) among others) is the prime methodological tool.

Right: In another paradigm, participation (as advocated by Adler & Adler, 1987, among others) is the prime methodological tool.

or

In another paradigm, participation (as advocated by Adler & Adler [1987] among others) is the prime methodological tool.

or

In another paradigm, participation (as advocated by, among others, Adler & Adler, 1987) is the prime methodological tool.

Parentheses with other punctuation

When using other punctuation marks with the element in parentheses, place these marks *outside* the closing parenthesis:

Farm debt, which is one-half real estate debt (farm mortgage), is on the rise.

When using parentheses to enclose an independent sentence, place the period *inside* the closing parenthesis:

Muslims in the UK want to be recognized not as an ethnic minority but as a religious one. (Sikhs, for example, have such religious recognition.)

Two experts analyzed the data. (See appendix A.)

[*But*: Two experts analyzed the data (see appendix A).]

When a sentence within parentheses is part of another sentence, do not place a period at the end of the enclosed sentence and do not capitalize the first letter. (This rule holds true even when the sentence in parentheses occurs at the very end of the sentence enclosing it.)

He finally wrote up (she knew he would) his criticism of their decision.

Two experts analyzed the data (see appendix A).

Dashes

Use the dash (—) to show an *abrupt* change in thought or grammatical construction in the middle of a sentence:

We will—we must—settle the matter before the next committee meeting.

[This usage of the dash most commonly occurs either in transcriptions of informant interviews or in informal email correspondence.]

Use the dash to set off a nonessential modifier or parenthetical element containing internal commas:

The comprehensive program—which, the organizers believe, will assess the impact of current incentives and complete the cost-benefit analyses of those incentives—will be ready by the end of the year.

Use the dash to *emphasize* a nonessential modifier or parenthetical element:

Categorizing obesity as an epidemic implicitly assumes that an individual becomes “infected” by it—much like influenza—and thus is a condition for which the individual cannot be held accountable.

Use the dash to emphasize a nonessential appositive or to set off a nonessential appositive containing internal commas:

The union demands—increased benefits, a shorter work week, and longer vacations—were rejected by the state government.

Use the dash to enclose expressions beginning with “that is,” “namely,” “i.e.,” or “e.g.” if you have a break in continuity greater than that for which you would use a comma or a semicolon:

Herbs and spices from almost every country—e.g., *shiso* from Japan, *zatar* from Jordan, and dittany of Crete—found their way into Lee’s kitchen.

Use the dash before a summarizing clause in sentences that contain two or more referents to the pronoun that begins the summarizing clause:

Flooring, draperies, kitchen and bathroom fixtures, and appliances—*these* once were the household items of US manufacture so highly regarded by Japanese consumers.

When a question mark or exclamation point is necessary to a parenthetical element enclosed by dashes, use this punctuation mark before the second dash:

Johann conducted himself so well at the interview—he really surprised everyone, didn’t he?—that we now think he has a chance to get the professorship.

For indented quotations, whether at the start of a paper or a chapter, or within a paper, use the dash before the author's or speaker's name to indicate the source of the quotation (the last letter of the author's name should be right-justified with the quotation):

We see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation.⁵

—EDWARD SAPIR

Compounding Guidelines

The primary function of the hyphen (-) is to combine two or more words into one, creating either compound nouns (e.g., *father-in-law*) or compound modifiers (e.g., *long-term goals*). Its use varies not only among style manuals but also with changing times. Widespread computer use has led to either more words becoming hyphenated or more previously hyphenated words now being written as one, without the hyphen. Use of the hyphen can vary among journals, with one preferring the spelling “child care”; another, “childcare”; and yet another, “child-care.”

Moreover, compiling a new dictionary can take decades, so that it is already out of date at the time of publication. Fortunately, having style manuals like *Chicago* available online, with a website that allows viewers to post questions, gives the writer the most recent style preference. Using the most up-to-date style manual is essential, especially because new technologies are causing rapid change in both the language and some of its rules.

This section contains general guidelines for creating clarity. Nonetheless, be sure to check spellings in your journal of choice (or in its preferred dictionary or style manual) before submitting a paper. Never rely on the spelling software in your computer. These programs often contain inaccuracies, and they rarely appear to draw their data from the best dictionaries or most recent style manuals.

Compound modifiers

A compound modifier consists of two or more words combined to make a single adjective.

Hyphenate compound modifiers when they precede the noun to which they refer:

up-to-date data set
well-known methodology

Do not hyphenate compound modifiers when they follow the noun (unless a dictionary lists them as hyphenated):

a data set that is up to date
a methodology that is well known

In general, do not hyphenate two or more modifiers unless they act jointly to modify the noun that follows them:

The experiment must be conducted in deep-blue water.

[water of a color that is a very deep blue]

The experiment must be conducted in deep blue water.

[blue water that is also deep]

Do not hyphenate three-word modifiers if their first two parts are adverbs:

very well developed argument
very well worth investigating

Do not hyphenate a modifier that has a letter or a number as its second part:

type A personality
Channel 3 programming

Do not hyphenate a modifier that is inside quotation marks unless that modifier is ordinarily hyphenated:

“blue law” attitudes

“Self” words are hyphenated more often than not (e.g., self-serving). Check a dictionary for exceptions (e.g., selfsame, selfhood, selfish).

Some non-hyphenated exceptions are:

- Anglicized foreign phrases (often from Latin or Greek)
 - ad hoc committee
- Chemical terms
 - sodium chloride base
- Proper nouns
 - London traffic
- Modifiers that include an “-ly” adverb:
 - fully annotated article

[*But: a well-written report, because “well” is an adverb that does not use “-ly”*]

Compound nouns

A compound noun is a noun consisting of two or more words combined.

Hyphenate compound nouns that indicate the combination of two or more parts, functions, or qualities within a person or thing:

architect-engineer
city-state

Hyphenate all other nouns that consist of two or more words, including parts of speech other than nouns:

editor-in-chief
right-of-way

Hyphenate all adjective-noun combinations that create verb compounds or noun modifiers:

The editor always made her comments with a *red pencil*.
The editor always *red-penciled* the report.

In general, compounds with prefixes and suffixes do not take hyphens:

threefold
bimonthly

Some exceptions to this guideline are:

- Words that would be misread if they were not hyphenated:

re-sent (sent again, as opposed to “resent”)
re-posed (posed again, as opposed to “reposed”)
- Proper nouns preceded by *anti*, *mid*, *neo*, *non*, *pro*, and *un*:

anti-Semitic
mid-November
- Words with the prefixes *ex*, *self*, *quasi*, and *co*, or with the suffix *elect*:

self-regulating
president-elect

[Although common nouns joined with these prefixes are generally not hyphenated, check a good dictionary for exceptions.]
- Words that might be mispronounced if they were not hyphenated:

co-op
re-entrance

[This guideline, however, is not binding. For example, one US dictionary lists *reentrance*, *re-entrance*, and *reëntrance* as acceptable. If a word occurs frequently in the journal you choose, use the most common spelling that you find in it.]

A suspending hyphen carries a modifier over to the noun from which it has been separated. To avoid unnecessary repetition, use suspending hyphens when breaking up hyphenated words:

Is it a two- or three-page document?
They studied both high- and low-rent urban neighborhoods.

Hyphenating numbers—general guidelines

For numerical compounds, hyphenate all written numbers from twenty-one through ninety-nine (e.g., seventy-one, ninety-five).

When spelling out numerals, hyphenate fractions to separate the numerator from the denominator, especially when using the fraction as an adjective:

a three-quarter majority
one-half gallon of fluid

Hyphenate adjective compounds whose first part is a number:

12-kilometer relay
three-hour interview

For the use of fractions as nouns, authorities disagree. Some avoid hyphenation; some prefer it. Follow the style of the journal or publisher. Be consistent:

five eighths [or five-eighths] of a second
one third [or one-third] of the interviewees

If the fraction already contains a hyphen, do not use another hyphen to separate the numerator and denominator within a fraction:

forty-five fiftieths
eight one-thousandths

Punctuating Vertical Lists

Vertical lists are highly useful for displaying a long list of complex material that would make a “horizontal” sentence in a paragraph hard to read. However, some editors do not like vertical lists, which were once considered not properly academic. Skim a year’s worth of issues in your journal of choice to see whether it contains vertical lists.

If vertical lists will help the reader absorb complex information, use them (or put the information in tables, which have always been properly academic). In terms of the psychology of reading, a vertical list or table makes the author look more organized and professional. The same information, framed in ordinary sentences with commas or semicolons, carries less psychological weight. So use vertical lists to your advantage as necessary. As style manuals or submission guidelines may differ on the punctuation of vertical lists, always copy the style of the journal.

You may enumerate the items on a vertical list with letters or numbers. Such enumerations are useful if you plan to discuss or refer to any of these items later in the text. You may also use bullets (•), which infiltrated into academia from the advertising industry in the late 20th century.

When converting a long list in a horizontal sentence into a vertical list, remember to delete the “and” before the last item. In a sentence, this “and” alerts the reader that the next item will be the last one. By contrast, in a vertical list the reader can immediately see which item is last, so no “and” is necessary.

What follows are general guidelines, not hard-and-fast rules, for American English. The purpose of these guidelines is to help you see how even the punctuation of lists relates to both grammar and parallel structure.

Use a period after each of the numbers or letters used for enumeration:

- | | |
|----|----|
| 1. | a. |
| 2. | b. |
| 3. | c. |

If the items are independent clauses, place a period after each item.

After days of contention, the couple arrived at a compromise:

1. She would take out the garbage and the recyclables.
2. He would do the laundry.
3. They would alternate the shopping and the cooking.

If none of the items is an independent clause, use no periods at all:

The following words are commonly mispronounced and misspelled:

bruxism
leptorrhine
dysesthesia

For listed items that are not independent sentences but that grammatically complete the sentence, you may use commas, semicolons, or no punctuation at all. Only if you use commas or semicolons should you place a period after the final item. Otherwise, omit the final period:

After analyzing the third data set, the researchers agreed:

- that it contained information similar to the first two sets;
- that it was newer than the original set but older than the second;
- that it was too small to be useful.

After analyzing the third data set, the researchers agreed:

- a. that it contained information similar to the first two sets
- b. that it was newer than the original set but older than the second
- c. that it was too small to be useful

These two examples show that a number of permutations are possible for the same words. Some style manuals prefer a colon after the introductory half-sentence that

the list completes. Others do not. Follow the style preference of the journal. Above all, be consistent within the same document.

Some major differences between UK and US punctuation

Although many of the punctuation rules in the Anglo-American world are the same, noticeable usage differences exist. Following are some major differences between UK and US punctuation, primarily for the use of commas, quotation marks, and dashes. These guidelines, however, are general. For example, *New Hart's Rules* makes clear that while the “serial comma” (the one that Americans use before the “and” in a series of three or more items) is a matter of debate in the UK, it has been known as the “Oxford comma” for over a century. So in some instances these differences between UK and US English may exist only for those publications that do not follow the Oxford style. Thus, these guidelines notwithstanding, always be certain to use the style manual that a journal recommends.

On balance, UK English uses fewer commas than US English:

Comma before “and” in a series of three or more items:

US: We need ice cream, cookies, and cake. (comma before final “and”)

UK: We need ice cream, cookies and cake. (no comma before final “and”)

[However, when the series includes clauses or long phrases, instead of simple nouns or noun phrases, UK use recommends a comma.]

We spent the afternoon eating chocolate cookies, drinking coffee from Hawaii, and talking about everything but work. (comma after “Hawaii”)

Comma after an introductory phrase:

US: Despite the changes, we see.... (comma)

UK: Despite the changes we see.... (no comma)

US: Given the results of the second test, we conclude that.... (comma)

UK: Given the results of the second test we conclude that.... (no comma)

Comma use after “e.g.” “i.e.” and “namely”:

US: I like all kinds of chocolate, e.g., ice cream and cake. (comma)

UK: I like all kinds of chocolate, e.g. ice cream and cake. (no comma)

[Both, however, use a comma before the “i.e.” and “e.g.”]

US and UK style differ in their use of what Americans call “quotation marks” and the British call “inverted commas”:

Americans use double quotation marks; the British use single quotation marks:

US: Berger and Luckmann use the word “facticity” in their theory. (double)

UK: Berger and Luckmann use the word ‘facticity’ in their theory. (single)

US: “I don’t believe in mediation,” she said. (double)

UK: ‘I don’t believe in mediation,’ she said. (single)

[In the second example, both the US and the UK use the comma before the quotation mark, to separate the speaker from the quoted material.]

To show quotations within other quotations, Americans use single quotation marks inside of double quotation marks; the British use double quotation marks inside of single quotation marks:

US: “‘Facticity’ is a silly-sounding word,” she said.

(single quotation marks inside double)

UK: ““Facticity” is a silly-sounding word,’ she said.

(double quotation marks inside single)

[The British will often use single quotation marks for words or phrases within typical declarative sentences but use double quotation marks for actual quotations from, say, informants or cited authors. Check any UK or UK-style journal for its particular style.]

When quoting a word or a phrase inside an otherwise academic sentence (i.e., *not* inside an actual quotation), Americans put the comma and what they call the “period” *before* the final quotation marks. The British put the comma and what they call the “full stop” *after* the final quotation marks:

US: This “world of ideas,” in other words, applies to....

(comma before quotation marks)

UK: This ‘world of ideas’, in other words, applies to....

(comma after quotation marks)

US: We intend to build on the concept of the “world of ideas.”

(period before quotation marks)

UK: We intend to build on the concept of the ‘world of ideas’.

(full stop after quotation marks)

The US and UK differ in other forms of punctuation as well:

Americans use one long dash, without spaces, between words, whereas the British use a slightly shorter dash, with spaces, between words:

US: His idea—with which I disagree—is going to cause a problem.

UK: His idea – with which I disagree – is going to cause a problem.

Americans put periods after abbreviations such as Dr. and Ms.; the British do not:

US: Dr. Johnson attended the meeting.

UK: Dr Johnson attended the meeting.

Americans use *both* parentheses for enclosing enumerating letters or numbers within sentences; the British tend to use only the closing parenthesis. (The British are also more likely to use small Roman numerals rather than Arabic ones.)

US: The budget report is (1) badly written, (2) poorly organized, and (3) much too long.

UK: The budget report is i) badly written, ii) poorly organized and iii) much too long.

Americans do not put spaces around ellipses (“...”). The British do:

US: His behavior...caused great difficulty in diplomatic circles.

UK: His behaviour ... caused great difficulty in diplomatic circles.

Americans do not put parentheses within parentheses. The British do:

US: (For more details, see Thompson, 2004.)

UK: (For more details, see Thompson (2004).)

With punctuation as both a tool and a guide, you will be able to clarify your meaning at every turn of each sentence.

PART IV

ORGANIZATION AND ARGUMENTATION: Anglo-American Style

The last thing one knows in constructing a work is what to put first.¹

—BLAISE PASCAL

How do I know what I think until I see what I say?²

—E.M. FORSTER

In academic English, nothing is more important than the structure of the argument, because the way in which a writer organizes and presents his or her thinking, theories, methods, data, findings, and conclusions largely determines the success of the paper. Assuming that the subject and focus of a paper are appropriate for the journal, if the argument is logical and compelling but the writing less than perfect, most editors will offer the writer a conditional acceptance or a “revise and resubmit” option. But if the argument is weak and the material not well organized, a rejection is the more probable outcome. Thus the strategy of organizing and arguing according to Anglo-American rhetorical norms, which are based on Aristotelian logic, is critical.

That “writing is thought made visible,” as previously discussed, is more evident in the structuring of the overall argument than in any one section of a paper. How the writer envisions, frames, and presents the whole of the argument determines what the reader takes away from reading it. Thus the writer must not only argue “logically” (by Anglo-American standards) from his or her own standpoint but also know his or her audience well. The writer must anticipate all possible questions, skepticism, and counter-arguments and, as the “good guys” used to say in American 1950s television cowboy shows, “head ‘em off at the pass.”

Organizing starts at the level of the paragraph, which offers the reader a particular unit of meaning. The writer then moves from paragraphs to sections (each of which has a distinct role in Anglo-American argumentation) and then to the paper as a whole. What goes where, and how the writer goes about deciding what goes where, is the focus of this part of the book. The following three chapters cover paragraphing, organization, outlining, and Aristotelian argumentation as it applies to academic writing in English.

chapter 11

PARAGRAPHING: Creating Coherent Units of Meaning

The paragraph is a small box of sentences, making a whole shape that is at the same time part of another whole.... The paragraph...makes a sign for the reader; it alerts the reader to the part structure.... Paragraphs give signals and directions and help to connect writers with audiences.¹

—DONALD HALL AND SVEN BIRKERTS

The purpose of paragraphing is to give the reader a rest.²

—H.W. FOWLER

What constitutes a paragraph—and what specific weight a paragraph carries—depends on the rhetorical tradition within a linguistic community. For example, while in France a paragraph is a “division” of a piece of writing, presenting a “certain unity of thought,” the French rhetorical tradition does not differentiate paragraphs according to specific types.³ By contrast, the Scandinavian languages have only one word for both “paragraph” and “section.” That Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish do not differentiate between these two nouns signifies the paragraph’s relative lack of importance as a carrier of meaning in those languages.

Yet paragraphs have meaning for people, as anyone who has stayed up at night trying to read to the end of a chapter—or, at the very least, the end of a paragraph—knows. Even when returning later to the text, readers tend to go back a few paragraphs, to refresh their place in the reading. But they almost never stop reading in the middle of a paragraph.

In English, the paragraph is a complete unit of meaning. Just as an independent clause should express one thought, and a sentence either one or two (the latter if the two are clearly connected), a paragraph should hold and express *one* unit of meaning. This function is so precise that a complete English paragraph never expresses only half a meaning, nor does it tackle more than one subject. This precision returns us again to the psychology of reading in the Anglo-American tradition. Every reader educated in that tradition expects to be able to read each paragraph—and to mentally

digest all the information it presents—in one reading. If a writer in any way misuses this function (e.g., by making a paragraph too long), the reader will first be puzzled and then annoyed, eventually going into *MEGO*-reading (“my eyes glazed over”) or ceasing to read the piece altogether. For the reader, as Hall and Birkerts state in *Writing Well*, “[t]hose little indentations are hand- and footholds in the cliff face of the [paper].”⁴

Every writer of English must take paragraphing seriously. A quick look through the pages of this book, for example, will show you that I have consciously kept the paragraphs at a length that neither taxes the reader’s mind nor forces the reader to reread them for full comprehension.

Questions arise at this point: What is a “readable” length in English? Why should this length matter to anyone, especially non-native readers of English? And does this length differ in the US and the UK? This chapter will answer these questions, starting with a brief overview of the centrality of paragraphing to the Anglo-American educational process and using the US as an illustration.

Learning paragraphing at school

Children raised in English-speaking countries start learning paragraphing very young. Soon after we learn to write words and sentences, we learn to combine sentences into coherent paragraphs. Depending on the local school system, American children learn to write at least three or four types of paragraphs: narrative, descriptive, expository, and comparative or persuasive. The narrative paragraph relates a story or shows a sequence of events. The descriptive paragraph generally depicts a person, an object, or a scene. The expository paragraph gives factual information about someone or something, and may include definitions, directions, or instructions. The comparative paragraph either compares (shows similarities) or contrasts (shows differences) two people, things, processes, or ideas. If the writer’s intention is to make the comparative paragraph persuasive, then the paragraph uses a logical reasoning process to convince the reader that one of two ideas, theories, etc., is in some way preferable to the other.

When American students graduate from writing single paragraphs to putting them together into longer pieces, our model is the *five-paragraph essay*. However short the essay, its form follows the dictum “tell them what you’re going to tell them, then tell them, then tell them what you told them.” Although we always laugh when we use this expression, we also mean it, because it states a basic axiom of academic writing in English. Thus, as the Anglo-American rhetorical tradition is based on Aristotelian logic, that the basic American argumentative model is the five-paragraph essay is not surprising.

In this classic model, the first paragraph introduces both the subject of the essay and the position for which it will argue. Each of the following three paragraphs

gives a separate defense or argument for this point of view; that is, *every position or opinion must have at least three supporting arguments*, each of which must be different, not repetitive or derivative. The final paragraph, the fifth, concludes the essay by restating the original position (as put forth in the first paragraph) and showing the reader that the writer has proved his or her point—and how.

Whenever I mention to any American professional that my European colleagues have never heard of the five-paragraph essay, they all ask one or both of the following questions: “Then how do they learn to argue a point? How do they learn to write?” These spontaneous questions (puzzled, not critical) show the power of this model within the US branch of the Anglo-American rhetorical tradition. (Chap. 13 on argumentation will further expound on this theme.) Because writers in this tradition learn very young to conceptualize in paragraphs, we tend to paragraph almost unconsciously as we write our first draft. During the revision process, we re-paragraph only if we find that one is too long or does not cohere as a unit.

The teaching of writing in the UK treats paragraphing much the same. For example, the website of the Birkbeck Centre for Learning and Professional Development at the University of London, on its page for “Academic writing for undergraduates” “new to British university and college education,” states: “We will discuss fundamental aspects of the culture of British academic writing, such as writing in paragraphs....” Under “Outcomes,” “students will...have devised strategies for developing coherent arguments through a conscious awareness of the structures of a paragraph, the links between paragraphs,” etc.⁵

What makes a paragraph?

Educational strategies aside, what actually constitutes an English paragraph? The answer is *coherence*—the paragraph must *cohere* (from the Latin “to stick or cling”), must hold together naturally (and logically) as one meaningful unit. The coherent determiner is always the “topic sentence.” Simply defined, the topic sentence tells the reader what the paragraph will cover. In the social sciences, it is usually the first sentence and sometimes the second. The topic sentence is in essence the writer’s contract with the reader that the paragraph will discuss, include, explore, or otherwise cover what the topic sentence promised it would—and not suddenly start discussing something else. Examples of typical topic sentences are:

In the trial scheme, each group of 15 children had one full-time pre-school teacher and two part-time assistants.

[The reader expects to read more, or all, of the details.]

Other converts to Islam, however, insist on their “Spanishness.”

[Following a paragraph on Spanish converts (to Islam) who no longer feel Spanish, the reader expects to read—perhaps with interview excerpts—about those who still do.]

The results in Table 2 are in line with this paper’s argument.

[The reader expects to read findings and possibly a discussion of findings.]

This paper has some weaknesses that should motivate future research.

[The reader expects to read about both weaknesses and ideas for future research.]

Income inequality is not the only country-level variable assumed to influence the demand for redistribution.

[The reader expects to read about other variables “assumed to influence” the demand.]

One-sentence paragraphs are acceptable, provided that they have something strong to say. The following example, while unusually long, can stand alone:

If, in the nation-state era the struggle was a class one and centered on the question of possession and distribution of capital and the protection of private property rights, in a global era the struggle is over diversity and centers more on preserving one’s cultural identity and enjoying access rights in a densely connected, interdependent world.⁶

The rest of this chapter will present and explain everything you need to know about organizing, introducing, and limiting the length of English paragraphs. It starts, however, by offering you a challenge—to organize the following six sentences (which I have scrambled out of order) into a logical paragraph. Do not change any words. Just follow the linguistic cues that the sentences offer you:

1. The pressure gradient is said to be strong when the isobars are close together, and weak when the isobars are widely spaced.
2. This pressure difference is referred to as the *pressure gradient*.
3. The stronger the pressure gradient, the stronger the resultant wind.
4. The source of energy for the wind is the pressure difference between areas of high and low atmospheric pressure.
5. The pressure gradient is the rate of change in pressure with distance and acts at right angles to the isobars, or contours, on a weather map from high pressure to low pressure.
6. Wind is the circulation of air throughout the atmosphere.⁷

Even if you know nothing about either meteorology or paragraphing, the exercise is surprisingly easy. The sentence that frames the entire paragraph is No. 6, because the paragraph is about wind, and No. 6 defines wind—and thus is the topic sentence. But where does wind come from? What is its background or source? These questions lead to No. 4, which gives us the term “pressure difference.” We then know that the next sentence must be No. 2, which begins with “*this* pressure difference”—because

a “this” phrase must refer to something in either the same sentence or the one immediately preceding it. No. 2 ends with “pressure gradient,” leaving a choice between Nos. 1 and 5, both of which begin with it. The only choice here is No. 5, because (a) it defines the term and (b) it defines “isobars,” a word that would not make sense in No. 1 without the definition in No. 5. These choices lead us to No. 3, which elegantly wraps up the paragraph and returns us to where we started—with the wind.

Very few paragraphs are short enough and well-written enough for one person to take apart and another to put back together. Part of your strategizing as a writer of English is to learn to create paragraphs like this one about the wind. While few paragraphs need to end with a “wrap-up” sentence, all of them need to comprise sentences and ideas that flow easily, naturally, and logically into the next.

Paragraph length

When is a paragraph too long, and when not? The answer is complex, as length guidelines appear to depend more on the journal than on any other criterion. The chapter on analyzing journals for structure and language recommends finding average paragraph lengths or paragraph structures for each journal. Nonetheless, some general guidelines apply.

Length itself, and what makes a paragraph too long, is deeply enmeshed in the psychology of reading, which can differ even within a language, e.g., between fields such as mechanical engineering and philosophy. For example, Victorian writers used very long paragraphs, as they were then in style: Charles Dickens, for instance, often wrote 50-word sentences with 16 commas. To modern readers in the social sciences, such long sentences, bundled into long paragraphs, would constitute poor style. To complicate matters further, the advent of the computer and the rapid proliferation of related technologies in the late 20th and early 21st centuries have also affected paragraph length within the academic world.

The psychology of reading plays a large role in paragraph length in English. A paragraph must be tightly focused, and the reader must be able to absorb its contents in one reading, without needing either a break or a rereading. Therefore, giving someone too long a paragraph to read is much like handing someone a half a kilogram of steak on the end of a fork and saying, “Eat it in one bite.” Just as no one can eat and digest half a kilo of steak in one bite, let alone get it into his or her mouth, so a reader cannot mentally digest a very long paragraph in one reading.

Your best overall strategy is to consider 10 to 12 lines of type as your guideline for maximum paragraph length. Some readers find 10 or 12 lines too long; others, too short. But my teaching and editing experience shows that no one finds this length uncomfortably long or unprofessionally short. With such a length as your guideline, you can either shorten or lengthen your paragraphs as necessary, according to the style of the journal you choose.

Some country differences may also apply. On the one hand, US journals *tend* towards shorter paragraphs than UK journals. (Given the many exceptions, however, do your journal analysis—see chaps. 15–17.) On the other hand, many British journals use a pattern that reminds me of Morse code. The reader encounters two long paragraphs, then a very short one, then three long ones, then another very short one, then two long ones, etc. In other words, while British journals often have paragraphs that look overly long to the American eye, British writers intersperse those lengthy paragraphs with unusually short ones. If, as a writer, you find that copying this British style is difficult, then stick to the strategy of keeping paragraphs shorter, allowing a long one only if the journal does, and only if the material in that paragraph must remain together for coherence. In most cases, however, a very long paragraph has a natural breaking point, where a transition word such as “however” or transitional phrases such as “despite these successes” move the reader’s eye and mind easily from one paragraph to another.

In addition, you should consider shortening your paragraphs for working papers you are posting on a website. Conventional wisdom on reading online suggests that the longer the onscreen text, the less likely that someone will read it all the way through.

A final comment on length is that just as a writer needs to vary sentence structure, he or she needs to vary paragraph length. The British “Morse code” style meets that need very nicely.

Length, coherence, and topic sentences

The examples that follow involve issues of length, coherence, and topic sentences. The first is a paragraph that coheres in two ways: one, through its use of numbers; the other, through having every sentence involved in framing the paper’s overall structure:

In what follows, I first define the agonistic approach. Second, I define the resistance I met during fieldwork in the Hinterland, drawing on Adler and Adler (2002) and Bourdieu (1999), and discuss the limitations of these perspectives. Third, I develop the agonistic approach by reflexively embedding the interview situation into the ethnographic context and showing how this context conditions and limits positions for research participants, thereby setting the stage for potential agonisms between the researcher and field participants. Moreover, I point to ways—in the research process—of possibly constructing alternative positions for research participants. Fourth, I discuss the way in which the agonistic approach taps into—and moves beyond—approaches to qualitative interviewing from [three well-known refs.]. Finally, I sum up how the agonistic approach challenges qualitative research by offering a new lens for insight into the ways in which research relationships are parts of, and are formed by, everyday social processes and power relations, and I point to resistance dynamics in research as an excellent tool for this insight.⁸

While the paragraph is long, it appears in the introduction of a paper published in *Qualitative Inquiry*, which often publishes papers with long paragraphs. In addition, the sentences cohere stylistically, with active voice sentences and strong verbs (e.g., “I *define/draw on/discuss/develop/show/set the stage/point to/sum up*” and “the agonistic approach *taps into/moves beyond/challenges*”).

The next example is the first draft of an introduction to an anthology chapter entitled “Consumers without Money.” (Author Pernille Hohnen has graciously given her permission for the use of two of her original drafts.) Before you actually read the paragraph, make a short experiment: *glance* at it—do not read it, simply scan its length. As you do, be aware of how you *feel* (not think) about the prospect of reading it. (Even if you are comfortable with long paragraphs, length may not be what is at stake here.) I have underlined several sentences as reference points for later.

How does it feel to be poor in a society otherwise dominated by affluence? What kind of participation and what kind of choices are available to poor consumers? And more generally, what are the social consequences of the increased emphasis on consumption and consumerism for social marginalization and the distribution of social welfare in Scandinavian societies? These are the main research questions of the present paper, which builds on empirical results from a primarily qualitative comparative research project on social vulnerability and consumption in Denmark, Sweden, and Norway. The overall aim is to gain a better understanding of social marginalization by analyzing the relationship between consumption and social exclusion in Scandinavian welfare societies, where both the market and individual conduct are highly influenced by political regulation. The project, in other words, attempts to integrate the fields of consumption, welfare and poverty. The background is a series of debates on how to measure social exclusion in contemporary welfare society, especially debates on defining “poverty” in a society that is rhetorically and ideologically dominated by “affluence” [3 refs.]. The project builds on the hypothesis that in a society dominated by consumerism, it is insufficient to focus solely on forms of social marginalization based on a fixed economic definition of “absolute poverty,” because the “society of affluence” changes the boundaries between inclusion and exclusion as well as the categorization of excluded groups. What we aim to do therefore is to investigate what Bourdieu (1999) has termed *la petite misère*, focusing on those groups of the populations who are subject to the rhetoric of affluence and to material welfare among other social groups, but who themselves are unable to take part in consumerism. Subsequently we use the concept *social vulnerability* to indicate the *relatively* deprived situation that these families are in [ref.]. Understanding differentiated access to consumption as well as differentiated effects of dominating consumption discourses, furthermore, demands an empirically based analysis of experiences of being a poor consumer in contemporary Scandinavia. Consequently, the paper is based on empirical research.⁹ [underlining mine]

If you come from a writing culture that uses very long paragraphs, you may find this paragraph length acceptable. However, most European participants in the academic writing seminar, regardless of discipline or country, cringe at merely *seeing* a paragraph this long.

Hohnen did what all good writers do—she put this first-draft paragraph aside for at least a day. Upon returning to it with fresh eyes, she immediately recognized her old habit of trying to cram too much information, with too many ideas, into one paragraph. To her credit, in her first rewrite (which follows) she did more than merely break the long paragraphs into shorter ones where appropriate. She also moved several sentences (the ones I underlined) to positions that better served her argument—and did some slight editing while doing so (including changing the oh-so-comfortable “we” and “our” to the correct “I” and “my” for a single author).

However, she left her first four sentences very much the same. She was wise to do so, because her uncommon placement of her topic sentence is very effective. Rather than starting with a topic sentence, she poses a series of three questions, and then pulls them all together (i.e., creates coherence) with a topic sentence beginning “These are the main research questions....” This style, while more commonly seen in the genre of creative nonfiction, works very well with questions. The key is to begin the topic sentence with the words “*This is*” or “*These are*” the [questions/issues/problems],” depending on the grammar of the sentence. This stylistic technique is one that skilled writers use sparingly but to good advantage.

In her first revision (the published version is even further improved), the paragraphing does much more than make the reading easier. It also focuses the reader on one clearly demarcated segment at a time.

How does it feel to be poor in a society otherwise dominated by affluence?

What kind of participation and what kind of choices are available to poor consumers? And, more generally, what are the social consequences of the increased emphasis on consumption and consumerism for social marginalization and the distribution of social welfare in Scandinavian societies? These are the main research questions of the present paper, which builds on empirical results from a primarily qualitative comparative research project on social vulnerability and consumption in Denmark, Sweden, and Norway.

The overall aim of the paper is to gain a better understanding of social marginalization through analyzing the relationship between consumption and social exclusion in Scandinavian welfare societies, where political regulation highly influences both market and individual conduct. Understanding differentiated access to consumption, as well as differentiated effects of dominating consumption discourses, demands an empirically based analysis of experiences of being a poor consumer in contemporary Scandinavia.

This paper integrates the fields of consumption, welfare, and poverty. The background is a series of debates on how to measure social exclusion

in contemporary welfare society, especially debates on defining poverty in a society rhetorically and ideologically dominated by affluence [3 refs.]. I suggest that a society of affluence changes the boundaries between inclusion and exclusion, as well as the categorization of excluded groups. Therefore, given a society dominated by consumerism, focusing solely on forms of social marginalization delineated by a fixed economic definition of "absolute poverty" is insufficient. My aim is to investigate what Bourdieu (1999) has termed *la petite misère*, focusing on families who, while subject to the rhetoric of affluence and to observations of material well-being in other social groups, are unable to take part in consumerism. I use the concept of *social vulnerability* to indicate the *relatively* deprived situation of these families [ref.].¹⁰

For a journal that accepts longer paragraphs, Hohnen could easily combine the first two paragraphs of the revised introduction. The third paragraph, however, needs to stand alone, to focus the reader on the important statement that sets this paper apart from all other papers on the subject. (If her journal of choice tended to use shorter paragraphs, then she would have needed to start a fourth paragraph at "[M]y aim is....")

The next example, which brings up some different paragraphing issues, comes from Kathrine Vitus's "The Agonistic Approach: Reframing Resistance in Qualitative Research" (*Qualitative Inquiry* 2008: 14). (Vitus has generously permitted me to use excerpts from both the first and final drafts.) This first-draft paragraph is too long, not only because it exceeds 400 words but also because it contains far too many ideas to cohere as one paragraph. Seminar participants groan when they see it, and, as an individual exercise, they paragraph it in a number of creative ways. Here is the original draft:

Reluctant Respondents?

What was at stake in the interviews? One obvious interpretation was in accordance with the staff's general assumptions about the children's families, namely that "these families have so many secrets." This statement further resonated with Adler & Adler's discussions of "the reluctant respondent" in their article of the same name (2002). Adler & Adler discuss what they call "problems of resistance"—different situations where respondents do not "give any information." They warn us that the result of dealing with such "reluctant respondents" and from the researcher's inability to implement the right methodological tools to counteract the reluctance may be data material with "significant data gaps" and a "poor scientific understanding" of the areas of interest (2002:516). Adler & Adler organize these problems of resistance into "a spectrum of degrees of aversion to revealing aspects of self and/or being part of social scientific research" and they identify the "more unwilling respondents" "around the top and bottom of the power, prestige and socioeconomic hierarchies" (2002:518). Among the types of

reluctant respondents the article categorizes "secretive respondents," "sensitive respondents," and "the disadvantaged." The "secretive respondents" are supposedly ordinary people with secrets, people engaged in illegal conduct or people from secret societies, concerned about "leaking out" information. "Sensitive respondents" fear embarrassment when asked about delicate or sensitive questions, traditionally issues such as finance, sexual conduct, drug use, etc. "Disadvantaged respondents" may "distrust the intentions and meanings of academic research" (2002:519-22). Adler & Adler thus explain reluctance primarily as characteristics of the respondents and as matters to overcome by way of different methodological prescriptions. Precautions to take are related to research design, in which the relationship between researcher and researched is established (through sponsorship, friendship, confidence, detachment), and in which forms of reciprocity to the field are established ("giving back" to the field by empowerment or pay-off in terms of goods, payments, or services). Other precautions are related to ways of setting up the interview (e.g., not frightening them through one's eagerness) and ways of introducing and framing the interview to the respondents (e.g., "the sin of omission"; being vague about the specific purpose of the study in order not to scare off respondents) (Adler & Adler 2002:525). Within a phenomenological tradition, the implicit goal for this approach is to find more or less technical ways of overcoming the obstacles for creating an interview environment of trust and empathic identification between researcher and respondent, and hopefully less reluctance.

During the academic writing seminar, the most common paragraphing decision among participants is the five-paragraph version that follows. I have underlined the sentence that I want to discuss.

Reluctant Respondents?

What was at stake in the interviews? One obvious interpretation was in accordance with the staff's general assumptions about the children's families, namely that "these families have so many secrets." This statement further resonated with Adler & Adler's discussions of "the reluctant respondent" in their article of the same name (2002). Adler & Adler discuss what they call "problems of resistance"—different situations where respondents do not "give any information." They warn us that the result of dealing with such "reluctant respondents" and from the researcher's inability to implement the right methodological tools to counteract the reluctance may be data material with "significant data gaps" and a "poor scientific understanding" of the areas of interest (2002:516).

Adler & Adler organize these problems of resistance into "a spectrum of degrees of aversion to revealing aspects of self and/or being part of social scientific research" and they identify the "more unwilling respondents" "around the top and bottom of the power, prestige and socioeconomic hierarchies"

(2002:518). Among the types of reluctant respondents the article categorizes “secretive respondents,” “sensitive respondents,” and “the disadvantaged.”

The “secretive respondents” are supposedly ordinary people with secrets, people engaged in illegal conduct or people from secret societies, concerned about “leaking out” information. “Sensitive respondents” fear embarrassment when asked about delicate or sensitive questions, traditionally issues such as finance, sexual conduct, drug use, etc. “Disadvantaged respondents” may “distrust the intentions and meanings of academic research” (2002:519-22).

Thus Adler & Adler explain reluctance primarily as characteristics of the respondents and as matters to overcome by way of different methodological prescriptions. Precautions to take are related to research design, in which the relationship between researcher and researched is established (through sponsorship, friendship, confidence, detachment), and in which forms of reciprocity to the field are established (“giving back” to the field by empowerment or pay-off in terms of goods, payments, or services). Other precautions are related to ways of setting up the interview (e.g., not frightening them through one’s eagerness) and ways of introducing and framing the interview to the respondents (e.g., “the sin of omission”; being vague about the specific purpose of the study in order not to scare off respondents) (Adler & Adler 2002:525).

Within a phenomenological tradition, the implicit goal for this approach is to find more or less technical ways of overcoming the obstacles for creating an interview environment of trust and empathic identification between researcher and respondent, and hopefully less reluctance.

Now the reader finds approachable paragraphs and looks forward to smooth reading. Each paragraph has a topic sentence, including the last one, which is its very own paragraph.

As for the underlined sentence, a minor point is that the word “thus” is now at the beginning, so that the reader will not see two consecutive paragraphs starting with “Adler and Adler.” But the major point is that, during the paragraphing exercise, many seminar participants want to make the underlined sentence the last line of the preceding paragraph. Their argument—that the sentence perfectly concludes that paragraph—raises the question of which is more important: a great last line or a good (or great) topic sentence? The answer is that topic sentences must take precedence. When editing your writing, make sure that every paragraph has a topic sentence. Never sacrifice a topic sentence to create a good paragraph ending for the previous paragraph, no matter how perfect that ending might appear.

In her final version, Vitus tightened her prose by pruning 100 words. She then chose to use two paragraphs, because the material worked well that way for a journal that takes longer paragraphs. She also solved the question of whether to end one paragraph or begin another with the underlined sentence by splitting it into two

clauses. The first of these ends the first paragraph; the second begins the next paragraph (underlining mine)—an elegant solution that many writers should consider using.

Interpreting Reluctant Respondents

What was at stake in the interviews? One obvious interpretation fit with the staff’s general assumptions about the children’s families “with so many secrets” and with methodological ideas about “reluctant respondents” (Adler & Adler, 2002). Adler and Adler (2002) organize problems of resistance into “a spectrum of degrees of aversion to revealing aspects of self and/or being part of social scientific research.” They identify and categorize the “more unwilling respondents” “around the top and bottom of the power, prestige and socioeconomic hierarchies” (p. 518). Among these categories are “secretive,” “sensitive,” and “disadvantaged” respondents. “Secretive respondents” are supposedly ordinary people with secrets, people engaged in illegal conduct, or people from secret societies concerned about “leaking out” information. “Sensitive respondents” fear embarrassment when asked sensitive questions, traditionally about money, sexual conduct, or drug use. “Disadvantaged respondents” may “distrust the intentions and meanings of academic research” (pp. 519-522). Adler and Adler thus explain reluctance primarily as characteristics of the respondents.

In addition, Adler and Adler (2002) explain reluctance as something to overcome through different methodological prescriptions. Precautions relate to research design, in which the relationship between researcher and respondent is established (through sponsorship, friendship, confidence, or detachment) and in which forms of reciprocity to the field are established (“giving back” to the field by empowerment or payoff with goods, payments, or services). Other precautions relate to ways of setting up the interview (e.g., not frightening interviewees away with one’s eagerness) and ways of introducing and framing the interview (e.g., being vague about the study’s specific purpose) so as not to scare off respondents (Adler & Adler, 2002, p. 525). Within a phenomenological tradition, the implicit goal for this approach is to find technical ways of overcoming the obstacles to creating an interview environment of trust and empathy.¹¹

Paragraphs involving a series of items

Some paragraphs introduce a series of items yet cannot cover them all without becoming too long. Moreover, if the sentences discussing one or two of the items are too short for even one paragraph, then the writer has to reconsider the paragraphing. Fortunately, the writer has several strategies from which to choose. One is reframing and dividing the paragraph, so that it naturally falls into two or more paragraphs, each with its own topic sentence. Another common strategy is covering the shorter items in a first paragraph, possibly beginning each with words like “first/second/

third," and then starting a second (and perhaps third or fourth) paragraph to discuss the longer items. In either case, the writer has to rethink the way in which he or she wishes to set up and contextualize the information.

In the next example, which is clearly a first draft, the writer introduces "four types of capital"—but discusses only three. The fourth ("symbolic capital") will probably appear in a following paragraph. But the English reader, relying on the promise of four, will be rereading the original paragraph in frustration long before he or she starts reading another paragraph:

In general Bourdieu operates with four types of capital. The economic capital that can be converted directly into money, wages and other forms of monetary possession that can be institutionalized into property rights etc. The cultural capital that consists of three subtypes: The personified cultural capital which are the individuals' *habitus* and cultivation given by dispositions in body and mind; the objectified cultural capital which is cultural goods; and finally institutionalized cultural capital which is educational merits and other forms of approved abilities (approved knowledge). The cultural capital is on one side accumulation of education and knowledge and on the other side elements of individual lifestyle, and class specific sets of action and value (Bourdieu 1986). The social capital is the amount and quality of institutionalized social relations, networks, and connections that can be used to promote individual interests.

As with many first drafts, this paragraph contains typical problems with everything from grammar to punctuation and style (parallel structure)—not to mention the writer's having worked with the material for so long that he or she forgets that the reader may not have the same knowledge or know the same definitions. But before this writer begins to consider correcting all the grammatical mistakes, he or she must deal with paragraph framing. If the fourth type of capital, symbolic capital, needs to come last, then the writer must somehow let the reader know.

One good strategy is to list all four, followed by "three of which are...." This narrowing of four to three signals the reader that another paragraph will cover the fourth. In such cases, the fourth can be the longest item (and therefore last); the least important item (and therefore last); or, most usefully, the main important item from which the writer will build a new method, refine a theory, create a new subsection, or make any other such useful moves towards directing the flow of the argument.

Here, then, is one possible rewrite:

In general Bourdieu posits four types of capital, three of which are economic, social, and cultural. Economic capital refers to assets that an individual can convert directly into money, wages, and other forms of financial possessions that can be institutionalized into property rights, etc. Social capital refers to the amount and quality of institutionalized social relations, networks, and connections that an individual can use to promote his or her interests. Cultural capital, which refers to "culture" in several senses, consists of three subtypes: personified cultural capital (the individual's *habitus* and cultivation from mental and physical dispositions), objectified cultural capital (cultural goods), and institutionalized cultural capital (educational accomplishments and certificates, as well as other forms of socially approved knowledge or abilities). On the one hand, cultural capital constitutes an accumulation of education and knowledge; on the other, it contains elements of individual lifestyle and class-specific sets of actions and values (Bourdieu 1986).

The fourth type of capital, symbolic capital, refers to....

or

The fourth type of capital, symbolic capital, is significant to the argument of this paper, because it refers to....

This second version does everything a paragraph should do, provided, of course, that the writer has previously defined "*habitus*." To the objection that readers in the social sciences have all read Bourdieu, my answer remains firm: the authors of the articles in the top-ranked journals in anthropology, economics, political science, and sociology follow the Anglo-American tradition of defining their terms the first time they use them, no matter who their audience. The immediate defining of terms is non-negotiable in English. Be sure to do it.

This revised paragraph names four things and promises three, with the hint of a fourth to follow. It uses excellent parallel structure both between and within sentences. Even better, the writer moved social capital from third place to second, so that the much longer discussion of cultural capital can come last, without interrupting the flow of the series with too many digressions.

Comparative paragraphs with a lot of details

Some comparative paragraphs—paragraphs comparing two or more countries, theories, etc.—have so many subsets or smaller details that the reader may have trouble knowing "who is doing what to whom" within one paragraph. Be certain to carefully distinguish one set of facts from the other. If creating that comparison clearly within one paragraph becomes difficult, break it into two or more. The following first-draft paragraph offers a good illustration:

In the Netherlands a work-disabled person receives benefits independent of the work situation, although the payment may come from the employer. The individual employee is entitled to a partial benefit, also in the case of unemployment. In Denmark, the “benefit” or “subsidy” compensation is calculated as well as paid only in relation to a specific job. The “compensation” is subsequently paid to the employer, not to the beneficiary. The general picture therefore seems to be a high degree of political regulation and control, but at the same time, a high degree of private administration and implementation exists in the Netherlands whereas Denmark has a low degree of political regulation and control—yet the public agents have the responsibility for administering, implementing, and subsidizing employers’ reintegration activities. This combination of political regulation and increased decentralization has been termed “managed liberalization” [ref.]. On the other hand in Denmark, the state had and still has the basic legal financial and administrative responsibility; however, legislation has aimed at promoting employers’ active measures in retaining and reintegrating work-disabled employees by economically compensating employers as well as appealing to their moral responsibility. Within this process the publicly financed “disability benefit” has been tied firmly to the labour market participation of individual citizens. We may call the Danish model “managed individualization.”

The first four sentences (two for each country) are both clear and parallel. But the moment the fifth sentence begins with “the general picture therefore seems,” with no identifying country marker, the reader usually assumes that the sentence is creating a “general picture” for both countries. Halfway through the sentence, however, that “general picture” turns out to refer only to Denmark.

How is the writer to fix such a paragraph? More importantly, how can the writer avoid creating one like it in the first place? In the Anglo-American tradition, students learn two ways of organizing and presenting technical or multifaceted material. One method is to focus on dividing the material by the larger units (in this case, the countries) and treating the sub-issues (e.g., who pays for benefits, who can receive what kinds of benefits) separately for each larger unit (e.g., country). The other method is to focus on the smaller units and compare both of the larger units for each one of the sub-issues. In my American experience, our teachers provided the following models (I use the country names and the word “issue” here for brevity):

Model 1: <u>the Netherlands</u>	<u>Denmark</u>
Issue 1	Issue 1
Issue 2	Issue 2
Issue 3	Issue 3

While **Model 1** can entail one paragraph or more paragraphs each for the Netherlands and Denmark, the writer offers the information separately by country. A final paragraph (or more) would then make a comparative conclusion. Only if what the writer is comparing is very short should he or she attempt to put all of this information in one paragraph.

Model 2: <u>Issue 1</u>	<u>Issue 2</u>	<u>Issue 3</u>
the Netherlands	the Netherlands	the Netherlands
Denmark	Denmark	Denmark

In **Model 2**, the writer compares the two countries separately for each issue before moving on to the next. Again, after making all the comparisons, the writer will pull them all together into a comparative conclusion.

These models illustrate the Anglo-American tradition of putting clarity first. The writer picks the model that best serves the purpose of the paper. Part of the academic writer’s overall writing strategy should include choosing all models and sub-strategies that best fit the development of the argument—and then to paragraph accordingly.

Coherent paragraphing with clear topic sentences is intrinsic to Anglo-American rhetoric because, as mentioned earlier, we learn to think as well as write in paragraphs. If you are not already in the habit of thinking in English-style paragraphs, start now. The practice will do you good. As you read the articles of the best English-speaking writers in international journals, study their writing, from language to sentence structure to paragraphing. When you come to the chapters on journal analysis, put paragraphing and topic sentences on your list of linguistic cues to analyze. You will be a better writer for doing so.

chapter 12

WHAT GOES WHERE IN A PAPER: Organizing and Outlining

Technique holds a reader from sentence to sentence, but only content will stay in his mind.¹

—JOYCE CAROL OATES

What you should do in your introduction is to state your subjects, in order that the point to be judged may be quite plain; in the epilogue you should summarize the argument by which your case has been proved.²

—ARISTOTLE

Where to begin is often the most difficult decision a writer makes. This chapter discusses what goes where in a paper—and why—in the Anglo-American rhetorical tradition. It introduces Aristotelian logic (from which this tradition derives) as it applies to academic writing and gives examples of its application in very specific instances. It covers introductions, findings, conclusions, recommendations (for policy makers or for future research), and abstracts. While the chapter also touches on theory, methodology, literature reviews, data sets, hypotheses, etc., these all belong in what is called the “body” of the paper—and where they go, and in what order, always depends on the particular journal. The chapter concludes with an outlining technique that every writer can apply, whether his or her strongest thinking mode is analytical or intuitive.

The motive for my quickly reviewing Aristotle’s powerful influence on the Anglo-American rhetorical tradition is that most European writers neither come from writing cultures based on Aristotelian principles nor are accustomed to applying these principles from an early age. Yet these principles—deeply rooted on both sides of the English-speaking Atlantic in both the secondary and tertiary levels of education—affect not only attitudes towards writing but also the types of writing that result.

At the risk of oversimplification, I observe one main difference between the ways that native English speakers and Europeans write: many Europeans tend largely to describe their data, or offer it in narrative form, and then come to a conclusion, while English-speaking writers have learned in either middle school or high school

to construct an Aristotelian proof, with an almost mathematically precise conclusion deriving solely from the argument.

Ironically, if you were to ask most American, British, or Canadian social scientists about their use of Aristotelian logic, they would look puzzled. Many have never read Aristotle, and even most British or American high school teachers of English do not realize that they are teaching their students the principles of Aristotelian logic. Yet at the heart of the structure (the “how” and “where” of writing) lies Aristotelian logic.

The influence of Aristotle: a very brief introduction

Rhetoric within the Anglo-American tradition, for centuries, emphasized a writer or speaker’s ability to rouse others through their emotions. However, as language and culture are inextricable, a renewed interest in Aristotelian logic on both sides of the Atlantic in the 19th century shifted the emphasis of rhetoric (and writing) from swaying the emotions of an audience to convincing their minds through the use of proofs.³

In brief, Aristotle systematized the study of rhetoric, which he defined as the “art of finding the best available means of persuasion in any situation.”⁴ Conceiving of persuasion as a strategy, he laid out three principal tactics for making an argument: *pathos* (appealing to the values most deeply held—and emotions most deeply felt—by a particular audience), *ethos* (showing the speaker’s trustworthiness), and *logos* (using logic and sound reasoning, i.e., offering the audience good reasons and proofs). Although academic writing in the Anglo-American tradition is strongest on *logos*, elements of *ethos* are always present (if only in the writer’s credentials and proof of his or her knowledge of the field). Elements of *pathos* tend to show up in papers by writers hoping to influence the actions of policy makers or others in their field, often with regard to vulnerable populations, political dangers, etc.⁵

In his translation and annotation of Aristotle’s *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*, George A. Kennedy includes among “the most important of the concepts that Aristotle uses as frameworks for his discussion” the following forms of persuasion:

- i. Inductive argument, called paradigm, or example, drawing a particular conclusion from one or more parallels
- ii. Deductive argument, called enthymeme, or rhetorical syllogism, drawing a conclusion from stated or implied premises⁶

Kennedy continues: “*On Rhetoric* is strong in its emphasis on the importance of logical validity. There are also valuable concepts in the discussion of style, especially the demand for clarity, the understanding of the effect of different kinds of language and sentence structure....”⁷ Thus we see that both the commonly used deductive method and the necessity of absolute clarity in the Anglo-American academic tradition have their roots in Aristotle. Moreover, because both deductive and inductive

reasoning involve proofs, academic writing in English took an almost mathematical turn: in principle every writer should be able to write Q.E.D. (*quod erat demonstrandum*, “that which was to be demonstrated”) at the end of his or her paper.

As interest in Aristotelian logic and argument grew, schools in the English-speaking countries began adapting their curricula to this new approach to argumentation. The 1906 sixth edition of the high school textbooks *Elements of Rhetoric and English Composition*, by G.R. Carpenter of Columbia University, defines rhetoric as “the art of expressing, by words, precisely what we mean.”⁸ The two textbooks cover everything from sentence structure and paragraphing to composition, clarity, persuasion, force, and elegance. On coherence, Carpenter wrote:

Coherence of the whole composition is strictly analogous to coherence of the sentence and of the paragraph. We must bind our words together logically into sentences, our sentences together logically into paragraphs, and our paragraphs together logically into the whole composition. The only quality indispensable in serious writing is *order*. As the chief aim of all composition is usually to tell the reader something which he presumably did not know before, it is obvious that to impart to him this new information we must begin where we and the reader have some knowledge in common, and then lead him by consecutive logical stages to that which he is to understand. For that purpose it is absolutely necessary that our work be carefully planned. We can no more write successfully without a definite conception of what the structure of our composition is to be, than an architect can build without having in mind a well-defined and well-organized structure.⁹

This excerpt exemplifies the way in which students on both sides of the Atlantic were receiving instruction in writing-as-logic more than a century ago—and the structures that students learned then are essentially no different from those that academic writers use in English today. Thus paying attention to all the elements of constructing a logical argument is intrinsic to the Anglo-American educational process. While European social scientists become familiar with the final product of this argumentative style by reading papers in international journals, observing the product and producing one like it are very different processes. This chapter focuses on the major parts of an academic paper and the ways in which they interrelate in the Aristotelian tradition.

Major parts of a paper

Papers are arguments with audiences. Good writers never assume that the reader holds similar beliefs or shares the same set of cultural or political values. Therefore, the first thing that every writer must do is to define his or her audience. The writer can then begin constructing an effective argument, the point of which is to change the reader’s mind by convincing the reader either that the new ideas are valid or that

a specific response or course of action is the best. Knowing the audience, a writer can construct an appropriate argument; knowing the argument, the writer can decide which elements go in which parts of the paper. However, certain pieces of information, certain elements of the argument, always go in very specific places.

Almost all papers have an introduction, a body, findings, and conclusions. Some include recommendations for future research; almost all break down the body into discrete sections (and subsections) such as theory, methodology, data, literature review, historical background, competing theories, and discussions. While the first part of a published paper is usually the abstract, it is nonetheless a separate piece of writing. It should never substitute for the introduction, which must stand on its own. An abstract, while appearing first, is the last piece a writer composes. Therefore, while I discuss abstracts briefly towards the end of this chapter, I analyze them at much greater length as part of journal analysis (chaps. 15–17).

On occasion, a writer gets lucky—the journal’s submission guidelines will outline what goes where in their articles. For example, the *Childhood* guidelines state:

The Introduction (no heading) should clearly state the purpose of the article, give only strictly pertinent references, and not review the subject extensively. Material, Methods and Results must be presented in logical sequence in the text, with text and illustrations emphasizing only important observations. The Discussion should emphasize new and important observations of the study and conclusions therefrom. Do not repeat in detail data from results. Include implications of the findings and their limitations, and relate observations to other relevant studies.¹⁰

Alas, most journal guidelines are not this specific. Read on.

Introduction

The first part of every paper is an introduction of some kind. Some journals label these sections “introduction”; others do not. Some are only a paragraph or two; others can take eight pages or more. Although the length and specific content always depend on the journal, an introduction always contains at least three elements: *necessary background*, *purpose statement*, and *scope*. These three elements give readers everything they need to know about what the paper will contain, from the context to the content and from the purpose to the limitations of the data or methodology. Once the writer has set down an introduction, it must do what it promises—introduce what will follow—with no surprises in subject matter, purpose, or scope.

Necessary background contextualizes the paper. It names the general territory in which the specific subject, theory, or proposal takes place. In a genre analysis of academic papers in 1990, American linguist John Swales defines a three-part approach called “Create a Research Space” (CARS): establishing the territory, then establishing the niche, and then “occupying” the niche.¹¹ Almost all introductions (and abstracts) follow this pattern in some way. Both the territory (e.g., unemployed

unskilled workers) and the niche (e.g., workers in that category in a government-sponsored retraining program) form the necessary background for the purpose statement to make sense.

For example, the first paragraph of a three-paragraph introduction to “The Politics of Territorial Solidarity: Nationalism and Social Policy Reform in Canada, the United Kingdom, and Belgium” by Daniel Béland and André LeCours (*Comparative Political Studies*, 2005) succinctly gives both territory and niche:

The resurgence of substate nationalism and the emergence of the modern welfare state are among the most striking political developments of the second half of the 20th century. Despite the recent proliferation of literature on nationalism and on social policy, little has been written to explore the possible interaction between the two. Scholars of social citizenship have implicitly explored the link between national identity and welfare provisions, but they have seldom analyzed this connection in reference to substate nationalism [ref.]. Specialists of nationalism rarely mention social policy, focusing instead on the state, language, culture, ethnicity, and religion. For example....¹²

The first sentence gives the larger territory. The second, with the key words “despite” and “little has been written,” establishes the niche. The third sentence shows that those scholars who have “implicitly” considered the niche have “seldom analyzed” this connection, and the fourth sentence offers an example. Altogether the authors use only four sentences to cover a great deal of ground—all of it the necessary background.

The *what*, *where*, and *why* largely constitute the argument, because where and how a writer begins informs the reader of the writer’s intent. This obvious statement notwithstanding, too many European writers begin with so much theory and background (e.g., literature review, historical context) that not until the third or fourth page do they tell the reader what the paper will actually *do*. As no English reader will ever wait that long to discover the focus or purpose of a paper, this form of structuring does not work. Thus one of the criteria for writing a good introduction is to condense the initial necessary background as much as possible. Later you will be able to return to the background and give it in greater detail. If necessary, you can create a separate section called “background,” “literature review,” etc.

The *purpose statement* is to the paper as the topic sentence is to the paragraph: the purpose statement tells the reader—with broad brush strokes, not fine detail—what the paper will contain. “Purpose statement” is in some ways a misnomer, because this statement really constitutes a broadly written overview of the paper’s contents. It tells the reader that the paper will analyze this, explore that, or disagree with Famous Scholar’s theory of _____. In other words, this one crucial sentence frames and contextualizes the entire paper. The reader then can place all the information within that frame while reading, secure in the knowledge of the overall structure to follow. Part

of the reader’s acceptance of the writer’s credibility (Aristotle’s *ethos*) relies greatly on the writer’s delivering exactly what he or she has promised.

While a purpose statement is always *one* sentence, putting the entire purpose of your paper into only one sentence need not be daunting. You may then follow it with more details, in a sentence starting with a phrase such as “more specifically” or “in addition.” A purpose statement is always general, leaving the rest of the paper to live up to its promise by filling in the details. It usually begins with either “this paper (examines/investigates/analyzes)” or “the purpose of this paper is to....”

Following are sample purpose statement models for both papers and reports:

- This paper investigates the impact of (this) on (that) under [very specific circumstances].
- This report presents and discusses (this) program and suggests ways of improving it.
- The purpose of this report is to present (this) data for incorporation into a larger report on (that).
- The purpose of this paper is to analyze the results of a study on (this).
- This article discusses the results of a study on (this) and offers policy recommendations.
- The article investigates whether (these people) are more likely to do (this) when facing the threat of having to do (that).
- This report outlines the (number of) stages in (this) program and suggests ways for policy makers to cut costs on (that).
- This paper presents an overview of (such-and-such) information from (this) point of view.
- This article compares (number of) possible solutions to the problem of (this) and recommends one.
- This report summarizes the _____ program, which was an attempt to provide the research necessary to support (these) recommendations.
- This paper identifies the (number of) major factors involved in studying (this).
- This article presents and discusses recent developments in (this) and analyzes their effectiveness in terms of the theory of (that).

Some purpose statements are longer, as is Axel West Pedersen’s in “The privatization of retirement income? Variation and trends in the income packages of old age pensioners” (*Journal of European Social Policy*, 2004): “In this article I shall use data from the Luxembourg Income Study databank to investigate the interplay between public and private components in the income packages of pensioners in a selection of OECD countries.”¹³ This kind of purpose statement allows the writer to specify not only what the paper will do but what data it will use to do so. He then goes on

to name the nine countries (“with very different traditions”) in the study. The next sentence further amplifies the purpose: “In addition to the analysis of cross-national differences, I also look at....” The following paragraph continues this amplification with “More specifically, I address three sets of issues....”¹⁴

In Béland and LeCours’ paper (see p. 162), their second paragraph begins with the purpose statement, which they, like Pedersen, then expand upon:

This article examines the relationship between substate nationalism and the welfare state in Canada, the United Kingdom, and Belgium. It puts forward two main arguments. First, it shows how the processes of identity formation/consolidation and territorial mobilization inherent to substate nationalism often involve a social policy dimension. In Québec and Scotland, the nation is partly defined in terms of social policy preferences. Moreover, the political struggles of *Québécois*, Scottish, and Flemish nationalism have recently involved gaining control over some social policy areas. Second, we argue that substate nationalism affects welfare-state development by reshaping social policy agendas while, in some contexts, strengthening the policy autonomy of regional entities. In conducting our comparative and historical analysis of the relationship between substate nationalism and welfare-state politics, we pay attention to the mediating effect of institutions, ideological forces, and socioeconomic cleavages.¹⁵

After the one-sentence purpose statement, the authors announce two main arguments, using “first” and “second” to frame them. As the two previous introductions illustrate, rather than feeling limited by one-sentence purpose statements, writers should view them as excellent framing tools for launching a discussion of the paper’s purpose.

Scope is the last essential part of every introduction. It gives the limitations of the paper in time and space (e.g., 1998–2006, Spain and Portugal, children in single-parent working class households). The reader needs to know the scope of the paper—how many years or countries, which types of family or types of employment, which theories or methods—and the introduction needs to provide that information. For example, Béland and LeCours limit their examination to three countries and two main arguments. Pedersen, for eight of his nine countries, names “four waves of cross-sectional micro-data...from around 1980 to the mid-1990s.”¹⁶

You may be wondering why I have not mentioned the well-known “this section does X, that section does Y” paragraph that concludes many introductions. The reason is that some journals do not like them—indeed, some submission guidelines specify that the journal does not want them. Nonetheless, such a paragraph is usually helpful in framing the entire paper, not merely the purpose. As mentioned in Chapter 9, keep this paragraph short and focused, unless you are using it as a springboard for a larger discussion, and write it in the active voice.

Béland and LeCours start their third paragraph as follows: “We have divided the article into three parts.” The next four sentences say what those parts do, with “The first explains.... The second part looks at.... The article concludes with....”¹⁷ Paul Pierson uses the same approach at the end of the third paragraph of his introduction in “The New Politics of the Welfare State” (*World Politics*, 1996):

The argument is presented in four stages. Section I highlights the characteristic qualities of retrenchment politics. Section II discusses in more details the principal theories of welfare state expansion and suggests why the distinctiveness of retrenchment makes a straightforward application of these arguments to the contemporary welfare state problematic. Section III explores the dynamics of retrenchment in four cases: Great Britain, the United States, Germany, and Sweden. Section IV builds on this theoretical and empirical analysis to offer some basic propositions about retrenchment politics.¹⁸

Rather than merely writing “section I gives the qualities, section II gives the theories,” etc., Pierson uses each sentence to further develop his argument and strengthen his point. In highly complex papers, some writers take three or four paragraphs to frame the paper—and to define their terms.

Every good introduction should also *define all terms* that it mentions. Wherever unusual or highly specific terms appear, define them the first time you use them. Do not make the mistake of thinking that you can wait another three pages and define a word when you discuss it in detail. Articles published in the highest-ranked journals always define their terms both immediately and at length. For very complex papers, where these writers want to differentiate among theoretical subtleties or sub-types, they spend several paragraphs on the definitions. By the time the reader has finished reading them, he or she knows the precise meaning of each.

Some writers also denote a particular meaning of a term for a specific paper. Following is an example from “Changing gender roles in popular culture” by Jennifer M. Rey (in *Variation in English: Multi-Dimensional Studies*). After defining her main term, Rey uses the definition to frame the importance of her study [italics hers]:

Gender roles have been variously defined (3 refs.); in this study, *gender role* is defined as the *socially and culturally defined characteristics that govern the behavior of individuals within a social or cultural group*. Because this and other definitions of gender role hinge on social and cultural values, the importance of studying the depiction of gender roles over time becomes clear as a means of determining what changes in social values have impacted the portrayal of these roles in the popular media.¹⁹

Defining your terms also calls for a keen awareness of what readers outside your country or outside your immediate field may know or not know—as well as an

awareness of the limitations of your knowledge. Too many European social scientists use the general term “social security” in papers they submit to American journals, because they do not know that in the US the term applies only to the US Social Security Administration. Similarly, German and Nordic sociologists often use the word “pedagogue” (a social educator), although such a profession does not exist in the UK, the US, or much of Europe. Moreover, “pedagogue” in English is an old-fashioned word for a (usually) pedantic, dogmatic schoolteacher. Learning that most readers will not understand their meaning, and that they therefore must immediately define a term so familiar to them, comes as a big surprise. Extrapolating from one’s experience without checking out the wider global landscape can lead to mistakes that make the writer look very unprofessional.

National pride also commonly leads to mistakes based on cultural myths. For example, a Danish Ph.D. student handed me a first-draft paper stating that Denmark had the highest percentage of working mothers in Europe. But I had recently read a paper by a Swedish scholar, giving a higher percentage for Sweden. When I spoke to the Danish student, he immediately recognized his error for what it was—a common Danish assumption that, in this area, Denmark’s record was the best. This anecdote exemplifies a problem that occurs in every country and against which all researchers must be on guard—i.e., the danger of letting national or regional assumptions substitute for well-researched accuracy.

One of the most difficult problems arises when countries have different ways of doing things such as classifying immigrants. The statistics bureaus in some countries classify immigrant adults as “immigrants,” the minor children (even if also immigrating) as “children of immigrants,” and the first generation born in the country as “descendants.” This latter word sounds both harsh and bigoted in English-speaking countries, which have been dealing for decades with the linguistic aspects of multicultural issues. As social scientists in those countries have a keen ear for language that turns people into “others,” any European scholar using “descendents” without first explaining that the term comes straight from “Statistics [Country]” runs the definite risk of being considered a bigot, racist, etc.—when the opposite is probably true.

No matter how specific the meaning of a certain term to the statistics bureau in that country, it may make no sense to a native English speaker. The lesson here is that all European social researchers need to read widely in their field for *language* (in articles by native speakers of English), not merely for content.

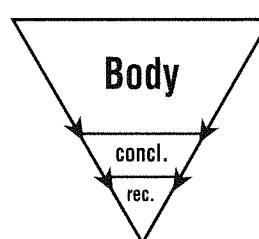
Remember—when you set up the reader’s expectations in your introduction, you must be certain that you can support every statement that follows in the body with a solid argument based on real facts and findings, not national myths or misconceptions. You must also use terms that readers can understand outside of your country.

For writers of qualitative papers based on interview data and on-site observation, the temptation to begin the paper with an illustrative anecdote is strong. However, what is interesting or meaningful to the writer may not be to the reader. All writers of such papers must decide whether the incident they have chosen will stand up under the harsh light of an editor’s lamp. Writers in the Anglo-American tradition tend not to start with anecdotes unless both the story and the language are gripping. Following is one that succeeds: the opening two paragraphs of Tamir Sorek’s “Between Football and Martyrdom: the bi-focal localism of an Arab-Palestinian town in Israel” (*British Journal of Sociology*, 2005):

On the evening of 18 May 2004, while Israeli troops stormed Palestinian refugee camps in the Gaza Strip in another attempt to crush the Palestinian uprising against the occupation, both Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat found time for phone calls concerning seemingly trivial issues. Sharon phoned the manager of an Israeli football team to congratulate him on winning the Israeli State Cup, which made it eligible to represent Israel in the UEFA (Union European Football Association) cup. Prime Minister Sharon emphasized his confidence that the team would represent Israel in an honourable manner in Europe. That same evening, President Arafat called the director of an Arab football team to congratulate him on his team’s victory, telling him that the team brought pride to the Arab nation.

What makes the co-occurrence of these two events remarkable is the fact that Sharon and Arafat had called the same director, Mazen Ghenayem, and referred to the same team—Ittihad Abna’ Sakhnin (translated from Arabic as ‘United Sons of Sakhnin’), after the team became the first Arab team to win the Israeli State Cup. This dual congratulation, while apparently paradoxical, was possible due to the peculiar and multifaceted image of Sakhnin among both Jewish Israeli and Arab Palestinian publics.²⁰

If your story can match the impact of this one, use it. If not, think again. Starting your introduction with no anecdote is better than starting it with a long or weak one.



The body of a paper

After the introduction, the rest of the paper resembles an upside-down triangle. The largest segment is the body, which contains everything that you want to present between the introduction and the conclusions. Where that information goes depends both on the typical structure of articles in the journal you choose and on the way you construct your argument.

The best strategy for getting published is to follow the lead of the journal. I recall one young researcher who was applying an unusual method to a recurrent problem. In the paper, she presented the theory underlying her methodology before she explained the method itself. When I mentioned that the journal she had chosen always

put methodology before theory, she exclaimed, “But that doesn’t make sense!” I asked whether she wanted to be right or wanted to be published. She then reframed her argument so that she could put the methodology section first and have it flow nicely into the theory section—and the journal published her paper.

Because the organization of the body of a paper is so journal-dependent, this section will necessarily be short. What I most want you to take away from it is the idea that the way in which you organize the body determines the success or failure of your argument in terms of your conclusions. No matter how stunning or critical your findings, a poorly structured argument or presentation can blunt their impact or bury their importance. Everything in the body must logically march towards the conclusions. By the time you sit down to write, you should already know your conclusions. Therefore, consider doing what many native English speakers do: writing backwards from the conclusion, organizing your ideas so as to make your conclusion the only one possible.

In quantitative work, organizing the body is usually fairly easy. The writer moves from theory, methodology, or niche to data and findings. In qualitative work, however, researchers often have to struggle to find the right categories: Where should they start—with an anecdote or with the territory? How can they frame their sample or their interviews? And, most important from the Anglo-American tradition, how much quoting should they use relative to paraphrasing, and which quotes can or can they not use?

The issue of quotations within interview- or questionnaire-based qualitative papers involves several unwritten rules of Anglo-American academic style and standards. While these standards vary according to the field and the journal, a researcher should quote from informants’ statements only under two conditions: first, the quotations should strongly make or exemplify the point that the researcher wishes to make. If the informant’s statement is boring or weakly articulated, the researcher would do better to paraphrase the quotation (i.e., use reported speech, with no quotations), save perhaps for a telling phrase or word. Second, if the informant is not speaking in English and the researcher is translating the transcriptions, *that translation must be easy to read*. This unwritten rule also applies to the researcher’s translations of questionnaire questions, etc.

Too often, European academic writers write *literal* translations of quotations, book or article excerpts, or government regulations or legislation. Literal translations invariably constitute such bad writing that they make the speaker or writer appear stupid. Worse, too many European qualitative researchers include every “er” and “um” and repeated word that the speaker uttered. As almost no informant speaks in perfectly grammatical sentences, the researcher’s job is to use ellipses (...) to remove all stumbling blocks to easy reading and to avoid impugning the intelligence of the speaker or document being quoted.

Poor: “I, I think it’s important to, well you see, my family has to come first, so it’s difficult, well, maybe not so difficult, but difficult enough.... I guess what I’m trying to say about the problem is....”

Poor: “I think it is fine that you have this study. I’m sure you get many different answers. I...feel very fine, at school, at home...etc. But I’m sure many don’t feel as fine....” [14-year-old male]

As no fourteen-year-old male in the English speaking world is likely to use the word “fine,” even if something very close to it exists in his language, the researcher must read extensively through the literature to find a word that will fit contemporary UK or US English, whichever he or she is using. As long as you are competing with native speakers, everything you write must be in the appropriate English for that paper—not only for that of the journal (UK, US, CAN) but also that of the participant age group and that of the field (e.g., highly theoretical and academic or more prosaic and conversational).

The advice of writer Elizabeth Bowen on dialogue also applies to informant quotations:

1. Dialogue should be brief.
2. It should add to the reader’s present knowledge.
3. It should eliminate the routine exchanges of ordinary conversation.
4. It should convey a sense of spontaneity but eliminate the repetitiveness of real talk.
5. It should keep the [paper] moving forward.²¹

While meeting these standards is not an easy task, doing so remains part of what all of your paper must do, especially the body. The body of the paper should either contain strong quotations that serve the paper’s purpose or paraphrase the speakers with more general statements such as “eighteen of the twenty informants reported negative experiences with the unemployment services.”

Last, the body must also contain and discuss any disadvantages involved or any counter-arguments the writer expects to receive. Part of organizing the body involves imagining what arguments a critical reviewer might use and anticipating any potential objections. Skilled writers then interweave such objections or opposing arguments into their own argument, showing that their position, methodology, data set, or theory is superior to the other argument or shows solid reasoning despite the objection. Typical framing language for countering and containing objections includes the following:

However, [this/these] disadvantage(s)/objection(s)

- [is/are] minimal in the face of _____.
- [is/are] surmountable, because of _____.

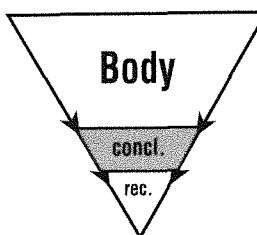
However, [I/we] can minimize the effect(s) of [this/these]disadvantage(s) by [doing/changing]....

However, the advantages far outweigh [this/these] disadvantage(s), because....

After reading the whole body of a paper, the reader should be convinced that your argument is the only argument—or the best. In other words, by the time the reader reaches the conclusions, the reader should already know or have guessed what those conclusions are and be convinced of their accuracy.²²

Conclusions

Conclusions appear to mean different things to different European scholars, depending on the field. In quantitative research, conclusion sections present almost no problem for the writer. The economist, sociologist, or political scientist presents the data, presents the findings, and draws conclusions straight from the findings. As journal categories in quantitative journals are usually quite obvious, they provide easy models for contributors. In qualitative work, however, researchers often have to struggle with conclusions: how definitely or tentatively can they conclude from a relatively small sample? Having quotations, interview data, and on-site observations, as opposed to numbers and statistics, makes writing a conclusion more difficult.



The upside-down triangle model shows that conclusions do not merely follow the body. Conclusions, according to Aristotelian logic, are part of the proof: they follow directly from the argument in the body, or rather, the writer pulls them out of or extrapolates them from the body. Thus the major axiom for conclusions in the Anglo-American tradition—an understanding so central to English academic writing that it is culturally self-evident—is this: *nothing new goes in a conclusion*. “Nothing new” includes not only new ideas but also quotations (except for repeating part of an important one from the body) and citations. If this material is important enough for you to cite or include in the conclusion, then certainly it belongs in the body.

To reiterate, to write a proper conclusion in English, the writer has to have named in the body every term or concept that he or she wishes to use in the conclusion. In addition, the writer needs to have constructed the argument to logically flow into the conclusion. If, while writing your conclusions, you realize that you want to mention scholar A or theory B, then you must go back into the body and reintegrate some mention of the scholar or theory in the body. Otherwise, you cannot legitimately mention either of them in the conclusion.

A conclusion, therefore, is the part of the paper that “tells them what you told them.” It pulls together all of the minor conclusions from earlier sections into a large one, with a general theme, overview, direction, or answer to the problem or purpose the writer named in the introduction. Because academic papers in English are proofs, not descriptions or narratives, your conclusion must present the reader with at least three components: *what you conclude, how you legitimately reached that conclusion, and that indeed you have proved either what you set out to prove or discovered that your research has proved something quite different*.

The tricky part of writing conclusions, even for native speakers of English, is to know how much repetition (“tell them what you told them”) is necessary. The issue of whether to repeat the purpose statement—and, if so, how much of it, albeit in different words—confuses many writers. For example, consider these longer and shorter versions of the very beginning of a conclusion:

Long: The purpose of this paper is to analyze whether young first-generation immigrants are over- or undereducated to a greater extent than ethnic Norwegians in the same age group and the consequences for the wages of immigrants. The focus is on young first immigrants from [countries], ages [given], who arrived in Norway before their sixteenth birthday.

Compared to young ethnic Norwegians these young immigrants are characterized by few years of education and labor market experience, low employment rates.... (etc.)

Short: The young immigrants in this study, compared to ethnic Norwegians in the same age group, have fewer years of education and labor market experience, lower employment rates.... (etc.)

Is one style preferable to the other? The answer depends on the journal. Some papers have classic conclusions that “tell them what they told them.” These conclusions reiterate what the paper did, what it found, and what the findings mean, thereby proving that the paper logically provided and proved everything that the abstract and introduction promised. Nonetheless, be careful—the reader already knows the purpose and content of the paper. Repeating too much of it at the start of the conclusion is not a good idea.

Journals that have “discussions” or both conclusions and discussions allow the writer some latitude for widening the discussion (especially in terms of future research or policy implications)—*but only following a proper conclusion*. The subtlety that many European academics miss in the concept of “discussion” is that a “discussion” can never replace a conclusion. Instead, in the absence of a “conclusions” section, “discussion” or “implications” sections always begin with a conclusion before launching into a broader discussion.

My British colleagues and I have often noticed a common European practice of putting new ideas in conclusions sections. During one seminar, while working with a large group of qualitative social researchers in Denmark, I felt rising tension during a discussion of what goes in the conclusions. Finally, a participant from an Eastern European country said that she had studied at a Swedish university, where she had been taught that throughout the Nordic countries, the practice in qualitative research was to use the conclusion to “open up the issue for a much wider discussion.” Everyone nodded and agreed.

When I asked why they hadn’t given me this information from the start, they looked puzzled. Then I realized that these mostly Nordic qualitative researchers so deeply *knew* what a conclusion was “supposed to do” that it never occurred to them to verbalize it. They *knew*—and I was supposed to know, too. It had taken an “outsider” to recognize and name the underlying premise.

As these types of unstated but taken-for-granted cultural differences often cause writing problems for second- and third-language writers, successful writing in English thus calls for you to become aware of your own academic writing culture—and to keep it from interfering when you write in English.

The last thing you need to keep in mind for conclusions and discussions is that “discussions” that follow a proper conclusion may indeed veer off in some new directions—but again, *only* as long as those directions logically grow out of the conclusions and lead into the next section: recommendations.

Recommendations (including “perspectives” and “implications”)

At the very bottom of the upside-down triangle sits recommendations. Just as the body must flow logically out of the introduction and the conclusion flow logically out of the body, so any recommendations, perspectives, or implications for policy makers or for future research must flow logically out of the conclusions. No huge mental leaps into unconnected territory are acceptable. (But always follow the style of the journal.)

Most papers that give recommendations for future research do so at the very end of the paper. Béland and LeCours, in “The Politics of Territorial Solidarity,” end a nearly four-page discussion (primarily a conclusion) with two paragraphs aimed at future research. These recommendations stick very closely to the theoretical issues central to the paper itself. The last paragraph uses some very good “recommendation” language [italics mine]:

Scholars could also consider the role of welfare provisions in building national identities at the state level. In multinational states such as Canada and the United Kingdom, welfare-state development has had a nation-building dimension (refs.) that deserves more attention. Even less discussed is the relationship between national identity and social policy in unitary states. Yet in countries like Denmark

and Sweden, for example, there is strong evidence that national identity is closely related to social and economic policies (ref.). We hope that future scholarship will draw on the theoretical insights formulated above to explore further the relationship between social policy, national identity, and territorial mobilization.²³

As with other parts of a paper, no one way of giving future recommendations is “right.” Study the journal for linguistic clues; then copy its patterns.

Facts, conclusions, or recommendations?

In English, the very words the writer uses signal the reader whether the sentence is a fact, a conclusion, or a recommendation. No matter where the writer puts the sentence (e.g., in the findings section), the actual wording of the sentence contains implicit messages about the meaning. As the upside-down triangle demonstrates, the body, the conclusion, and any recommendations have separate functions and go in separate sections or paragraphs. A good writer never mixes up facts with conclusions or conclusions with recommendations.

However, before you begin disagreeing, consider that many papers are organized as mini-papers with a general introduction and a general conclusion. Particularly in statistical analyses, the writer presents Test A and its findings (i.e., facts, findings, and mini-conclusions), then does the same for Tests B, C, etc. The final conclusion pulls all the mini-conclusions together into one large one. Nonetheless, even these mini-papers follow the basic pattern of fact → finding → conclusion.

The more skilled you are as a writer, and the more logical (in the Aristotelian sense) your argument, the better your paper’s chances of getting published. So be careful not to use the language of conclusions, for example, when you are presenting facts. What I am discussing here is not the writer’s intent to conclude but the writer’s inadvertent use of words that create the impression of a conclusion. Ironically, the moment that a writer takes two facts and starts comparing them, that writer is creating a conclusion—because a conclusion is an opinion, a commentary on what are otherwise facts. The following sentence illustrates the problem:

The newly published standards combine the characteristics and outline drawings of certain lamps into one booklet. A major difference in the new drawings is that they specify space requirements for each lamp.

The first statement, assuming that it is accurate, is a fact. The second statement, however, is not. It uses two “conclusionary” words: “difference” and “major.” The word “difference” tells the reader that the writer is drawing a conclusion, and the word “major” is all opinion and no fact. The writer offers no criteria for saying “major” instead of “minor,” or for using an adjective at all. Adjectives almost always are statements of opinion, and therefore conclusionary. A factual rewrite would look like this:

The newly published standards combine the characteristics and outline drawings of certain lamps into one booklet. The old drawings did not specify the space requirements for each lamp. The new drawings do.

The same problems apply to the following two sentences (italics marking conclusionary language are mine):

Poor: We analyzed forecasts from numerous sources to determine the potential for gas in the commercial sector. Employment in the service and trade industries *is expected to increase faster than* total employment in all regions.

Poor: *Most* Americans take it for granted that they will receive a steady supply of electricity for their home and business needs.

When I use this last sentence for teaching, arguments arise from those who insist, “But it’s true! It’s a fact!” My point, however, is not about truth or untruth but rather that the writer of this particular sentence has written this “fact” in conclusionary language. What does “most” mean—50.01% or 99.99%? And what facts support this assertion? The only way to present this “fact” as a fact is to write it with factual language before actually presenting a conclusion:

We interviewed a random sample of 10,000 Americans, asking them whether they take it for granted that they will receive a steady supply of electricity for their home and business needs. Nine thousand, nine hundred and eighty-two said yes. Eighteen said no. We therefore conclude that most Americans....

One other teaching example sparks great disagreement:

Apex Co. comes with impressive credentials and is widely used.

I think they will be able to meet your needs. Give them a call at _____.

A number of participants always say that the first sentence is a fact—because it looks true. But looking true and being a fact (and being presented as a fact) are two different things. Of the three sentences, the first is pure conclusion; other than the name “Apex,” the sentence is full of adjectives. The reader does not know who finds Apex “impressive” or whether “widely used” refers to the neighborhood or the world. And where are the credentials proving this impressiveness or wide use? All are missing. As for the second sentence, is it a conclusion or a recommendation? You find the answer by substituting the correct verb for “think”: “I *conclude* that they will....” It is a conclusion—based on nothing, to be sure, but still a conclusion. And, to be fair to those who interpret it as a recommendation, it is a conclusion on the verge of becoming a recommendation, which the next sentence provides. For “give them a call,” add the missing words “*I recommend* that you give....”

Therefore, even if you have positioned your facts, conclusions, and recommendations in the right places, be sure that your language accurately reflects those choices.

Appendices

This book does not cover appendices, as each discipline—and each journal—has different policies and expectations. The one important guideline is never to put anything essential to your argument in an appendix. The same goes for footnotes. Too many European researchers define their main terms in footnotes or endnotes, a practice that horrifies native English speakers. Your main terms are critical to your paper, just as certain tables are critical to your argument. Consider anything in an appendix, endnotes, or footnotes to be essentially buried, out of the reader’s immediate consciousness. Some journals, however, will allow authors to place appendices on the journal’s website.

Abstracts

Abstracts, because they are so condensed, are often the hardest part of the paper to write. Yet they are nothing more than a distillation of the overall structure of the entire paper. Every abstract should include a purpose statement. Most will contain both territory and niche, and most will contain findings and conclusions, although some journal guidelines strictly forbid conclusions. Because the length and style of each abstract differ for every journal, this book presents the full discussion of abstracts and abstract analysis in the journal analysis section.

The one part of abstract writing that I cover here is the importance of tightness of structure and language. When a journal’s submission guidelines offer the contributor a lot of space (e.g., 250 words), the temptation to use up all that space is often too great for the average writer. The danger, however, is that the writer will end up rambling, not focusing. Fewer words that do the job well are always preferable to more words with less focus.

As an abstract should distill the essence of the paper’s structure, it should never be a narrative summary or an attempt at a condensed version. Editors use the abstract (as do readers) to determine whether the subject and purpose of the paper fit the needs of the journal. For example, an Italian economist sent a well-written paper to a journal, only to receive an immediate rejection. The editor, who may have made his or her initial decision from the abstract alone (we will never know), gave the following reason for the “unrefereed” rejection: “There is nothing per se wrong with the paper; rather, it seems narrow to the point where, even if referees were interested in it, I just don’t think I would wish to publish it.”²⁴ The narrowness that the editor mentions was evident in the abstract, because an abstract shows the breadth or limitations of the paper, as well as its prime focus and choice of data.

Following are several examples of first-draft abstracts that improved dramatically after some serious, thoughtful editing. (After you study abstract analysis in Chap. 17, you will find yourself writing tighter, better first-draft abstracts.)

First draft

Within the last two years a large number of a special kind of job called *flexjobs* have appeared on the Danish labor market. To establish this type of job has been part of the government's efforts to make private businesses socially responsible by employing more people with reduced working capacity. Following this the explosive increase in the number of these jobs has been interpreted (by the government as well as many business leaders) as an indication of the successful implementation of this program by enterprises and as a sign that the labor market is becoming more open, and generally less exclusive. Yet, although most of the *flexjob* employees I have talked to are relatively content about their everyday work, almost all of them also have an uneasy feeling about their status, a position that is reflected in their various strategies of "normalizing" their work (for example working longer hours and accepting more "hardship" than is agreed upon in their contract). In addition, the fact that persons employed in a *flexjob* are no longer part of the general collective agreements adds to an experience of social and economic insecurity. People who come from ordinary employment—in contradiction to how it is pictured in the political discourse of social inclusion, often experience their new position as an *exclusion from*—rather than *inclusion into*—the labor market. Furthermore, although most of their colleagues express the opinion that "there should be a place for everybody," the actual relationship to other colleagues is experienced as difficult and "uneasy."

Fortunately, this 250-word first draft contains almost everything the writer needs to say, so the editing job was relatively easy. This draft also contains some narration and some informant quotes, neither of which belong in an abstract. But crucially missing is a clear definition of the main term. The writer's next version (now 135 words) fixed all those problems, creating an abstract that works:

Rewrite

Within the last two years, a large number of special jobs called *flexjobs* have appeared on the Danish labor market. *Flexjobs*—jobs for people with reduced working capacities—are part of the government's efforts to make private businesses socially responsible. The government, along with many business leaders, has interpreted the explosive increase in these jobs in the private sector as a sign of both successful implementation and increased openness in the labor market. This paper shows that most *flexjob* employees feel uneasy about their status, as reflected in various strategies for "normalizing" their work. In addition, their *flexjob* employment exempts them from general collective agreements, thereby exacerbating their experience of social and economic insecurity. *Flexjob* em-

ployees who formerly had ordinary jobs often experience their new position as *exclusion from*—rather than *inclusion into*—the labor market.

In the next example, pay attention to the way in which the rewrite distills the concepts, so that confusion and rambling disappear, leaving the reader with focused clarity:

First draft

The purpose of this paper is to analyze whether young immigrants to a greater extent than ethnic [nationals] in the same age group are overeducated or undereducated and the effect of this on the wage differential between ethnic [nationals] and immigrants. This is done using a decomposition method originally applied to analyze differences between men and women with regard to distribution on occupational status and wage level. The analysis of the occupational distribution indicates that immigrants are not in general overeducated in the jobs they hold. On the contrary, at the top level, immigrants seem to be undereducated, while at the lowest levels we found evidence of overeducation. The decomposition analysis shows that the major part of the wage gap between immigrants is explained by differences in individual characteristics. The undereducation among immigrants contributes to reduce the wage gap between young ethnic [nationals] and young immigrants and dominates the effect of overeducation. [152 words]

Rewrite

This paper analyzes whether young immigrants are more greatly overeducated or undereducated than their ethnic [national] peers and how such differences affect the wage differential between them. We use a decomposition method originally applied to differences in the occupational status and wage levels of men and women. Results indicate that at the highest occupational levels, immigrants appear undereducated, while at the lowest levels they are overeducated. Differences in individual characteristics explain the major part of the wage gap among immigrants. Overall, immigrant undereducation narrows the wage gap between young ethnic [nationals] and young immigrants, thus mitigating the effect of overeducation. [100 words]

Not only for abstracts but also for all parts of the paper, you should be studying journals while doing your research, so that by the time you reach the outlining stage, you will already have chosen a journal. Doing so will save you *days* of extra work organizing, outlining, and writing. As for outlining itself, the next section gives you a technique that you can use for everything you write, from papers to reports to entire books.

Outlining

Before you make an outline, what exists in your mind is a creative nebula, not a solar system. It is a chaos of matter which might be organized into a solar system.²⁵

—AYN RAND

As the articles in every journal usually follow a certain organizational format, studying the journal will save you time and help you organize your paper. For example, one journal may always have a theoretical section, while another may put theory and methodology into one section, and a third will include a section called “Methods and Data.” Even if two journals have theory and methodology sections, one may place theory before methodology, while the other does the opposite. Thus your first thoughts about organizing your paper should come from the journal you have chosen. Find the pattern in the journal, and use the same major categories in the same order.

Nonetheless, deciding what goes where within each category, especially in a complex paper, is not easy. Outlining is an essential strategy for clarifying not only “what goes where” but also—and more importantly—the entire structure and flow of your argument. Moreover, outlining is an integral part of the Anglo-American writing tradition. Learning to outline means learning to organize thought. Without careful organization, a writer almost never has a paper that works.

All good Anglo-American scholars make outlines, whether visually or (for only the very skilled) mentally. As children, most of us learn the concept of outlining along with paragraphing. Some teachers use the traditional method of Roman numerals and English letters:

- I. [First Main Point]
 - A.
 - B.
 - i.
 - a.
 - b.
 - ii.
 - iii.
- II. [Second Main Point] (etc.)

This system, based on classical Greek rhetoric, teaches that every I has to have a II, and every A has to have a B. These principles call for balance within the argument. The value of using the classical outline is that it trains the student to weigh the importance of every part of an argument—which are the main points, which are the sub-points attached to each of the main points, and which are the sub-sub-points, etc.

I remember agonizing over outlines in which I found only one A and had to stretch my imagination to ridiculous ends to invent a B that a teacher would accept. This intuitive and experiential knowledge that not every A has a B is likely what stopped me, and countless others, from using this outlining system, its effectiveness notwithstanding. Even so, I recall my English composition professor at Berkeley having us outline President John F. Kennedy’s 1961 Inaugural Address (with the famous line “ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country”) in its entirety, to see the brilliant rhetorical balance for which speechwriter Theodore Sorensen was justly famous. The point was to teach us how to organize our ideas and our words for greatest effect.

Other outlining techniques include “mind-mapping,” a color-coded method of creating principal points that branch off the main point, with little twigs or smaller branches branching off of those points, etc. While proponents of this method trumpet its “flexible” and “creative” superiority over linear thinking, my experience is that while it works for some individuals, others work better with organized lists. Therefore, this section presents a third approach—a method that works easily for almost everyone, whether the writer’s thinking strengths are analytical or intuitive.

What is an outline, and what does it do?

An outline is a frame that allows the writer to visualize his or her argument as the reader is going to see it. Even though many researchers write up their findings or observations as they go along, those discrete pieces of writing do not a paper or an outline make. Deciding where to place these pieces, for best persuasive advantage in the development of the argument, is the main purpose of outlining.

The saying that “there is no such thing as good writing, only good rewriting” also applies to the organizing process. We do not really know what we have to say, or mean to say, until we see it in writing. Then we see all the holes in the argument, the missing steps, etc. But writing is hard work and takes time. How much wiser, then, for the writer to use an outline, which identifies those problems before the writing stage and shows the writer exactly how to proceed. In essence, not using an outline means wasting one’s time. As Ayn Rand writes:

The basic pattern of an outline is that of a theorem of Euclidean geometry: state what you are going to demonstrate, demonstrate it, and then announce the conclusion. An outline, however, involves more steps and details....

The guiding question in this process is: What does the reader need to know to agree with the conclusion? That determines what to include. Select the essentials of what you need to convince the reader—keeping in mind the context of your subject.”²⁶

She also adds this caution:

The purpose of an outline is to present your future article in a form you can grasp *as a unified whole*. This is why I stress that each person should make his outline to suit his own purposes. The exact form of the outline will depend on the subject and theme, and on how detailed or abstract *you* need the outline to be in order to hold it all in your mind. So first make it abstract enough that you can hold the total in your mind, and then, before you start writing, expand it by adding the necessary details. That way, you grasp the connections between the overall structure of your article and the more concrete outline from which you will write. [italics hers]

*Never start an article without knowing whether your structure is clear, organized, and properly delimited....*²⁷ [italics mine]

I agree with Rand. Different minds have different strengths. Some scholars find the writing process an analytical one, whereas others use the writing itself as a process of discovery (i.e., they write to discover what they want to say). Outlining allows you, as the writer, to see both what needs to go where and the problems that will follow if a certain section comes later rather than sooner.

Outlining method

The method that follows allows you to use both hemispheres of your brain—the more linear left, the more holistic right—while creating the outline. It has six consecutive steps, the first of which you have probably already done.

1. Write a one-sentence purpose statement.

A purpose statement serves as both a focusing agent and a magnet that attracts essential information and repels nonessential information. Take time to write the statement well, as it will appear in both your abstract and your introduction.

2. Brainstorm.

Turn off your critical faculties and make a list of *every idea, fact, theory, finding*, however imperfect, that you think should or might go in the paper. Jot down any idea that comes to you, in any form that it comes to you—words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs. Include the names of categories (e.g., methodology). List anything that comes into your mind.

Do this step in a concentrated way, taking as many hours or days as you need. Have an electronic device or a paper and pen with you at all times during the process, so that if an idea comes to you while you are doing something else, you can immediately note it.

Brainstorming is the most creative part of the technique. It allows you to work with longer-term memory, which can also spark new ideas. But brainstorming works *only* if you do it with complete disregard for the critical side of your nature. Therefore, during this step, do not ask “will this idea work?” You will do that later. As no self-censorship is allowed at this stage, enjoy it.

Caution: If you are keeping your list on your computer, make the list vertical. If you are doing this step longhand, be sure to place every item on your list on only one side of the page, with a space between each. An alternative longhand strategy is placing every item on a separate sheet of paper.

3. Become critical.

Relate every item on your brainstorming list back to the purpose statement, and eliminate all irrelevant ideas.

- a. Look at what remains on your list. If the list doesn’t really cover what you know you have to write, then your purpose statement does not accurately reflect your purpose.
- b. Rewrite your purpose statement, if necessary, and repeat all the steps to this point.

This third step is the most crucial, because during it you will discover whether your purpose statement is accurate.

For example, if you have 30 items on your brainstorming list and eliminate 12, you may find that the 18 remaining items are exactly what you want. Or you may see that those 18 items will lead to a 9,000-word paper, when the journal does not take papers over 6,000 words. In that case, your purpose statement is too broad. Rewrite it more specifically, and repeat the first three steps.

Conversely, you may find that you have eliminated 18 of your original 30 items, leaving you with a nice short list of 12—but those 12 will not create the argument that you want to make. In this case, the odds are that you did not focus your purpose statement as precisely as necessary. Rethink your purpose, rewrite your purpose statement, and repeat the first three steps. During this step, add any essential ideas that you forgot to put on the original list.

Remember—you will *always* find it easier, faster, and more productive to rewrite an outline than to rewrite an entire draft of a paper.

When you leave this step, you should feel confident that every idea or item on your list is pertinent to a purpose statement that works.

4. Group together all related items.

Each group will become a paragraph, a series of paragraphs, a subsection, or a section.

This step is so low-tech that many professionals make the mistake of thinking that it is beneath them. On the contrary, scholars who have used this technique even once now swear by its efficacy. Take the time to do it right—the results are worth every minute.

This step calls for visually organizing your entire paper. As grouping items means cutting and pasting, some specific rules apply to this step. If you have written your list on paper, take a pair of scissors and cut each item into a separate strip. If you have your list in your computer, you *may* cut and paste electronically—but only if you can see your entire list on the screen, without having to scroll up or down. If you need to start scrolling to see the full list, print it and cut the items into separate strips of paper.

Look at each strip of paper and decide what pile it should go in: introduction, findings, conclusions (maybe both findings and conclusions?), methodology, literature review, hypotheses, theory, discussion?

Create these separate piles until every piece of paper is in its appropriate group. If you find one or two that do not fit anywhere, ask yourself: should I toss this item out, because it does not fit my paper, or does it actually constitute a category or group of its own?

5. Within each group, put the items in the correct order for your paper.

In many ways, this step is the most fun—and the most revealing of your thought processes. For example, you will quickly discover as you put item A first, followed by items B and C, that item D makes no logical sense unless you have placed item G between A and B. Moving item G to that position, you then see that item J, which you thought should go at the end, now needs to replace B, because without the definition of J very close to the beginning, nothing after A will work.

Roll up your sleeves and have fun. This step will walk you through your own thinking and help you to discover the best organization for your argument.

As you move all the pieces of paper around, continue to eliminate any irrelevant items left over from Step 3 or add any that you now realize you forgot.

6. Place all the groups in a logical sequence.

This logic may be inherent in the nature of the argument (e.g., subject → cause → effect → conclusions). If your paper is chronological, then 2008

obviously precedes 2009. The style of the journal will also play a big role in determining both the categories and the order in which you place them.

Your first draft is now done. Yes, this method of outlining does double duty: it gives you both an outline and a first draft, because all your ideas are exactly where you want them, pared down to the necessary ones. Just as no first draft is ever perfect, this draft is like a skeleton that needs meat on its bones. Flesh it out with all the details, revise it for grammar and language, and you will have a good enough second draft to offer to colleagues for comments.

This method works. Until you have tried it, you may make the mistake of considering it unnecessary or contrary to your way of writing. Try it—you will not be disappointed. And you will be well on your way to writing the kind of well-argued paper that international journals publish. The next chapter will take the principle of logical organization and concept framing one step further.

chapter 13 ANGLO-AMERICAN ARGUMENTATION: How to Develop and Frame a Logical Argument

[D]eductive strategies are usually used in cases of proofs or logical arguments where the goal is to show the reader...how one has arrived at a foregone conclusion....

[T]he inductive strategy works best...when your conclusion is one which you believe your...reader is likely to resist.¹

—RON SCOLLON AND SUZANNE WONG SCOLLON

Argument is discourse that tries to prove a point: any argument purports to give reasons for accepting some proposition. Let us call the proposition an argument that tries to support its *conclusion* and those propositions which it advances as that which support its *premises*. Aristotle recognizes two kinds of arguments which support their conclusions in fundamentally different ways. The first of these is *deduction*.... In modern terms, deductions are *valid arguments*.²

—ROBIN SMITH

Every linguistic community has a different way of organizing and presenting ideas to its audience, partly because that presentation method is embedded in its educational system and partly because that style is what the readership in that community expects. As I have stressed throughout this book, the Anglo-American idea of *what* writing a paper means, *how* the writer should organize his or her thinking, and *how* the writer will present and argue the main point is rooted in Aristotelian logic. Some European traditions, by contrast, are more Hegelian. Others demand a great deal of highly specific description but in no rigidly particular order.

In addition, the organizational methods that social scientists learn during their studies also depend on their field. For example, ethnographers and anthropologists learn how to frame narratives better than, say, economists. Yet economists and some sociologists have a language for data presentation that other disciplines lack; they have both a mathematical vocabulary and mathematical tools for organization and presentation.

Furthermore, researchers in particular need to detach themselves from their project long enough to consider what interests editors and readers—whose interest is almost always the ideas, not the data per se. As writers in English, all social scientists need to consider the following question: How can I think about, present, and interweave my data, methodology, or theory into a larger and relevant context? In other words, how can I create a cohesive, convincing argument?

“Argument” derives from the Latin *arguere*, meaning to “make clear.” In English, constructing a valid argument calls for applying Aristotle’s three argumentative appeals as described in the preceding chapter. A publishable paper in English must contain sound reasoning that the writer carefully puts together with the aim of convincing the reader of the rightness of his or her theory, statement, or position. Argument thus entails a meticulous ordering of the writer’s ideas, so that they lead the reader, step by well-framed step, to agree with the writer’s conclusions.

While knowing his or her audience is the writer’s first task, understanding the linguistic logic of English is also a prerequisite for creating an argument that an international journal will want to publish. Once the writer can identify the audience, he or she can begin to ask and answer the three most important questions:

- What am I certain that my reader already knows about the subject?
- What does my reader need to know?
- In addition to what my reader needs to know, what additional information might help convince my reader of the rightness or accuracy of my position?

Thinking about the answers to these questions both during the research and just before beginning to write will make the outlining process much quicker.

This chapter discusses Aristotelian logic as it applies to both language and organization. The chapter also presents a sentence-by-sentence analysis of a six-paragraph example of excellent argumentation.

The linguistic logic of English

In English, every word must be the right word in the right place for the sentence to make sense and for the writer to make his or her point. Because English has such a large vocabulary, as well as regional and country differences, knowing which word to use can be difficult. Nonetheless, certain basic guidelines apply to argumentation and the language of proofs.

First, words such as *therefore*, *thus*, *consequently*, and *hence* have precise meanings and functions relative to cause-and-effect. The use of any of these words tells the reader that the writer has given a cause and will now present its effect. Unfortunately, many European scholars use “therefore” or “thus” as a general transition word, helping them to move smoothly from one sentence to the next. Such inaccurate usage

causes confusion for the reader, not to mention editors and reviewers. The same rule holds for phrases such as “for that reason” and “as a result.” The writer may use these words and phrases *on the condition that they introduce a definite effect of the cause that the previous sentence has presented.*

Second, many words have verb uses that differ from their noun meanings. For example, being “at risk” for something is not the same as “risking” something. The first use entails being inherently vulnerable to danger; the second use means actively taking chances to which danger may be attached. Non-native writers must learn these differences through careful reading and close work with a good copyeditor. The following sentence illustrates the problem:

Children who are constantly bullied by other children and who react with extensive crying appear to have a higher risk of having at least one unemployed parent, at least one parent with no vocational training, a mother with mental problems, or a family in financial difficulty.

This sentence, as now written, suggests that these children are “risking” (at some later time) having parents with these problems. The writer’s intention, of course, was to suggest the opposite—that these children already had parents with these problems. The writer confused the concept of risk with the word itself. The problem in English is that sometimes the right noun (for a concept) makes the wrong verb. In this instance, the verb phrase “appear to have a risk of having” should instead be “tend to have” or “are likely to have.”

Pragmatically speaking, the real problem with these mistakes is that they make the writer sound unprofessional, an attribute that can damage a paper’s chances of getting published:

Data is a great difficulty in cross-country analyses.

Oops—“data” is not “difficult,” data simply is. What the writer meant to say was:

Finding comparable data is a large problem in cross-country analyses.

However, as the English reader is supposed to accept the words as written (rather than ferreting out what the writer really intended to say), the reader usually starts laughing at the writer’s expense.

Third, Anglo-American writers know that they must very carefully spell out the relationship of each sentence to the next and of each idea to the one that follows. Too many European writers make an “obvious” jump in their minds and forget to include that missing link in their draft. (Many Anglo-American writers also make such leaps in our first drafts, but our cultural training is to iron out the kinks in those logic problems before showing the draft to anyone.) The result of leaping from A to C, with an implicit B, is that the reader cannot follow the writer’s thinking and comes away believing that the writer cannot think well. Here is a typical first-draft example:

To our knowledge the current paper is the first to investigate the impact of the quality of compulsory school on housing prices in Norway. Machin and Salvanes (2007), however, exploit a policy experiment to identify the relationship between housing prices and school performance on upper secondary education (11th to 13th grade) in Oslo. They use raw grade point averages as indicators of school quality.

The “language logic” problem begins with the word “however,” which implies that “although our paper is the first, there is some problem with its being first or with our thinking that it is first.” “However” is the wrong word in the wrong place. The real relationship that the writer wants to show is most likely this: “We are the first to investigate the impact of [X upon Y]. Although [other researchers] investigate the same relationship in a slightly different population, their study uses indicators different from ours....” How the paragraph continues would depend on the content of those differences and the direction in which the writers want to take their argument.

In addition, I highly recommend thinking twice before using the phrase “to [our/my] knowledge.” In the English-speaking academic tradition, the writer is supposed to have read every related published article at the time of submission. Doing all of that research is the writer’s job. Writing “to my knowledge” is the mark of an amateur. In English it functions as a hedge word (“oh, well, just in case maybe I missed an article, I’m hedging my bets”) and is stylistically and pragmatically inadvisable.

One last type of language problem comes from the writer’s making two sets of assumptions—first, that something is true, and second, that the reader shares that first assumption. The following first-draft excerpt illustrates the problem (italics mine):

Globalization represents a new economic environment to which businesses have to adjust. To determine globalization effects on the labor markets, *you* have to investigate and analyze how businesses perceive the structural space of opportunities and challenges they have been placed in and how they respond to their perceptions. *Obviously outsourcing will belong* to the list of possible adjustment strategies, *but it is not obvious that it should necessarily belong* to the most favored items on it. When globalization-related labor market research has concentrated on employment and inequality due to outsourcing and international trade, it has *therefore* concentrated on some but not all of the ways in which businesses can respond to the possibilities and challenges of current globalization.

First, a quick comment on style: the words “you” and “your” never appear in academic writing in English, except in a quotation from an interviewee. Even though the writer is writing to the reader, who is technically “you,” Anglo-American academic conventions do not permit the use of those two words. Returning to the issue of logic, we find both “obviously” and “it is obvious” in contexts in which the writer has not made the subject’s “obviousness” clear. One to three sentences of argument are

missing—and the writer must supply them or the argument will remain illogical. By the time we reach the “therefore,” we readers are at sea, because the writer has given us no clear cause to support a “therefore” statement.

These problems and others like them make it all the more incumbent upon the European writer to *clarify, clarify, clarify*—and never move to the next step or idea until the first one is completely clear. The rest of this chapter concentrates on framing an argument, so that the reader can follow your thinking, step by perfectly explained step.

Framing your argument

Framing is essential to the writing of any academic work in the Anglo-American rhetorical tradition. Framing—the art of introducing and contextualizing everything you write—is to your argument what a topic sentence is to a paragraph, and a purpose sentence to a paper.

Framing makes logic out of otherwise unconnected sentences. Framing fills in the gaps that other linguistic communities may allow but that English never does. Framing takes the reader by the hand and walks him or her through the writer’s thought processes. If the writer frames the argument well, the reader will see only the writer’s point of view—the result that the writer wants. But if the framing is poor, and the logical connections between paragraphs and sentences are missing, then the reader will have time to disagree and reason to find fault and get bored with the paper. In English, elegant framing signifies not only good writing but also sophisticated thinking. The more elegant the framing language, the better a thinker the reader assumes the writer to be.

A European colleague of mine has observed that Americans tend to pay stricter attention to framing than the British, and that the amount of framing a writer needs depends on the journal. The latter statement is true, because everything in a paper depends on the journal. Although some American journals may be more obvious in their framing, my observation is that writers in top-ranked British journals also pay close attention to framing—as should you.

Framing occurs on many levels. One is the simple use of transitional adverbs, from *therefore* to *however*, from *first* to *on the other hand*, and from *as we shall soon see* to *as previously mentioned*. A second level is that of letting the reader know what will happen, and when, so that the writer can make a digression without losing the reader’s attention. Whereas most European readers have no problem with a discussion of theory X or Y in the middle of a paragraph or section about something entirely different, Anglo-American readers do. Culturally, they know that the writer’s job is to make clear what the writer is doing at every stage of the paper, what direction the argument is taking, when the argument is heating up or winding down, and so on. Doing all of these things demands careful framing on the part of the writer.

Framing at all times works well, even with longer phrases such as “third, and more relevant to the main argument of this article....” A typical framing sentence looks like this: “We intend to answer these three questions in this article by empirically relating X characteristics and control variables to various aspects of Y.” Following are a few excellent models of reader-preparing framing, distilled and adapted from sentences in high-ranking international journals (italics mine):

However, before analyzing these theories, we will review the literature on why the general public distinguishes between types of X, and formulate some hypotheses about what we may reasonably expect as outcomes of these analyses.

We briefly review the literature on the X hypothesis, refine our hypotheses, and then present the results of our five-region analysis of the relationships between various kinds of Y and characteristics of [# of] EU Member States.

[after building a case leading to the “therefore”]

Therefore, I put the theoretical debate aside and concentrate on pragmatic questions about the X hypothesis, which in its most basic form suggests:

[from the end of an introduction]

Before demonstrating the production of X, the paper begins with a necessary brief outline of the studies that examined the collective identity of the [particular group] in [country].

I argue and present evidence that (a) _____ policies indeed involve significant _____s that cross regional boundaries, and that (b) these crossovers are large enough to create XYZ.

[from the end of an article]

Finally, and clearly open for discussion, is the issue of why Z patterns are the same throughout the [Balkan region], that is, why X beliefs are so deeply embedded in popular culture. We speculate that this similarity exemplifies a cultural pattern originally necessary for.... If true, some form of X should also exist in all other regions and countries.

Another type of framing carefully sets up the writer’s disagreement with other scholars, methods, or theories—or anticipates and defuses any possible counter-arguments from readers with other points of view. However, in criticizing the work of others, avoid heavily negative language. Much better etiquette (i.e., writing unto others as you would have them write unto you) is to emulate this style of sentence:

In addition, my focus on an important new set of _____ contradicts the hypothesis of [famous theorist(s)] that the transition to X is accompanied by a decline in Y.

Although some ethnographers still connect cultural preferences with social class, others argue that....

Some might invoke [theory X], suggesting that what the average [country] voter thinks about Y is irrelevant, because these decisions take place at the EU level.... However, the [country] has recently changed its policy towards....

The first writer takes all personal disagreement out of the equation by saying that the “focus” “contradicts” a “hypothesis.” The second writer politely acknowledges those with whose opinion he or she disagrees, thereby avoiding an outright attack. The third writer not only uses “[s]ome might invoke” (to not “name names”) but also includes their argument before politely stating “however.”

Anticipating criticism, naming it, and neutralizing it (or at least reducing its impact) is a critical skill in academic writing. All the best academic writers do this well—and not only those writing in English. An impressive example comes from *Reading Jewish Women: Marginality and Modernization in Nineteenth-Century Eastern European Jewish Society* by Iris Parush, a 340-page book that won the highly coveted Israel Prize. The excellent translation from the Hebrew shows Parush’s framing talents, especially when she anticipates criticism for even hinting that the lives of women had any influence in the Jewish Enlightenment movement of that pre-feminist period. By paragraph five of her preface, she writes:

Without denying that the [modernizing] enterprise was indeed advanced chiefly through the efforts of a male elite, and without mitigating in the least the importance of the scholarship of its projects, institutions and authors, this book seeks to shift the focus from the elite to the margins of society. It seeks to describe the role played by women readers in widening the fissures within traditional society, and draws attention to the unique contributions women made to the dissemination of the new ways of thought in the society of their time....³

Pay close attention to the framing language and structure. Parush rightly expects criticism for suggesting that women of the time were important or that their efforts could possibly compare with those of highly influential male scholars and writers. She thus takes all the academic wind out of the sails of anticipated critics by telling them that she agrees with them. “*Without denying* that [X] was indeed advanced chiefly by...” and “*without mitigating* in the least the importance of...” stops the criticism in its tracks—and with excellent parallel structure. Parush also uses “seeks to shift the focus,” soft-pedaling the incisive analysis to come, and uses “from the elite to the margins,” nominally deferent to her critics’ claim for the primacy of the male elite.

Another kind of framing has to do with argument, the next subject of this chapter. Using words and phrases such as *consequent*, *in turn*, and *thereby [do]-ing* tells the reader how the writer is building his or her case. The following conclusionary paragraph comes from Jeremy Rifkin’s *The European Dream*:

Immigrants are frequently discriminated against by their adopted country. *The discrimination, in turn*, perpetuates the cycle of dire poverty and alienation and fans the flames of social unrest among immigrants, *creating* a kind of vicious cycle that’s difficult to break. *Then, too*, immigrant parents often are unable to exert the same kind of parental control over children that they were able to command in their native land. The breakdown of family authority *combined with* abject poverty and a sense of rootlessness make for a powerful mix of escalating antisocial behavior and crime.⁴ [italics mine]

Rifkin starts with a clear, short topic sentence. He then converts the verb of the first sentence into the subject of the second (another excellent framing strategy, called “nominalization,” that is crucial for achieving coherence), and he follows that subject with “in turn”: the reader now easily sees that X not only happens to a group of people but also “perpetuates” Y. “Then, too” tells the reader that X has even more ramifications. By the time the writer reaches the concluding sentence of this four-sentence paragraph, he has taken the reader from discrimination to poverty to social unrest, showing both a “vicious cycle” and “breakdown of family authority.” For the final framing of his argument, he now “combines” these two factors with two others to end up with “a powerful mix” of “escalating antisocial behavior and crime.”

This paragraph shows much more than sophisticated framing. It also includes strong verbs (*perpetuate, fan, command*) and adjectives (*dire, abject, powerful*). More importantly, it shows the clear, careful development of the writer’s argument. As a short example of good framing, it makes an excellent lead-in to a focused discussion of Anglo-American argumentation: what it entails and how it works.

Constructing an argument, sentence by sentence

Choosing a good example to use in this section was difficult, as so many published papers argue convincingly. The one I finally selected impresses me greatly because of the writer’s ability to both acknowledge the territory and cast serious doubt on the efficacy or reasonability of all previous studies in her area—and do so with impeccable reasoning in a straightforward, collegial tone. Without casting aspersions on the integrity of her colleagues, and with well-organized deliberation, she moves her argument forward sentence by sentence, until by the end of the introduction, no reader could possibly disagree with her. Her position is so well argued that she manages to wipe out the competition while establishing a “novel theoretical approach” with a data set that has “two key advantages”—all in merely six paragraphs.

The paper is “Pulled, Pushed and Persuaded: Explaining Women’s Mobilization into the Salvadoran Guerrilla Army” by Jocelyn S. Viterna (*American Journal of Sociology*, 2006.) As you read her introduction, visualize the structuring of her argument. My dissection of that argument and the way in which she builds and frames it will follow. (I have deleted the references and italicized the major framing elements.)

Popular support is often considered the sine qua non of revolution (ref.). Nevertheless, there is little consensus among scholars about which causal factors are most important for generating popular mobilization (ref.). Some scholars portray popular participants as aggrieved individuals who become mobilized when structural conditions—for example, weak states, elite division, agrarian arrangements, or socioeconomic dislocations—are conducive to activism (4 refs.). For others, popular participants are rational actors who see opportunities for personal gain through revolutionary activism (2 refs.). Some scholars portray grassroots participants as identifying deeply with the ideals and goals of the movement because of their preexisting network memberships (4 refs.). Still others depict participants as unwilling supporters of the cause, coerced to participate by threats of harm, denial of needed goods, or a lack of options to avoid activism (3 refs.).

Yet, of the many individuals experiencing structural changes, of the many individuals in position to benefit from revolutionary activism, of the many individuals embedded in identity-molding mobilizing networks, and of the many individuals caught in coercive situations, only a few actually participate in revolutionary movements. *Herein lies the dilemma:* if the characteristics that explain activism are shared by activists and nonactivists, then how can these characteristics be the critical causal factors behind popular mobilization? If they are not, what additional—or alternative—factors explain why some, but not all, members of a group or network take part in high-risk revolutionary activism?

Questions about the causes of revolutionary mobilization remain unresolved because mobilization scholars generally seek the one causal factor or set of factors that “typically” leads individuals to activism. These explanations assume that activists are a largely homogenous group who generally follow one path to participation. But activists are heterogeneous (3 refs.) and, as I demonstrate, can follow strikingly different paths to the same mobilization outcome. For example, the same causal factor that promotes mobilization in some people may actually inhibit mobilization in others. In this case, searching for the “typical” mobilization pattern obscures an important causal factor because its contradictory effects cannot be captured in a generalized explanation of all activism. These generalized explanations can therefore lead to inaccurate explanations of mobilization and distort our understanding of broader revolutionary processes.

In this article, I develop a novel theoretical approach for analyzing microlevel mobilization that complements mesolevel and macrocomparative studies. I argue that there are multiple, conjunctural causes of mobilization, even among individuals embedded within similar identity-producing networks and within similar structural contexts. These multiple paths to participation arise from the patterned interaction of individual-level biography, networks, and situation context. Because mobilization processes are patterned, scholars can identify the different paths that individuals follow to participation while still prioritizing parsimonious explanations. My analysis shows that distinguishing microlevel

variation in participation processes yields more accurate theories of high-risk activism and, in turn, improves our macrolevel understanding of the causes, successes, failures, and unintended consequences of popular revolutionary mobilization.

The case of women revolutionaries in El Salvador illustrates the utility of this approach. In the 1980s, thousands of Salvadoran women joined the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN), a revolutionary guerrilla army engaged in combat with the oppressive Salvadoran state. These women, like their counterparts around the world, defied patriarchal traditions, abandoned their homes and families, and became militant members of rural guerrilla insurrections. By analyzing the multiple paths that Salvadoran women followed to the guerrilla camps, I refine existing explanations of women’s revolutionary participation and suggest how these new insights may have important implications for macrolevel processes such as democratization and broader transformations in gendered rights and relations.

My conclusions are based on analysis of rich data from in-depth interviews with 82 rank-and-file guerilla combatants, guerrilla supporters, and nonparticipants in rural El Salvador. These data have two key advantages. First, they include the experiences of the grassroots, whereas most mobilization studies focus solely on movement leadership. Second, they allow for comparisons between activists and similarly situated nonactivists, whereas most studies sample on the dependent variable and omit nonactivists. This rare representative sample of activists and nonactivists is uniquely suited to the identification of the multiple paths to activism that deepen sociological understandings of mobilization.⁵

As Viterna’s argumentation and writing are superb, we have much to learn from this introduction, paragraph by paragraph. The analysis that follows is highly detailed, so that you may model your future analyses of your own or others’ arguments on what you read here:

Popular support is often considered the sine qua non of revolution (ref.). Nevertheless, there is little consensus among scholars about which causal factors are most important for generating popular mobilization (ref.). Some scholars portray popular participants as aggrieved individuals who become mobilized when structural conditions—for example, weak states, elite division, agrarian arrangements, or socioeconomic dislocations—are conducive to activism (4 refs.). For others, popular participants are rational actors who see opportunities for personal gain through revolutionary activism (2 refs.). Some scholars portray grassroots participants as identifying deeply with the ideals and goals of the movement because of their preexisting network memberships (4 refs.). Still others depict participants as unwilling supporters of the cause, coerced to participate by threats of harm, denial of needed goods, or a lack of options to avoid activism (3 refs.).

The first sentence is short and strong, grabbing the reader’s attention, because the Latin *sine qua non* means “that without which not” (i.e., no popular support, no revo-

lution). By using the verb phrase “is often considered,” she signals the reader that this opinion is that of others: it is the territory in which she will establish her niche. So when the reader sees the first framing word of the second sentence, “nevertheless,” the reader is not surprised. Nonetheless, after naming the territory, she has to name the problems within it, because in English all argument is explicit, not implicit. She uses good parallel structure in her next four sentences to break down the scholars among whom “there is little consensus” into four distinct groups. She needs to name these groups and their different positions as the foundation on which she will begin creating her own position.

Throughout the paragraph, she uses references to create her Aristotelian *ethos*, her academic credibility and reliability. She has thus primed her readers to trust her and has piqued their curiosity about the as-yet-unstated position that she will take:

Yet, of the many individuals experiencing structural changes, of the many individuals in position to benefit from revolutionary activism, of the many individuals embedded in identity-molding mobilizing networks, and of the many individuals caught in coercive situations, only a few actually participate in revolutionary movements. Herein lies the dilemma: if the characteristics that explain activism are shared by activists and nonactivists, then how can these characteristics be the critical causal factors behind popular mobilization? If they are not, what additional—or alternative—factors explain why some, but not all, members of a group or network take part in high-risk revolutionary activism?

In terms of style (parallel structure, rhythmic repetition of the positions named in the preceding paragraph) and persuasion, this is one of the best short paragraphs I have ever read. Viterna begins with “yet” (a counteractive word less forceful or combative than either “but” or “however”), thereby signaling the reader that some doubt, if not full disagreement, will follow. She then repeats all four scholarly positions, so that her “yet” encompasses them all (“the many individuals” who fit each group) and calls into question—in only eight words—the work of her predecessors: “only a few actually participate in revolutionary movements.” (Her argumentative sentence structure, boiled down to its essence, is this: “Of the many people in categories A, B, C, or D, only a few actually do E.”) These eight words reveal the weakness in the findings of the previous studies.

But rather than criticize her colleagues outright, Viterna instead uses a four-word clause to begin framing this observation as a “dilemma.” Her framing of this dilemma, in two sentences, shows a careful Aristotelian building of the questions that frame the issue: “*If this, then why that? And if not this, then what is missing?*” Or, put another way, if groups Y and Z share X characteristics, then how can those characteristics be the critical causal factor for group Y alone? If groups Y and Z do not share X characteristics, then what is missing? What “additional—or alternative—factors”

can explain why some but not all of group Y members act in a certain way? Furthermore, by using “additional—or alternative,” Viterna lets her colleagues (and the reader) know that the position she is about to state will not be antagonistic to theirs.

Viterna now proceeds to analyze the likely cause of the “dilemma” she has framed:

Questions about the causes of revolutionary mobilization remain unresolved because mobilization scholars *generally* seek the one causal factor or set of factors that “typically” leads individuals to activism. *These* explanations assume that activists are a largely homogenous group who generally follow one path to participation. *But* activists are heterogeneous (3 refs.) and, as I demonstrate, can follow strikingly different paths to the same mobilization outcome. *For example*, the same causal factor that promotes mobilization in some people may actually inhibit mobilization in others. *In this case*, searching for the “typical” mobilization pattern obscures an important causal factor because its contradictory effects cannot be captured in a generalized explanation of all activism. These generalized explanations can therefore lead to inaccurate explanations of mobilization and distort our understanding of broader revolutionary processes.

Viterna’s first sentence explains the relationship between her questions and the previous work of other scholars: “Questions” “remain unresolved” because “mobilization scholars” “generally seek” “the one causal factor” “typically” leading to _____. (This structure is “because-of-this-therefore-that” in reverse, i.e., effect before cause.) Words such as *unresolved*, *generally*, and *typically* make her language and tone highly collegial and respectful. With the second sentence, she takes her analysis deeper, revealing the assumption upon which her colleagues’ positions are based (i.e., a certain homogeneity).

The “but” that starts sentence three signals the reader that Viterna is about to stake out her niche: not homogeneity but heterogeneity exists. She bolsters this claim with the “as I demonstrate” clause, which tells the reader that proof is coming—and that the reader should therefore suspend all judgment until he or she has read the whole paper. Sentence four offers a validating example, allowing Viterna in sentence five to use that example to show how her colleagues’ assumptions and consequent goals can “obscure an important causal factor” even as they are seeking one. Viterna rounds out her argument and wraps up the paragraph with sentence six, which shows that “generalized explanations” “can therefore lead to inaccurate explanations” and “distort our understanding of” “broader processes.” (The word “can” softens the blow.) The “therefore” sentence tells the reader that she has reached a logical conclusion—and indeed she has.

By now Viterna has explained the problem as she sees it—a problem with both the assumptions and results of previous research. She has thrown down the gauntlet and

claimed her niche. The reader now expects, and receives, the details of how Viterna will occupy this niche:

In this article, I develop a novel theoretical approach for analyzing microlevel mobilization that complements mesolevel and macrocomparative studies. I argue that there are multiple, conjunctural causes of mobilization, even among individuals embedded within similar identity-producing networks and within similar structural contexts. These multiple paths to participation arise from the patterned interaction of individual-level biography, networks, and situation context. Because mobilization processes are patterned, scholars can identify the different paths that individuals follow to participation while still prioritizing parsimonious explanations. My analysis shows that distinguishing microlevel variation in participation processes yields more accurate theories of high-risk activism and, in turn, improves our macrolevel understanding of the causes, successes, failures, and unintended consequences of popular revolutionary mobilization.

Here Viterna lays out her general purpose in one paragraph, in a series of sentences that move increasingly from the general to the specific. (This movement from the general to the specific—both in a paper as a whole and in each paragraph and section—is another hallmark of Anglo-American argumentation.) She begins by announcing a “novel theoretical approach” for analyzing “microlevel mobilization that complements mesolevel and macrocomparative studies.” For a journal interested in theory, she could not have done better, as she uses one level of analysis to “complement” two others. With this statement as a springboard, she leaps into her argument (“I argue”) for “multiple, conjunctural causes of mobilization, even among individuals embedded within similar identity-producing networks and within similar structural contexts.”

Her third sentence, becoming more specific, names the source of these paths. Sentence four is classic Aristotelian cause-and-effect, showing that because of what she has already proved about these paths, “scholars can identify” them while remaining rigorous in their scholarship (“while still prioritizing parsimonious explanations”).

Viterna supports her fourth sentence with the final one, referring to “my analysis” (i.e., in this paper) as showing that her assumption (“microlevel variation in participation processes”) “yields more accurate theories” and “in turn” “improves our macrolevel understanding” of four important factors relating to the larger territory. In this paragraph, and particularly the final sentence, she fully occupies her niche and promises the reader more “accurate” results and an improved understanding.

Thus far, only four paragraphs into the six, you may have noticed some shifts in Viterna’s language. The first two paragraphs use no first-person pronouns (I, we, my, our). But by the middle of paragraph three, “I” appears, as she shows the reader that she will “demonstrate” her point; and by the last line of the paragraph she uses “our”—thus inviting all readers in the field to enter into full engagement with her.

While she uses “I” and “my” in paragraph four (“I develop/I argue/my analysis”) as part of occupying her niche, even more important is her repetition of “our,” again at the end of the paragraph. Both times “our” occurs in the context of “understanding” (“distort our understanding/improves our macrolevel understanding”). By using “our” in so specific a way, she fulfills Aristotle’s call for the inclusion of *pathos* (engaging a reader’s deeply held beliefs or emotions). The implicit suggestion is that the reader cares, that “we” (you-the-reader and I-the-writer) share the same value of wanting “our” understanding to be accurate.

Paragraph five introduces her data set as an “illustration” of the “utility” of her approach:

The case of women revolutionaries in El Salvador *illustrates* the utility of this approach. In the 1980s, thousands of Salvadoran women joined the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN), a revolutionary guerrilla army engaged in combat with the oppressive Salvadoran state. *These women, like their counterparts around the world,* defied patriarchal traditions, abandoned their homes and families, and became militant members of rural guerrilla insurgencies. *By analyzing* the multiple paths that Salvadoran women followed to the guerrilla camps, *I refine* existing explanations of women’s revolutionary participation and suggest how these new insights may have important implications for macrolevel processes such as democratization and broader transformations in gendered rights and relations.

Viterna uses this introductory paragraph to show the applicability of her group to the larger territory (“like their counterparts around the world”), and she uses her final, long sentence to reiterate, amplify, and expand on her original point. “By analyzing” the paths she has defined, she does much more than merely “refine” “existing explanations.” She also suggests “how these new insights” may have “broader implications” for “macrolevel processes”—which she then exemplifies (“democratization and broader transformations” in “gendered rights and relations”). With this sentence, Viterna not only buttresses her original argument but also takes it out of its niche and specific scope, widening the implications of her research to other fields.

Wisely not leaving any asset or advantage unmentioned, Viterna uses the final paragraph of her introduction to stress the uniqueness of her data:

My conclusions are based on analysis of rich data from in-depth interviews with 82 rank-and-file guerrilla combatants, guerrilla supporters, and nonparticipants in rural El Salvador. *These data have two key advantages.* First, they include the experiences of the grassroots, whereas most mobilization studies focus solely on movement leadership. Second, they allow for comparisons between activists and similarly situated nonactivists, whereas most studies sample on the dependent variable and omit nonactivists. *This rare representative sample* of activists and nonactivists is uniquely suited to the identification of the multiple paths to activism that deepen sociological understandings of mobilization.

Viterna uses the first sentence to specify the advantages of her data source: “rich” and “in-depth” interviews with 82 “rank-and-file” people in four categories in “rural” El Salvador. Then she uses a short sentence to name and emphasize “two key advantages.” The next two sentences, each covering one of the two advantages, have parallel constructions that do double duty: [her informants] include the “grassroots,” “whereas most mobilization studies” do not; [her informants] “allow for comparisons,” “whereas most studies” only look at one group. In these two well-framed sentences, she has situated both her informants and her approach as unique within the territory. She then drives her point home with a final statement of her belief, based on the proof in this and previous paragraphs, that her sample is “rare” yet “representative” and “uniquely suited” to accomplishing the work that she set out to do.

While not all of us can write as skillfully as Viterna, we can all learn from her language and her argumentation how to carefully build as airtight a case as possible. Her writing flows—but hardly by accident. All good writers write, rewrite, and rewrite again until they have positioned their arguments where they want them, in the right order, with language that makes the points they want to make. As the preceding chapter makes clear, good writers outline their ideas, both to think through their reasoning and to reduce the huge amount of time they would otherwise waste while searching for the right beginning, the right approach.

Argumentation is a complex subject with many aspects, as well as many angles from which one can view it. Lack of space has prevented me from covering all of the different forms (e.g., evaluative, comparative, contrastive, causal, definitional, narrative, rebutting, propositional). Fortunately, excellent books and websites abound, covering these structures in great detail. My purpose in this chapter has been to help you understand Anglo-American argumentation in general and the argumentation strategies of others in particular, so that you can develop your own strategies for constructing clear arguments of whatever type you need for each paper. With a deeper appreciation for Aristotelian logic and the demands of constructing a successful—and publishable—argument in English, you are now ready to study journal analysis: both the first and the last stages in the analytical process.

PART V

JOURNAL ANALYSIS: Analyzing Journals for Elimination and Submission

The first essential is to know what one wishes to say;
the second is to decide to whom one wishes to say it.¹

—HAROLD NICOLSON

As a European writer competing for limited space with native speakers of English, what do you need to know about journals, editors, and the editorial process to maximize your chances of getting your papers published? This part of the book covers journal analysis, the process of analyzing a journal from every possible angle—audience, content, focus, language, and organization. It will show you how to analyze a journal both structurally and linguistically, for organization and for content—and on multiple levels.

Above all, it makes the following strong point: *when an editor receives your paper, it should look exactly like a paper that the journal has already published.* It should be a near-perfect match from the abstract to the conclusion, from the organization of the argument to the section headings, from the sentence structure to the paragraph structure, from the use of personal pronouns to the use of the active voice. Everything, including the labeling of the tables and the average number of lines per paragraph, should look familiar to the editor. In essence, you want the editor to immediately think, “Hmm, this looks like something we can use,” as opposed to “Why in the world would anyone send this paper to our journal?”

Therefore, perhaps no strategy for getting published in international professional journals is as crucial as journal analysis, the goal of which is to know how best to organize and write a particular paper for a specific journal. Choosing the right journal is so important that every social scientist should conduct some level of journal analysis, however cursory, not only during the research process but also during the development of the project. Waiting until the research or thinking is done and the writing is about to begin may be too late—and thus a waste of time.

Whenever I mention to any American or British professional that many European social scientists first write their papers and then look for a prestigious journal to which to submit them, their usual response is, “Are they crazy?” This incredulous reaction in no way represents condescension towards their European counterparts;

instead, it reflects the intrinsic importance of the strategy of journal analysis within the English-speaking rhetorical tradition. By the Ph.D. level, we are already studying professional journals for their style and looking for a good fit for the papers we plan to write.

While Parts II-IV of this book have concentrated on the essentials for creating meaning and clarity, and for organizing your writing and thinking in terms of Aristotelian-based argumentation, Part V builds on those skills by helping you to apply them to a specific, carefully chosen journal. The form of journal analysis that I present here is neither microlevel (i.e., linguistic analyses for scrutinizing only one text) nor macrolevel (i.e., computer-assisted analyses for analyzing huge chunks of text). The kind of analysis most helpful to the social scientist is what I consider a mesolevel approach, involving much more than one or two articles but much less than the large amount of textual material that linguists use in corpus analysis.²

This mesolevel journal analysis has two phases. The first involves eliminating all journals that, despite the relevance of their subject matter or their prestige value, are not appropriate to either the nature of the paper (not enough theory? too quantitative?) or the level of the writer's written English skills. The elimination process culminates in choosing the best journal for the paper. The second phase entails studying—for style, language, and organization—the most recent year's worth of articles in that journal.

For beginning writers in particular, writing a paper without having conducted a proper journal analysis is largely ineffective, because all journals differ in terms of style, content, and organization. Some European researchers report that instructors of academic writing courses have given them the opposite advice—to write a paper that might “generally” fit a number of journals—to save them rewriting time in case of rejection. From a pragmatic standpoint, however, such advice is unwise. Just as a one-size-fits-all dress is not likely to fit any woman of any size very well, a one-size-fits-all paper will likely lack the focus or specificity that editors prefer.

Writers who do their journal analysis and rewrite papers when necessary, as opposed to avoiding the inevitable rewriting intrinsic to the process, are the most likely to have their papers published. While the writer of the one-size-fits-all paper may save rewriting time after a rejection, that same writer risks receiving more rejections and spending (or wasting) time on papers that may never be published. Time and again, I have seen a strategically thinking European writer choose another journal for a rejected paper, rewriting the abstract to fit the new journal's style, changing (perhaps) the order of certain sections, or changing a “conclusion” to a “discussion” (or vice versa)—and have the paper accepted.

Never forget that editors are busy people. They have to read a great many articles, either to reject them outright or to begin the process of considering and inviting various scholars to referee them. They have to balance both the needs of their journal

and their own time constraints. For example, editor Kris Deschouwer points out in “Editing the European Journal of Political Research” (*European Political Science*, 2007) that the journal receives an average of 150 manuscripts a year, with invitations going out to over 400 potential referees. He attempts not to ask any one individual to referee more than one paper a year. Of the 150 manuscripts, slightly fewer than 25% are likely to see publication.³ These percentages are not unusual.

Arch G. Woodside, editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Business Research* (JBR), notes:

- I ask 49 of 50 authors to revise before the first formal review.
- I ask 1 of 5 authors to revise twice before formal review.
- I ask 1 in 10 authors to revise three times before formal review.
- I ask all authors of all papers that I process to revise again after a JBR Associate Editor accepts the paper.⁴

Editors feel strongly about the content, approach, and style of the papers in their journal. They want to see *from the outset* that the writer has read the journal and understands what the editor is seeking. When I mentioned to the former senior editor of a top-ranked journal that I was developing a seminar in journal analysis, this normally soft-spoken person nearly barked into the phone: “Tell your seminar participants that I am *deeply offended* when I receive a paper from someone who obviously has never read our journal and has no idea of our style or standards, but who sends it simply because our journal is prestigious. Tell them how offended I am—yes, *offended*—when people waste my time like that!”⁵ The sudden change in her tone on the subject of thoughtless manuscript submitters should give you pause. As editors are hard-working people looking for good manuscripts (and often willing to work with, or make suggestions to, the authors for improving those manuscripts), you want the editor on your side. All the chapters in Part V will show you how to do so.

This part of the book contains the questions you need to ask before you even choose a journal. These questions are central to what I call the “elimination analysis”: studying the content, focus, author institutions, etc., of all journals related to the topic and purpose of your paper, so that you can eliminate those that do not match. Also covered are all factors of the analytical process for you to apply to the journal that you eventually choose. These factors include—among many others—assessing the ratio of theory to data, analyzing the abstract for specific types of language, and determining the overall organization of the paper, down to specific sections and paragraphs.

Above all, the following chapters will give you techniques for studying journals from a linguistic perspective, so that you may avail yourselves of various cues and linguistic devices not readily apparent to the untutored eye. Not surprisingly, the first chapter starts with a discussion of submission guidelines and the seriousness that editors attach to them.

chapter 14 UNDERSTANDING SUBMISSION GUIDELINES: What They Mean and What Editors Want

It is not wise to violate the rules until you know how to observe them.¹

—T.S. ELIOT

Many European social scientists tend to regard journal submission guidelines as minor formatting irritations. But writers ignore submission (or “contributor”) guidelines at their peril, as they carry information on three levels. First, following them is *mandatory* for publication. As the submission guidelines for the *American Economic Review* emphasize in capital letters: “PAPERS WILL NOT BE REVIEWED IF THEY DO NOT FOLLOW OUR STYLE GUIDELINES.”²

This policy, rather than being unusual, may soon become the norm. Part of being a professional—and, as a writer, showing an editor from the start that one is a professional—involves more than merely meeting the editor’s requirements for citations, tables, and endnotes. They also entail more than spelling and vocabulary (e.g., US vs. UK). Increasingly, editorial requirements cover the specifics of style (e.g., “do not use *it is*” or “write only in the active voice”).

Second, while the expressed purpose of these guidelines is to make life easier for the editor, a less explicit purpose is to weed out papers by writers who do not write with sufficiently professional editorial skill. When receiving papers that show no adherence to the editorial guidelines, editors assume that the writer is not capable (as a writer of English) of meeting editorial specifications.

Third, contributor guidelines can provide excellent tools for journal analysis. Guidelines will often tell the prospective contributor both what to do and what *not* to do. Ultimately, well-constructed guidelines can be a writer’s best guide in the stylistic part of journal analysis.

The submission guidelines of the *Journal of European Social Policy* (JESP) are typical of many European journals regarding language and style. For example, “Spelling should follow that of the Oxford English Dictionary; authors are responsible for consistency in spelling and nomenclature.”³ This guideline means what it says—the writer *must* use that specific dictionary, and both the spelling and names of places, people, concepts, etc., must be consistent. In this case, what may look like

a “guideline” to Europeans from linguistic traditions in which such guidelines do not have primacy is actually a rule as far as the editor is concerned.

In addition, the JESP guidelines continue: “The Journal is committed to a non-sexist use of language. Avoid, for example, the use of masculine pronouns (he, him, his), unless specifically referring to a male.”⁴ As for the habit of some European scholars of trying to right the old “generic ‘he’” problem by exclusively using “she” and “her,” such usage is equally unacceptable in most English-language journals.

The JESP guidelines conclude with a hint that replaces the more obvious “we are only accepting papers written in proper English” statements of other journals. As JESP is published by SAGE, this last statement reads simply: “*English Language Editing Services*: Please click here for information on professional English language editing services recommended by SAGE.”⁵ The message, however, remains the same: submitting a paper *not* written in correct English grammar or a style *not* conforming to the guidelines of a particular journal is likely to lead to rejection.

This unyielding emphasis on correct punctuation, grammar, and style—not to mention writing, spelling, and punctuating exclusively in American, Australian, British, or Canadian English, not some peculiar mixture of them—derives from the Anglo-American principle that all responsibility for clarity lies with the writer. This principle is absolute. Therefore, when a writer comes upon submission guidelines stating “*American Heritage Dictionary* and the *Chicago Manual of Style*,” that writer must immediately get copies of both—and, in the case of *Chicago*, be prepared for pages of detail to which he or she must attend. In the world of international English-language publications, “guidelines” is essentially an academic euphemism for “rules”: what the guidelines tell the writer is *precisely* what the editor expects the writer to deliver—and nothing less.

As mentioned earlier, books like *Chicago* and *New Hart’s Rules* are easily available, as is Roget’s *Thesaurus*. (One of the assets of *New Hart’s Rules* is that it notes specific differences from US English.) Ask the library at your university or research institute to order them. *Chicago* is also available online, with a reasonably priced annual subscription. In addition, read any of the style-related books recommended in the annotated bibliography at the back of this book.

Journal editors are specific about requirements other than those for tables, references, and appendices. For example, the *British Journal of Sociology* (BJS) guidelines clearly state: “Please note that overly long papers will be returned without review at the Editors’ discretion.”⁶ In addition, because of the confusion of spelling between US and UK English, the BJS (like many UK journals) specifies the spelling style it wants its contributors to follow, e.g., “acknowledgment (not acknowledgement); judgment etc.; organize, recognize etc. BUT analyse not analyze....”⁷

A number of guidelines stress the importance of good writing. A typical example is the *International Journal of Ageing and Later Life*:

Only manuscripts written in proper English can be accepted for publication. British or American English is accepted. Bear in mind the multidisciplinary and international readership of the journal. Use a clear readable style, avoiding jargon. If technical terms or acronyms are included, define them when first used.⁸

The *Child & Family Social Work* guidelines are equally straightforward: “The language of publication is English. Authors for whom English is a second language must have their manuscript professionally edited by an English speaking person before submission to make sure the English is of high quality. It is preferred that the manuscripts are professionally edited.”⁹ The guidelines offer a list of “independent suppliers of editing services,” all of which the author must arrange and pay for and none of which “guarantee acceptance or preference for publication.”¹⁰

Likewise, the submission guidelines for the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* (JEMS) stress both clarity and appropriate language: “Authors who do not have native or equivalent proficiency in English are encouraged to have the manuscripts read by someone with this proficiency prior to submission.”¹¹ The JEMS guidelines also give the following caution about “derogatory” language usage:

Terms such as ‘black’, ‘Asian’ or ‘foreigner’ should be used with care to ensure, as far as possible, that those so designated accept these labels or that they are accurate. Terminology with derogatory connotations (e.g. ‘immigrant’ for non-migrants, ‘coloured’) is not permitted.¹²

Even after a journal has accepted a paper, the writer may receive additional—and strict—revision guidelines. For example, as the editor-in-chief of the JBR, Arch G. Woodside looks at language choice, grammar, punctuation, and style, including the wording of hypotheses and the length of titles. These excerpts from the guidelines that JBR writers receive upon acceptance of a paper are exceptionally instructive [boldface is his]:

Authors: please read and revise your paper to achieve the following requirements before submitting the paper to me. Thank you.

Do tell in your letter (i.e., email note) what is unique and valuable about the paper when you submit the paper.

- Use “i.e.” only inside parentheses; use “that is” in text outside of parentheses.
- Use “e.g.” only inside parentheses; use “for example” in text outside parentheses.
- Use American English.
- Keep your title to 8 words or less.

- Go up to 25 pages of text pages if necessary rather than the limit of 20 pages.
- Do not use air quotes such as, When going fishing, I “really believe” that I will catch fish.
- Do not use single quote marks such as, When going fishing, ‘I really believe’ that I will catch fish.
- **Do not use psychological markers** such as, “In writing this report, the authors believe that....” “The authors believe” is a psychological marker.
- Do **not** use the following words in sentences except when quoting someone else: “it,” “there,” “we,” “our,” “moreover,” and “furthermore.”
- **Use present tense as much as possible. Avoid passive voice as much as you avoid death.**

Do **not** write, Jones (2001) reported that....

Do write, Jones (2001) reports that....

- Please go through your entire manuscript carefully to revise as much as possible to **get rid of passive voice**. Such a critical requirement, this requirement appears twice. Note that the last sentence avoids the following construction, “...this requirement is repeated.”
- Avoid writing, “This results in three conditions.” Add a noun after writing “This.” For example, “This finding results in three conditions.”
- Never state hypotheses in the null form unless the theory in the paper advocates the findings will support the null hypotheses. State alternative hypotheses. Most hypotheses should state a direction in a relationship. Use the strong form for stating hypotheses. Examples:

Usually unacceptable: H₁: Price does not influence demand.

Weak: H₁: Price influences demand.

Strong: H₁: Price increases/decreases demand.

- Read the following article before finalizing your submission (or doing your study if possible):¹³
[The title, authors, and abstract of this article follow.]

In a similar vein, the *British Medical Journal* (BMJ) gives writers specific instructions for grammar and punctuation (including examples of what *not* to do and how to correct those mistakes), spelling, technical terms, proof corrections, references, and so on. The BMJ guidelines make the journal’s position clear—that an international readership, which includes many non-native readers of English, demands straightforward active voice writing (e.g., with few embedded clauses and few abbreviations).

Some journal guidelines also specify what they mean by, and want in, an abstract. For example, the BJS guidelines offer a definition aimed at an academic audience not raised in the Anglo-American tradition: “An abstract of up to 300 words, giving a concise statement of the intention, results and conclusions of the paper should be attached to the article”¹⁴ (italics mine).

Of the many guidelines I have seen or studied (and I certainly have not seen them all), the one closest to a writer’s dream comes from the *Industrial Labor Relations Review* (*ILR Review*). Beyond offering the usual information about tables, footnotes, etc., these guidelines not only tell the writer exactly what the editors want placed where but also show the writer how to do so—sentence by sentence, with examples. Moreover, the writing sample at the end of the four-page guidelines includes an abstract, so that all a writer has to do is to model his or her abstract on that sample. The *ILR Review* guidelines thus save the writer a huge amount of journal analysis time.

This example brings up the issue of writing to editors. As part of both journal analysis and the submission process, a writer should always consider asking an editor a necessary question—but only if that question is highly pertinent, tightly focused, and easily (i.e., quickly) answered. Ideally these questions should be “yes-or-no,” allowing the editor to send a short reply (e.g., “no, do not name copyeditors in your acknowledgments”).

If, for instance, a European researcher notices that all of the articles in a journal’s most recent year’s worth of issues analyze case studies from the UK, he or she can send the editor a very short, professionally crafted query along these lines: “As a reader of _____ journal, I notice that all the articles in your last eight issues use British case studies. Is this an editorial policy, or would you be willing to consider a paper on _____ using a [Hungarian] case study? I look forward to your reply.”

As such a policy is unlikely, the researcher will probably get a positive answer. However, so as not to lose a possible advantage, the writer must have the paper within a week of being submission-ready. If the researcher will not have the paper ready for, say, another few months, the answer that the journal will accept European papers still stands, but the advantage of already having the editor’s attention—and expectation of a paper on the subject that the writer mentioned—will go to waste.

Returning to the *ILR Review* and its unusually helpful “style sheet,” I include some salient excerpts here. As you read them, pay close attention to the editor’s implicit message (i.e., please organize, write, and edit your papers in this style, according to these guidelines, to maximize your chances of getting them published and to minimize the number of papers we have to return because the writers did not follow them). The details that this style sheet presents are those that every writer needs to consider as part of journal analysis. Like a number of other journals, the *ILR Review* now tells prospective contributors that it will return “without reading” and “for correction” any paper that does not adhere to the guidelines.

ILR REVIEW STYLE SHEET: A GUIDE FOR AUTHORS AND TYPISTS

WHAT TO INCLUDE

Please try to observe the guidelines that follow. But first, two notes on sections that often receive the heaviest copy-editing:

(1) Typically, the most extensive editorial changes to accepted papers occur in the first 2-3 pages. Concerning abstracts, see the instructions and example below. Introductions should be brief (about three paragraphs); free of technical econometric language; and uncluttered with in-text cites and footnotes.

(2) In References, include full first names of authors whenever possible, not just initials; and, in article entries, include volume + either number or month.

TITLE, AUTHORS, ABSTRACT, ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

...In the “Cover Letter” field, provide acknowledgments...and a note stating which data and programs you are willing to make available, on request, to interested researchers. A typical note runs as follows: “A data appendix with additional results, and copies of the computer programs used to generate the results presented in the paper, are available from the first author at [postal address and email].” When the data used are proprietary, provide the names of agencies or persons who can....

ABSTRACT

In the “abstract” field, provide an abstract of no more than 150 words. The first sentence generally describes the data, method, and purpose. Two or three other sentences state the most important findings, conclusions, and, sometimes, implications. Use only terms that will be understood by a general audience (which includes readers who have little background in statistics).

OPENING TEXT

Provide an untitled introduction of 3-4 paragraphs. Give brief background and explain how the study differs from previous ones. Do not present a verbal outline of the paper; do not anticipate findings or conclusions. Avoid footnotes and in-text cites.

BODY OF PAPER

Number the pages of your article, so that text passages can easily be referenced by you, the referees, and the editor.

There should be headings, on average, every 2-3 pages. Avoid very long paragraphs.

Use in-text (“scientific”) citation style. [Examples follow]

CONCLUSION

The Conclusion is usually no more than two pages long. Briefly state conclusions, with reference to specific findings as necessary; recapitulate how the findings add to or differ from those of previous studies; and, if appropriate, discuss implications or unanswered questions (but avoid a detailed description of “more research needed”). As in the introductory paragraphs, avoid footnotes and in-text cites.

FOOTNOTES

Use footnotes only for explanatory notes and citations (such as legal citations) that are not easily accommodated by the “scientific” system of citation.

TABLES

Use substantive table titles, as completely descriptive as possible, and accessible to readers without a background in statistics.

Include headings for ALL columns (including the first, descriptive column), in plain English if possible. Use plain English, or sensible abbreviations, in row descriptions as well....

SAMPLE TEXT

Title, authors, acknowledgments, data availability statement, abstract (provide these in fields separate from the main paper, as directed above):

Trends in Earnings Differentials by Gender, 1971-1981

Francine D. Blau and Andrea H. Beller¹⁵

[All boldfaced sections follow, as well as the “introductory paragraphs, first paragraph of first main section, and conclusion.”]¹⁶

Some journal guidelines stress even larger issues, such as reader sensitivity. *Feminist Economics* offers its prospective contributors an entire section on “orienting papers for an international audience.” Two of the five targeted problem areas follow [italics mine]:

- Authors treat a phenomenon as though a particular country’s experience is universal. *Often the assumption is subtle and implicit and might be acceptable for a paper in a national journal, but is not appropriate for an international journal. Articles are culturally biased if they do not recognize that the experience of a particular country is not the world’s experience.*
- Authors provide an overview of the relevant literature on their topic, referring solely to contributions from one geographical region (e.g. North America). This approach may not be acceptable to an international audience, particularly where there have been significant contributions from other geographical regions, or if the issue under discussion is not primarily or solely concerned with that region or country.¹⁷

Finally, the “editorial on language policy” from the author guidelines of *Disability and Society* is worth every writer’s attention. This document on the journal website deals directly with issues not only of linguistic sensitivity but also of clarity, audience, and the use of jargon. For the psychology of reading, this thoughtful document encapsulates everything that every European social scientist, regardless of discipline, ought to know. Some excerpts follow:

Firstly, we will not publish articles containing offensive words, even if these words are based upon medical or diagnostic classification.... We accept that some historical and contemporary discourses use potentially offensive terminology and we would not wish to prevent this from being used appropriately within those discourses. However, it should be clearly demarcated by the use of apostrophes or *sic*.

Secondly, we expect all contributors to demonstrate both personal and cultural sensitivity in their use of language [despite] no universal consensus as to what is and what is not offensive or disabling. As in the past, contributors are asked to avoid disabling language and where it escapes their filtering system, we will try to edit it out before publication....

Thirdly...an increasing number of international classification schemes... position people in particular ways.... [A]uthors must demonstrate an awareness of the contested nature of such schemes before their work will merit publication....

Finally, we...believe strongly that all [theoretical] submissions can be made accessible to a larger and more varied audience by the careful avoidance of unnecessarily cumbersome and technical terminology. Additionally...we expect clarity in the use of terminology in what is becoming an increasingly contested area....¹⁸

All of the excerpts in this chapter not only exemplify the variety of detail and focus among submission guidelines but also emphasize their importance in the publication process. The golden rule (“do unto others...”) applies here as well: just as you want a journal editor or referee to respect your professionalism (including the time and effort you put into your research and writing), you must respect the editor’s professional requests. While showing such respect is not enough to ensure publication, the very lack of it may lead an editor to view you (and your work) as less than professional. Therefore, meticulously adhering to the “house style” of a journal is an essential strategy.

chapter 15

JOURNAL ANALYSIS: Eliminating and Choosing Journals

Why would an educated person submit a paper so inappropriate that I know from the start that they have never read our journal?

—ANONYMOUS EDITOR

Journal analysis is a crucial strategy. It involves gathering sources (i.e., copies of journals or copies of the articles in the most recent volume), reading articles, analyzing articles for not only content but also structure and language, making comparisons, and finally choosing a journal. Breaking the analysis into two phases, with several parts in each phase, makes the process easier for the writer both to face and to do.

The first phase is journal elimination, which entails asking specific questions and making hard choices about which journals are good matches for a particular paper and which are not. During this process, a writer may have to relinquish his or her preference for a certain journal because, for example, its writing style is too sophisticated or the proportion of theoretical discussion (relative to statistical data) in its articles does not fit the research that this paper would present. Therefore, starting the journal elimination phase very early in the research or thinking process—long before any actual writing has begun—will later save the writer both time and disappointment. Once you, as the writer, have eliminated all poor matches and ended up with from one to three possible journals, you will then begin asking different questions and looking at the articles more closely, with specific goals in mind.

Journal Elimination

Before you start analyzing articles in a journal, you must ascertain that it is the right journal for your paper. To do so, you need to ask and answer the following questions about each journal that you are considering. As you answer them, you will eliminate certain journals without much hesitation. Keep asking and answering these questions, always in relation to both the content and purpose of your paper.

While some of these questions are self-explanatory, comments or examples accompany others:

- Are the articles in the journal primarily qualitative or quantitative? That is, do the articles

- (a) mainly discuss theoretical issues, develop or compare different theoretical approaches, or attempt to synthesize different theories, or
- (b) mainly present and analyze empirical material (data)?

If the answer is (a), you need ask no further. But if the answer is (b), and the articles mainly present and analyze empirical material, you need to ask a corollary question:

- Is this published material primarily quantitative (statistics) or qualitative (descriptions, stories, quotes from interviews or newspapers, etc.)? To which of these categories does your article belong?
- Does the proportion of theory to data in your paper fit the average proportion in the journal?
(The same question applies to the average number of graphs and tables.)
- What is the journal's primary focus? That is, is it focused more on the *subject matter* (e.g., *Journal of Labour Market Affairs*, *Journal of Industrial Relations*) or on the *discipline* itself (e.g., *American Journal of Sociology*, *British Journal of Anthropology*)?

Journals that focus on disciplines tend to publish papers heavy on theory, while subject matter journals are more interested in the subject itself. If your paper is primarily theoretical, while the articles in a particular journal concentrate more heavily on statistical findings, then this journal is not a good match.

- Does the journal usually take papers focusing on a *small* question or a *large* question?

Small questions often lead to highly focused and concentrated papers with a lot of depth (e.g., what is most important for social mobility: cultural capital or economic capital?). The writer investigates all studies on the one “small” subject and then comes up with new evidence from a better data set.

Large questions tend to create broader, more general papers (e.g., does EU enlargement mean a “race to the bottom”?). The writer has to draw from lots of areas and disciplines to piece together an answer.

- Has the journal published a similar paper in the past two years?
If so, is it likely to publish another one soon?

To answer this question, you may need to look at more than one year’s worth of issues. Some journals return regularly to certain subjects, while other journals do not. A corollary question is the following:

- Does your paper amplify, contradict, or rebut either findings or theorizing in a paper that the journal has published within the past year or two?

This question is very important, because most journal editors relish a good discussion on a hot topic. If an article in a social policy journal argues that Policy A will work best for unemployed older workers, and your paper will show that Policy A has some problems and that Policy B will work better, then a carefully worded paper referring to the previously published article may be just what the editor wants. Here are the opening lines of an excellent model, “What Troubled Children Need”: constructions of everyday life in residential care” by Turf Böcker Jakobsen in *Children & Society* (2009):

Some years ago, Carole Smith argued strongly here in *Children & Society* for reaffirming and revitalising the notion of *values* in child protection work (Smith, 1997). She pointed out how accommodating the needs of cared-for children derives from the values of professionals, noting the ways in which these values guide interactions with children through the provision of ‘warmth, comfort, a sense of security, recognition and appreciation, responsiveness and genuineness, and respect for self-expression and individuality’ (p. 12).

While the promotion of such qualities in child welfare work is hardly an arena for dispute, *values* nonetheless constitute a problematic ground for discussing the situation of children in care....¹

The author uses strong positive language to support both the journal and the paper it had published while preparing to disagree with or add to one aspect of it.

- Has the journal published a paper about your region (e.g., Baltic, Iberian, Benelux) in the past two years? If so, does your paper tie your country’s data into much larger EU or world issues? In other words, are you able to make comparisons between your country’s data and those of other countries?

Underlying this question is the very real, although not always encouraging, issue of which countries are “hot” at any moment. If journal interest in your field is increasingly focusing on African or South Asian countries, or if articles about the newer EU member states are taking precedence over articles about the older member states, then you have to find a way to make data from a “less hot” country more relevant. You may need to join forces with a colleague from a country very different from yours, creating an interesting cross-country analysis along the axis that unites or divides them. Or you may need to use your data as an illustration of a larger point about a theory or methodology. Predicting whether your country will be high or low in the unwritten country rankings is nearly impossible. Whatever choice you make, be realistic.

- Where are most of the authors from—what countries, what universities? If your country is underrepresented, does that mean your paper has a better or worse chance of being published?

A corollary question is:

- Does the journal take many articles from your region of Europe—or even from scholars or researchers attached to, say, non-British universities?

Unfortunately for many European scholars, in some journals almost all the authors, despite their countries of origin, are professors or visiting scholars at British or American universities. To avoid wasted effort, always conduct a quick “author institution” analysis as part of the larger analysis.

- Study the references and citations in the published articles: are they from all over the world or from a specific country—or from specific theorists?

If you find certain theorists quoted or cited repeatedly in a particular journal, consider citing them as well. The same goes for theories or methodologies—if they are popular with a particular journal, find a way to mention them (e.g., agree with them, challenge them). A corollary question concerns the references you use:

- Will your paper, if it involves research in your country alone, cite mostly national and regional references (e.g., from Spain and Portugal)?

If so, unless you are writing strictly for a regional journal (e.g., *Journal of Circumpolar Health*), beware of having your paper appear too parochial or limited.

- Does your paper have the depth of content, and do you have the sophistication of writing style, to match the papers that the journal publishes? (Later chapters will cover both of these questions.)
- If you are using statistical analyses such as regression analyses, factor analyses, principal component analyses, or cluster analyses, to what extent does the journal publish articles with similar types of analyses?

Only after you have satisfactorily answered all of these questions (and any others that occur to you) about a particular journal should you begin to spend time analyzing the articles themselves—because only at this point can you be certain that your paper has a reasonable chance of being published.

Some academic writers disagree with this approach. They recommend that social scientists at the start of their careers send their first papers to top-ranked journals, even though their chances of getting published are minimal. The rationale is that the referee comments that these younger scholars receive will give them excellent feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of their writing and research skills. Yet, however useful such feedback may be, I strongly disagree with this tactic for at least four reasons.

First, fledgling social scientists are much better off getting feedback—and lots of it—from their colleagues and mentors before ever submitting a paper. They therefore learn to develop the important skill of editing their own work. Second, they will learn much more, and more immediately, by doing a journal analysis that includes carefully studying the style and structure of every part of the articles in a particular journal. Third, they will not be wasting the time of a busy editor or, at worst, have an editor remember their name in connection with a badly organized or poorly written paper. Fourth, because the increasing need to “publish or perish” puts great demands on having articles published early in a career, young scholars should not aim unreasonably high at the start, thereby losing their chances for needed publication in lesser-ranked journals.

In addition, submitting a paper before it is ready is the worst strategy of all (“haste makes waste”). Whether an individual is writing a report, a research article, or an academic book, the same principle applies: *take the time to write it well*. (Inveterate procrastinators cannot take this advice to mean that they can postpone their submissions indefinitely, as such behavior is just as unprofessional as doing the writing at the last minute.) Ultimately, taking the time for journal analysis has a very real timesaving payoff.

Author and title analyses

Often by simply reading a journal’s table of contents, you can choose or eliminate journals. Both article titles and the institutions or universities with which the authors are affiliated carry critical information about your chances of getting published in a particular journal. For example, even if most of the authors in Journals A and B come from very prestigious universities or institutions, you must still take a closer look. Perhaps the authors in Journal A are all affiliated with English-language universities—all American except for one from the London School of Economics. By contrast, perhaps Journal B authors come from all over the world.

In addition, the predominance of American authors aside, a “title analysis” may suggest that Journal A is an American journal focusing primarily on American data sets—and therefore not a good choice for a European social scientist doing research in Europe. (Yet, as a visiting scholar at a US university, working with US data sets, a European social scientist may find Journal A an excellent choice.) Meanwhile, a title analysis of Journal B—with its international authorship—will often show its UK or US origins by spelling differences such as “paycheque/paycheck.”

Title analyses also reveal useful information about the focus of a journal. For example, Journal A titles may indicate topics that are quite specific in terms of groups of people (i.e., more microeconomic articles) and show a strong focus on policy issues. By contrast, Journal B titles may show a greater focus on money and financial institutions (i.e., more macroeconomics), along with a wide range of international subject matter.

Thus author and title analyses are highly useful, not merely for considering an individual journal but particularly for comparing or contrasting two or more.

Journal Overview—the First Pass

After you have eliminated all journals that (a) do not fit your type of research, (b) are unlikely to publish a paper from your country, or (c) are unlikely prospects for publishing your results, you are likely to have one or more final candidates. At this point you should begin the first round of serious analysis, a process involving a more detailed overview of each journal’s articles and collecting some specific indicators. Doing so will help you determine not only which journal is your best choice but also what you need to know to be able to organize and write your paper in that journal’s style. These indicators include the number of pages per article, number of articles from non-English-speaking countries, and number of sections, footnotes, and paragraphs or pages in the introduction and the conclusion. I call gathering these indicators the “first pass,” because the information they give you, while necessary, is somewhat superficial. Your later analyses must go much deeper into content, organization, language, and style.

Each of the examples that follow has a slightly different focus, with something different to consider. Again, I caution you not to assume that you know something accurate or useful about the journals in these examples, because space considerations demand that I use very limited data sets, e.g., one or two issues. Obviously, two issues can never give you enough information, because either could be a special issue—or because, say, a UK journal might alternate issues between UK research and mostly international research. Only a full year’s worth of issues—or even two—will give you an accurate picture of your paper’s chance of acceptance.

Single journal indicators

This first example contains useful information from two 2006 issues of *International Migration Review*, published in the US:

- Two issues: 13 articles
- Abstract information:
 - Average abstract length is 11.5 lines (only two are more than 13 lines).
 - The authors establish their niche early, often in the first sentence.
 - No author uses “we” or “I” in the abstract.
- Average paper length

with references, etc.

28

without references, etc.

25

- How many papers are from your country or your region of Europe?
[In this case, the researcher was Scandinavian]
 - Issue "1" — none out of 7
 - Issue "2" — 2 out of 6 [one on Scandinavia, one on Denmark]
- As this journal is published in the US, how many authors are from American universities or organizations, and how many from elsewhere?
 - Issue "1" — 1 American, 6 from elsewhere
 - Issue "2" — 5 American, 1 from elsewhere
- How many articles are about migration issues in the US?
 - Issue "1" — 4 out of 7
 - Issue "2" — ½ out of 6 (i.e., one article comparing the US and Australia)
- How many articles involve cross-cultural analyses (i.e., comparative analyses of more than one country)?
 - Issue "1" — 1 out of 7 (Chinese and Dominican immigrants re: attitudes towards....)
 - Issue "2" — 1 out of 6 (Sweden and Denmark on declining immigrant employment opportunities, also comparing immigrants from three other countries)
- Are the articles primarily qualitative or quantitative?
[You will already know the answer to this question by now.]
 - Quantitative
- If quantitative, are the articles more statistical in nature or "story-telling/informant-quoting"?
 - Issue "1" — 5 statistical and 2 "informant-quoting"
 - Issue "2" — 5 statistical and 1 "informant-quoting"
- This journal uses footnotes, not endnotes:
 - shortest number of footnotes: 1
 - longest number of footnotes: 18
- Other indicators that apply to this analysis:
 - An article titled "Social Activities among Chinese Immigrants in Toronto" means that you probably will not get a similar article on Prague or Paris accepted—unless, perhaps, you can show something totally dif-

Only two of the 13 articles had 16 or 18 footnotes. The average was between 1-5 and 10-14. The longest footnotes (up to 8 lines) appear only in papers with 14-18 footnotes (usually papers with the most complex statistics).

- Other indicators that apply to this analysis:
 - An article titled "Social Activities among Chinese Immigrants in Toronto" means that you probably will not get a similar article on Prague or Paris accepted—unless, perhaps, you can show something totally dif-

ferent between the Toronto results and yours, with a significant theoretical or methodological difference.

- The language is straightforward and well framed. Sentences are not overly complex. Data is at the heart of—and forms the bulk of—almost all the articles, even those in which the focus is theoretical.
- Subjects covered in the 13 articles are quite varied. All the articles tie the specific subject matter into a much larger issue of theory or methodology, often with a view to future research.²

One final comment about this analysis is that all the article titles are serious. In the later phases of journal analysis, you will begin to notice everything from section headings to turns of phrases. But titles are the most important. A number of journals include articles with "clever" titles—puns, literary references, provocative questions, etc. If a journal tends to use such titles, try to create one, to catch the editor's attention. An excellent example is "In the Name of the Father, the Child, and the Holy Genes" by Mai Heide Ottosen in *Acta Sociologica* (2006), discussing issues surrounding the best interests of a child in legal arguments about parental visitation.

The next example analysis, from *Disability and Society*, uses only two articles (not from the same issue). These two articles, however, have significant implications for a writer wishing to submit a paper to this journal. One article is "Bauman's Strangers: impairment and the invalidation of disabled people in modern and post-modern cultures" by Bill Hughes, Glasgow Caledonian University. The other is "Cultural Representation of Disabled People: dustbins for disavowal?" by Tom Shakespeare, University of Sunderland. Both papers are highly theoretical and strong on theoretical analyses, with no "hard data" (e.g., studies, facts, figures). Using both "I" and "we," including in the abstracts, the authors argue forcefully and make their points well. Both papers contain a lot of quotations from prominent theorists.

These similarities aside, my focus here is on the different types of powerful language and style that the authors use. In addition to using alliteration in the subtitle ("dustbins for disavowal"), Shakespeare writes: "Pity is an expression of superiority."³ The strength of this sentence—and its style—lies both in its brevity and in the absolute conviction that pithy statements tend to convey. Hughes shows his verbal skills in a different way:

For Bauman, the post-modern is the rise of the awareness and acceptance of contingency and ambivalence. There was contingency and ambivalence aplenty during modernity, but the engrained habit of self-deception kept it concealed. Now that 'contingency is our destiny' and the hubris that oiled the wheels of modernity is much less in evidence, then impairment can be transformed from a symbol of disorder and tragedy into nothing out of the ordinary, merely another example of the pervasiveness of contingency and difference.⁴

Hughes' writing exemplifies a certain British style that encourages the writer to pull out all the stops and show what he or she can do with language. Finding such a style in any journal should make potential European contributors ask, "Can my writing, however different my style, match this standard? Can I stand up to such competition?"

This example also shows the dangers of doing an analysis based on too few papers or issues. Perhaps these two papers are not typical; perhaps they are. Without a full journal analysis, which includes studying the language, how is a writer to know? That the subject matter and theoretical orientation match the writer's work may not be enough. The writer also has to be realistic about his or her own English writing abilities.

In addition, details of all sorts are important components of journal analysis. If the articles in a journal are relatively short, with no more than two tables each, but the writer's paper is four pages longer than the average, with five or six tables, then that writer should consider either another journal or a much shorter version of the paper. Other details include paragraph length, types of headings, number of headings and subheadings (and their frequency), and the absence or presence of a "section one does this and section two does that" paragraph at the end of the introduction. For example, the articles in some journals tend to have relatively short sentences, with the longer sentences gaining length from series or lists, not from grammatical complexity. By contrast, other journals will tend to have articles full of highly complex sentence structure, and yet others tend to publish articles that use questions at the start of the major sections. The more small details to which you pay attention, the better you can match your paper to the style of the journal.

Conclusions

Often the conclusions section of a journal contains a great deal of information about the journal's expectations. If the articles have only "conclusions," then the writer must remember to "tell them what you told them." However, if the articles have section headings such as "discussion," "conclusions and discussion," or "implications," then the writer has more latitude for widening the subject (but never veering too far from it) after concluding the paper.

In terms of language, conclusions can be informative in a number of ways. The following example contains the first sentence of every paragraph in the conclusion of a paper from *World Politics* (2001), "The Social Construction of an Imperative: Why Welfare Reform Happened in Denmark and the Netherlands but Not in Germany" by Robert Henry Cox. Assume hypothetically that this paper is representative of the style of articles in *World Politics*, and read these 10 sentences as if you were a linguistic detective: what do they tell you about the style of the journal?

1. Welfare reform occurs at differential rates.
2. The specific problem was the differential experiences of Denmark, the Netherlands, and Germany.
3. In Denmark, ironically, history and tradition were employed as an important justification for change.
4. The Dutch strategy was different.
5. The Dutch welfare state is also built on an ethic of caring.
6. Though both countries reformed, they followed different sequences.
7. This difference in sequencing has theoretical significance.
8. Indeed, the need to reform is an idea that has a historical dimension.
9. But Germany remained different.
10. Path shaping requires rhetorical strategies that connect new proposals to an existing value structure.⁵

Two patterns are immediately apparent. First, all 10 sentences are short. Their brevity carries weight, particularly in the more typically American style (*World Politics* is American). Second, all 10 are topic sentences. The moment that the reader reads any one of them, that reader knows the subject that will follow. The first sentence of the sixth paragraph starts with "though" and the ninth with "but"—both clear transition markers letting the reader know the direction in which the concluding argument is heading. These two patterns are related because when a topic sentence is shorter, it stands out for the reader as more definitive and direct. It shows the writer's confidence—in this instance, Cox's confidence about his conclusions.

While abstracts are the best place for a journal analysis of content and journal orientation, conclusions also carry such information. Mostly, however, they tell the prospective contributor about style. Following are the conclusions from two papers in the *Journal of Labor Economics*.⁶ What do these two conclusions, stylistically speaking, have in common?

Some Contacts Are More Equal than Others:

Informal Networks, Job Tenure, and Wages LINDA DATCHER LOURY

This article argues that the effects of job contacts can be better understood by combining the two previously separate strands of empirical analysis. Uncovering the role of contacts in job tenure can help explain the disparate wage findings, and the wage findings can provide insight into the job tenure results. More specifically, the article indicates that the better matches and the limited choices hypotheses may be simultaneously valid for different types of contacts. In the case of the better matches story, using high-wage-offer contacts results in higher compensation, greater worker satisfaction because of improved matches between workers and

firms, and reduced turnover. In the case of the limited choices story, using low-wage-offer contacts also generates longer job tenure. However, it also signals a limited range of job alternatives and results in greater worker dissatisfaction and in lower rather than higher wages.⁷

**Technical Change, Job Tasks, and Rising Educational Demands:
Looking outside the Wage Structure** ALEXANDRA SPITZ-OENER

West Germany (together with other continental European countries) has attracted attention because of the stability of its wage structure, raising the question of whether or not West Germany has experienced similar changes in skill demand to those in the United States and the United Kingdom in recent decades. This article advances the debate by looking beyond wages and by offering a detailed characterization of changing occupational skill requirements in West Germany between 1979 and 1998/99. In addition, I provide detailed evidence on the nuanced version of the skill-biased technological change hypothesis introduced in the literature by Autor et al. (2003).

The results suggest that occupations today involve greater complexity than they did 2 decades ago. In recent decades, occupations have experienced a shift toward analytical and interactive activities and away from cognitive and manual routine tasks. This development was ubiquitous in the sense that it occurred within occupations, within occupation-education groups, and within occupation-age groups. In addition, the results indicate that these changes have been intensified by the diffusion of computer technologies in the workplace. This is due to the fact that computers substitute for workers performing manual and cognitive routine tasks but complement workers in performing analytical and interactive activities.

In addition, I used direct skill measures—which are unlikely to be influenced by factors such as unions, which typically distort the relationship between wages and skills—to show that West Germany (and probably other continental European countries as well) has witnessed changes in skill requirements similar to those in the United States in recent decades. This evidence moves the debate over the differential wage developments in continental European countries and the United States/United Kingdom forward, and the question that now arises is why similar changes in skill requirements in all of these countries have not led to similar changes in the structure of wages.⁸

Despite their different lengths, neither conclusion surprises the reader with new information or launches into a new discussion. Both are short, with relatively short paragraphs. Both use “this article” and break down the “this articles [does]” sentence into more discrete parts in the following sentence or sentences. Almost all the writing is in the active voice. While both use the soft verb “indicate” (and the second uses another soft verb, “suggest”), these conclusions also use strong verbs such as

“argue,” “signal,” and “advance.” The second conclusion, in addition, begins its final sentence with the strong clause, “this evidence moves the debate...forward.”

A full elimination analysis

This chapter concludes with an elimination analysis by a European sociologist who began by framing the issues and questions for which she wanted answers. Her paper concerned the social significance of kinship relationships in different classes within a society that likes to think of itself as “classless”:

I would like to submit the paper to a field-specific journal, because the research problem requires a special interest for family and kinship studies. I would also like this paper to be read by [regional] or European colleagues who are interested in family intergenerational issues. One problem might be that no one else besides [citizens of region] are interested in the “family ties” issues of one [regional] country. Another problem might be that the field-specific journals about family issues tend to be either very American or very clinical. I wonder if I should reconsider the field-specific option and find a general sociological journal instead?

For her initial elimination analysis, she considered each journal and its most recent ranking(s) and impact factor in one or more areas (e.g., anthropology and family studies); she listed the journal’s description of its aims and scope; and she added her observations. As these observations were for her eyes only, she did not edit them for parallel structure. What follow are her notes for seven field-specific journals and four more general ones [names omitted]:

Strategy 1: field-specific journals

- High-ranked, mostly American authors, tends to be rather quantitative.
- American: most contributors are from the US, though some are occasionally from abroad (e.g., Japan). Papers are often focused on social relationships and social problems (psychological tradition rather than sociological, focusing on structure). Many papers seem rooted in a (quantitative) “science” tradition.
- Contributions come from many countries. Focus is on kinship. However, most papers focus on history (past centuries, not present).
- British: Focusing too much on work-life balance and family politics, and too little on family structure.
- Too clinical!!
- Too practical, very applied, only seven articles appear when I search for “kinship.”
- A search for “kinship” gave me 57 articles. Judging from the names, most authors are English-speaking (Americans), but I see Europeans and names and subjects from other regions and areas. Focuses on social psychology. Seems oriented towards quantitative research tradition (small samples).

Strategy 2: general journals (issues related to family sociology)

- Interesting articles about the family and kinship have been published here by authors that I admire. Often qualitative studies. Often European authors—and 145 hits on “kinship.”
- Many articles about families. Articles often fit my sociological style.
- Authors from Europe, many articles about families, 30 hits on “kinship.”
- British/European. General sociological, both quantitative and (mostly) qualitative. One-fifth of the contributors are non-British, occasionally from [region]. Papers on sociology of family (and gender and social class) appear frequently. Welcomes alternative approaches (my method is used in other articles). Accepts “I” and “we.”

Not finding one journal that immediately stood out as the best option, but not wishing to let go of what she considered “valuable” insights, she continued to research journals under other keywords (e.g., “genealogy”) and from other angles. Her final comments are these:

My continuing journal research leads me to the following conclusions:

- No professional/scientific journals on genealogy exist.
- No [regional] journals published in English exist, other than Journal A (ranked in the second third of sociological journals and in which I have already published an article).
- No European sociological journals oriented strictly towards family/kinship studies exist; most family journals are based in the American scientific tradition, and these are often very clinical or practically applied (social work, therapy, etc.).
- Journal B is too historically oriented—most articles are about issues in the very far past.

Therefore, I have decided to go for a general sociological journal, rooted in the European tradition. This decision leaves two possibilities: Journal C or Journal D. Although Journal C appears to have good prestige value, I could not find it in Thomson’s ISI ranking. Journal D is ranked about in the middle. This placement is OK with me, as it is slightly higher than Journal A and slightly lower than Journal C.

So I have decided to submit my paper to Journal D.

With this thoughtfully executed elimination analysis as a model, writers can turn to the next level of analysis: creating models for the journal that they have chosen. The next chapter presents and discusses a variety of models.

chapter 16

JOURNAL ANALYSIS: Using Timesaving Ideas and Analysis Models

Writing is a difficult trade which must be learned slowly by reading great authors, by trying at the outset to imitate them; by daring then to be original and by destroying one's first productions.¹

—ANDRÉ MAUROIS

While the concept of journal analysis is simple to grasp, putting it into practice takes time. As in other aspects of academic work, shortcuts can lead to sloppy analyses with incorrect assumptions. Thus answering all the questions in the preceding chapter is the place to start. Nonetheless, social scientists can approach journal analysis from any of several angles, each of which can lighten the workload. For example, an author and author institution analysis alone can help quickly eliminate a number of journals. Likewise, a quick perusal of the major theorists or scholars cited in the articles may hold clues that save the writer analysis time. This chapter presents a few short journal analyses as models for helping you to create your own.

Both during and immediately following the journal analysis seminar, participants email me the results of analyses that they “couldn’t wait” to do. Although usually based on very small samples, these overnight analyses exemplify how much information even a short analysis can give, along with a clear direction for future analysis. One researcher said that before the seminar she recalled my telling everyone to “look at the journal.” Laughing, she recalled picking up a journal, holding it unopened at arm’s length, and “looking” at it. But when she finally understood what journal analysis entailed, she “actually opened the journal” for an analysis—and discovered a very clear pattern. As a result, she reframed and rewrote her paper, eventually receiving a “revise and resubmit” request for a paper that would otherwise have been rejected.

Her short analysis follows:

Some observations on articles in *Symbolic Interaction*:

- **Writers:** Almost exclusively American (tough luck).
- **Headings:** Very spunky—if you can find a good pun, they will like it. Quite long and loaded with concepts in the subheading.
- **Abstracts:** They foreground the empirical work. Often they supply details on the concrete empirical material and the main structure of the analysis, and they outline the conclusion and contribution. They may do so through positioning the study in relation to the existing field.
- **Introduction:** Regardless of the substantial topic of investigation, they often talk about “sociology.” They often bring in some “grand old man” in the very beginning—e.g., Goffman or Durkheim.
- **General layout:** After a—shorter or longer—introduction and theoretical part, there is *always* a part termed “method and data,” where they often give quite fine details regarding their fieldwork. Then comes an empirical section where they analyze this material, and here they use most of their space. They end with a rather brief discussion and conclusion.²

This researcher found a pattern so clear that she could model her paper on it. She commented later that she was amazed not only that journal analysis could be so useful and easy but also that she had not thought of it herself when it turned out to be so “common-sensical.”

Following are two other mid-seminar analyses:

I grabbed 3 issues of *Journal of Family Issues* before I rushed home:

- There are 5 papers per issue (12 issues per year).
- Of the 15 papers, 9 are from the US, 4 from Canada, 1 from US/Canada, and luckily 1 from the Netherlands.
- 6 men and 9 women are the first authors.
- There are no clever titles.
- on average 25 pages per paper
- on average 143 words per abstract (min. 114, and max. 153)
- 12 abstracts use “this paper/article,” 2 abstracts use “the author” and “they,” and 1 abstract uses “I.”

The worst thing is that it is American, and we have written our paper in British English!



I looked at the 2007 and 2008 volumes of *Social Science and Medicine* to evaluate the relevance of the journal for my work.

- There are 2 volumes per year, 12 issues in each volume and from 15-20 articles per issue—not bad!
- Of the first issue in the first 2008 volume, 8-9 papers came from US and UK authors, 2 from Sweden, and 1 each from a number of European countries. South Africa and Taiwan were also included.
- Both male and female authors.
- Some clever titles, but mostly serious.
- 10-15 pages long, 2 columns, maximum 8,000 words; maximum abstract length, 200 words.
- Either the abstract begins with a short background before the purpose statement, or the purpose statement is the first sentence: “This study does so and so (*analyze, explore*)”—most often using such strong words, just as you said. The abstracts very often end with future research recommendations—some explicit, others very implicit—or policy recommendations. In other words, I must work further with the future recommendations in my own article.
- Furthermore, the abstracts also appear to state the material on which the analysis is based, as well as the kind of analysis that is applied. Clearly oriented to empirical findings and less to theory.
- The personal pronouns “I” and “we” were seldom used, but “this ‘study’ or ‘analysis’ does so-and-so” is common.
- It’s an American journal—and you said that paragraphs are often shorter in American journals. But the paragraphs are long! Hence, I started to make mine longer.

These two analyses illustrate what happens when a writer begins the journal analysis mid-writing, instead of before writing. In the first example, the writer realizes that she and her co-author had to rewrite the paper in US English—a time-consuming effort that an earlier analysis would have made unnecessary. In the second example, a Ph.D. student discovers the need to change his vocabulary, his style (e.g., paragraphing), and his ending (more “future recommendations”). In these cases, as in many others, conducting the journal analysis *before* writing the paper would have saved a great deal of time and work.

Despite their brevity, some analyses can be very telling. A Ph.D. student once sent me a short journal analysis focusing on a linguistic cue that no other analysis had ever mentioned—a cue very important for non-native writers of English:

The journal is based in the UK, but every issue has at least one international publication from a non-native, i.e., non-English-speaking, country. Paragraphs are rather long, up to 26 lines. *Sentences are often long, particularly if the writer is English speaking, shorter if the writer is not a native English speaker.* The journal welcomes innovative research with a clear focus on original research, mostly qualitative. [italics mine]

More experienced social scientists do their journal analysis well ahead of the writing. Their spending the time to do so allows them to eliminate all inappropriate journals and begin focusing on, and analyzing in detail, the journal best suited to their particular paper. The next analysis, from a political scientist writing about theory, prioritizes theoretical and methodological focus for the journal that she has already chosen—*Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society*.

One volume per year, four issues per volume, and four or five articles per issue.

Length of articles: 8,000-10,000 words.

Length of abstracts: 50-100 words.

The analysis is based on two issues: no. 1 Spring and no. 2 Summer, vol. 15, 2008 (10 articles). For the analysis of both content and orientation, I also briefly checked the issues from 2000 onwards (mainly headings of articles and authors, but also some abstracts, introductions, and theoretical framework).

Content and orientation of the journal

- Focus on social policy and social change from a gender perspective.
- Focus on gender relations, often combined with social class and/or ethnicity.
- Often discourse analysis of policy, also combined with “hard data” like “outcomes.”
- Often gender equality policy or issues that are highly relevant for gender equality: care, family relations, employment, income, violence. Discussions of gender/welfare models and economic, political, and social citizenship, especially the relationship between care-giving and economic independence.
- Heavy on theory, but the articles are almost always based on empirical stuff. Theory is used in relation to policy and/or social change, as an instrument for analysis of empirical stuff.
- Orientation of theory is developed feminist and Marxist orientation, social constructivism often combined with materialism. Theory focused on power relations: gender, class and ethnicity. Gender studies, political theory, sociology.

Authors

- Most articles are written by a single author: six have a single author; two have two authors; the remaining two have three authors.

- Since one of the issues had a Scandinavian theme, the Scandinavians are probably overrepresented in this sample. Five authors come from Sweden, three from Canada, four from the US, and one each from Denmark, Belgium, and Spain.
- All the authors come from universities, often social science departments. Most are professors, but there are occasional Ph.D. students.

References

References are mostly from the US and the UK, with quite a lot (not surprisingly) from Scandinavia.

In my area of interest, I should relate to the following references: Fraser 1989, 1994; Lewis; Orloff 1993; Lister 1994; Marshall 1964.

Editorial board: Friends or enemies? Orientation of theory?

I know enough about the work of half the editors and associate editors to know that my theoretical orientation is similar to theirs.

The categories within articles: Order and headings?

- Abstract: One article had no abstract.
- Introduction.
- After Abstract and Introduction, the rest of the categories usually have headings other than Methodology, Results, and Discussion or Conclusion.

Following the introduction, there are often additional sections with background material and theoretical framework before the results are presented. Since the structure and content of the articles often are quite complex, and since there seldom are headings indicating the type of section, sometimes one has to read for a while and focus quite hard to find out if the section is for background or results.

- Implicit or explicit recommendations for research and/or policy are often made.

Titles

Most titles consist of two clauses, separated by a colon or a question mark. All titles are serious, none “clever.”

Abstracts

Abstracts vary a lot in length, composition, style and content. They are between 11 and 25 lines, on average 13 lines. Three abstracts have no purpose statement. Three describe what is going to be done in different sections or parts of the article. Two use the word “I.” One describes the material analyzed in the article, and one includes recommendations for policy. There is not much framing in the abstracts; the reader is assumed to be interested in or familiar with the area or issue.

Introduction

The introduction often presents background, purpose, material, methodology, scope, and what each section of the article is going to do. The framing is generally quite good. The introductions sometimes tend to be quite long (1-5 pages, on average 2.5).

Average article length

With references and appendices: 24 pages (from 20 to 28 pages).

Without references and appendices: 19 pages (from 16 to 25 pages).

This example introduces a new category, that of “editorial board—friends or enemies?” While judging a journal by the names on its editorial board is far from foolproof, knowing who is on the board may nonetheless tell you a great deal about the subjects, theories, and methodologies that a journal tends to favor.

The last example in this chapter comes from a scholar planning to submit a paper to the *American Management Journal* (AMJ). Using an analytical technique that the following chapter will discuss in detail, she carefully examines the structure of each section. I present her analyses of both the abstract and the introduction to show how these analyses helped her structure and match her paper perfectly to the journal style:

Abstracts: almost always 4 sentences (sometimes 3),
always around 100 words

- First sentence (Data + Question) typically looks something like this:
 - Using...DATA, we found...RESULTS.
 - With...DATA, we examine...QUESTION.
 - Based on...DATA, we examine how A and B are related.
- Second and third sentences (Results 1 & 2) typically look like this:
 - We discover...RESULT 1 (most important result). We also found...RESULT 2 (corollary or secondary result).
 - Findings of this study demonstrate...RESULT 1 (negative relationship between X & Y). Variable Z...RESULT 2 (Variable Z moderated this effect).
 - We found that...RESULT 1 (Var. X is positively related to Var. Y). Both Var. X and Var. Y moderate Var. Z.
- Fourth sentence (conclusion/consequence/lesson learned/additional result):
 - These findings illustrate the benefits of applying Method A.
 - Variable ZZ did not make a difference.
 - We develop a theoretical framework and empirical approach for understanding how X and Y are related.
 - We present a model based on two data sets that demonstrate how X reduces Y.

Introduction: 6-9 paragraphs (but sometimes as few as 4),
from 500-1200 words, but usually on the longer side.

- Often begins with a research question, contention, or empirical phenomenon (first sentence):
 - How can A do B?
 - The question XYZ is a central topic in literature ABC.
 - Relationship between A and B has gained increased attention in recent literature.
 - A contention of theory XYZ is that factors A and B can best explain Result C.
 - A is much more frequent than B.
- The rest of the paragraphs, except the last, follow the “territory-niche-occupy niche” structure:
 - First 1-3 paragraphs usually cover literature strands (i.e., establish territory):
 - Old literature has highlighted the importance of A, B, and C....
 - New literature has explored D, E, and F....
 - Next 1-3 paragraphs show what remain unclear theoretically/methodologically or econometrically (i.e., establish niche—what was missing)
 - Literature 1 + 2 draw critical attention to....
 - Relationship between A + B and A + C (or B + C) remains unclear (theoretical argument).
 - Furthermore, methodological problem(s) is/are not resolved.
 - Final 1-3 paragraphs (except last) explain how this paper solves the problem (i.e., occupies niche) and includes description of data, definitions, etc.
 - We emphasize A, B, C....
 - Building on these perspectives, I explore A + B + C.
 - I define term XYZ as....
 - I test data ABC with....
 - The current study responds to challenges with theoretical and empirical contributions. We argue that Theoretical Argument 1, Methodological Argument 2, Data 3....
- The last paragraph names contributions of the paper (2 to 4-5 arguments):
 - By examining XYZ..., I make several contributions: 1, 2, 3....
 - Our findings indicate...Contribution 1, 2, 3....
 - This article makes several contributions to the literature.
First.... Second....

This paragraph often ends with very short overall conclusions/lessons learned.

- Overall RESULTS foster research discussion.
- RESULTS help to solve practical problems.

Using these short but instructive models to give you ideas, you are ready to begin your own journal analyses. By the time you have finished your elimination analysis and chosen your journal, you will have collected a great deal of knowledge about the journal's format, structure, content, and language.

Once you understand both the principle and the mechanics of journal analysis (and begin conducting your own), you will discover its illuminating and timesaving value. As you share this discovery with your colleagues, you may want to suggest to your research institute or university department that it create an in-house archive (preferably on the intranet) for journal analyses. With such an archive at hand, you and your colleagues can

- save valuable time
- study the different ways in which fellow researchers have conducted their analyses
- add new analyses to the archive
- update previous analyses (e.g., changes in style or editorial policy)
- avoid having to reinvent the wheel for every journal you consider

The value of such an archive notwithstanding, you should never rely completely on someone else's analysis; instead, use it as a solid basis for doing your own.

Meanwhile, your next step is applying all of the argumentation and outlining strategies that you have learned thus far to the process of writing. But even after you have finished the paper, one final (pre-revision) step in the writing process remains: writing the abstract. The next chapter will show you how to analyze abstracts, so that the first part of your paper that an editor sees is exactly what that editor wants.

chapter 17

JOURNAL ANALYSIS: Analyzing And Writing Abstracts

A concise abstract should briefly state the purpose of the research and the main results. An abstract is often presented separate from the article, so it must be able to stand alone.¹

—JOURNAL OF HEALTH ECONOMICS SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

In terms of getting published, the abstract is in certain ways the most important part of your paper. Although a few journals use no abstracts, most journals do. Even though you have to write the abstract last, for reasons I shall explain, it is the first piece that an editor reads—and it therefore constitutes the first impression that your paper makes. As editors have only a short amount of time to decide whether to consider or reject your paper, you want yours to make the very first cut (i.e., to be sent out for peer review). Your abstract, therefore, is your article's initial—and pivotal—selling point. A well-crafted, well-focused, and interesting abstract will grab the editor's attention while announcing that you, the writer, can write well and therefore think well.

If a writer's abstract is weakly written, rambling, unfocused, too long, or stylistically inappropriate, the editor is likely to expect the worst of that writer's paper, and thus read it with little positive expectation. If, however, the organization of the abstract matches the style of the journal, and if the language and content are tightly focused (with the territory, niche, and purpose statement clearly stated), both the editor and the referees are likely to be interested.

Abstracts appear tricky to write, for a number of reasons. First, although abstracts come first in the paper, the writer has to write them last. The concept of "abstracting" something from something else means to pull out the essence of something, to boil it down to its essential meaning. A writer cannot pull out something from nothing. The first problem arises when conferences announce requests for papers, because the writer has to send an abstract or summary of a paper that he or she has not yet written. In such cases, the writer needs to view writing and rewriting the abstract as part of the research process, part of the constant dialogue between ideas and evidence. For calls for papers, then, the abstract is part of the discovery process in which the writer determines what he or she really means to say.

Second, because an abstract represents the essence of a paper, it is not a highly abbreviated version but rather a very different piece of writing—one completely dependent on the type of abstract most prevalent in a particular journal. To know which structure to apply, the writer must be able to perform a linguistic analysis of the abstracts in his or her chosen journal. Most submission guidelines give very little abstract information beyond a word limit. Without the good fortune of having guidelines such as those from the *ILR Review*, the writer cannot possibly write an appropriate abstract without first having studied the journal.

Third, because abstracts range from extremely short to relatively short, writing an abstract resembles writing a newspaper advertisement for a house for sale: the writer has limited space in which to create the greatest advantage with the fewest words, to interest the reader in what the writer is “selling”—the paper. Thus in an abstract, even more than any other part of a paper, *every word counts*.

Yet once you become accustomed to analyzing abstracts and their vocabulary and structure, you will find that journal analysis simplifies the process of abstract writing. The strategy lies in what I call “*patterning*”—finding patterns in the most recent year’s worth of journal articles. However, before you use patterns to help you write your abstract, you first need to use the patterns you find in abstracts as part of your preliminary analysis. These patterns will often give you so much information about a journal that you can eliminate it without needing to read the articles themselves.

Using abstract patterns for elimination analysis

Abstracts are highly informative. They give you the basic structure of both the content and the argument of a paper. Always think of the patterns you find in abstracts in terms of *sentence information* (what does each sentence tell me in terms of the purpose, theory, method, data, findings, or conclusions of the paper?) and *sentence purpose* (what is this sentence doing in this particular position in the abstract, what purpose does it serve, and how is it doing so?). Keep these questions in mind as you read on. I will return to them later in greater detail.

I encourage you to do the analyses yourself for all of the abstracts in this section. By doing so before reading my analyses, you will be well on your way to further developing your own patterning skills. As you answer the two questions in the next paragraph, however, bear in mind that they focus you not on editing the abstracts or deciding whether you think they are well written or well argued but solely on finding the commonalities among them.

Consider the following four abstracts from one issue of the *Journal of Labor Economics*.² What do they have in common? What can you tell about the journal from reading them?

Some Contacts Are More Equal Than Others:

Informal Networks, Job Tenure, and Wages LINDA DATCHER LOURY, TUFTS U.

The explanation typically given for longer tenure among workers who use informal contacts to find jobs is that relatives and friends reduce uncertainty about the quality of the match between worker and employer. An alternative explanation is that workers rely on informal information sources as a last resort. Such workers remain at their current jobs mainly because they have few alternative choices rather than because of better match quality. This article shows that the two different explanations are simultaneously valid for different types of contacts and can account for differences in the wage effects of job contacts.³

How Shortening the Potential Duration of Unemployment Benefits Affects the Duration of Unemployment: Evidence from a Natural Experiment

JAN C. VAN OURS, TILBURG U. MILAN VODOPIVEC, WORLD BANK

In this article we investigate the disincentive effects of shortening the potential duration of unemployment insurance (UI) benefits. We identify these disincentive effects by exploiting changes in Slovenia’s unemployment insurance system—a “natural experiment” that involved substantial reductions in the potential duration of benefits for four groups of workers plus no change in benefits for another group (which served as a natural control). We find that the change had a positive effect on the exit rate from unemployment—to new jobs and other options—for unemployment spells of various lengths and for several categories of unemployed workers.⁴

Immigrants and the Labor Market JAMES P. SMITH, RAND CORP.

This article examines skill gaps between immigrants and native-born Americans and generational progress achieved by different immigrant ethnic groups. Evidence of a widening skill gap is not strong. While wage data show a pronounced fall in relative wages of “recent” immigrants, significant independent contributors to that decline are a widening age gap and the increasing price of skill. When attention shifts to legal migrants, the evidence is that legal migrants are, at a minimum, keeping up with native-born Americans. I find that the concern that educational generational progress among Latino immigrants has lagged behind other immigrant ethnic groups is unfounded.⁵

Technical Change, Job Tasks, and Rising Educational Demands: Looking outside the Wage Structure ALEXANDRA SPITZ-OENER, HUMBOLDT U.

Empirical work has been limited in its ability to directly study whether skill requirements in the workplace have been rising and whether these changes have been related to technological change. This article answers these questions using a unique data set from West Germany that enabled me to look at how skill requirements have changed within occupations. I show that occupations

require more complex skills today than in 1979 and that the changes in skill requirements have been most pronounced in rapidly computerizing occupations. Changes in occupational content account for about 36% of the recent educational upgrading in employment.⁶

A number of patterns immediately emerge from a reading of these four abstracts. They all are about 100 words long and almost exclusively in the active voice. All use the term “this article,” and three use “we” or “I.” While only one uses a clever title (“Some Contacts are More Equal Than Others”), the potential contributor knows that the editor both likes and will consider them.

As for content and focus, all four abstracts are results oriented. They concentrate on the subject matter itself, not on the field or the larger territory, or on models or methods. Conclusions are clear, and policy makers can easily extrapolate from them to form opinions or positions. None end by pointing the way to future research, although “Immigrants and the Labor Market” strongly challenges previous research (“the concern...is unfounded”). In terms of authorship, only two papers have European authors (and European data).

Four abstracts obviously do not constitute a journal analysis. Nonetheless, assuming that the analysis of these abstracts is representative of a full year’s worth of *Journal of Labor Economics* abstracts, what useful information could a potential contributor glean from reading only the abstracts?

- The papers focus on specific data sets and conclusions (even though the purpose of these data sets is to test a more general hypothesis or theory).
- The writing, while by and for economists, is not overloaded with jargon.
- The writing is crisp, active, and readable.
- American English would be the best choice.
- The journal’s focus appears to be more on the best possible data set than on the countries from which they derive.

For a change of field, consider four abstracts from one issue of *Ethnic and Racial Studies*.⁷ Again, what do they have in common? What can you tell about the journal from reading them?

Both black and symbolically white: The ‘Bajan-Brit’ return migrant as post-colonial hybrid ROBERT POTTER AND JOAN PHILLIPS, U. OF READING

The research presented in this article centres on an under-researched demographic group of young return migrants, namely, second-generation Barbadians, or ‘Bajan-Brits’, who have decided to ‘return’ to the birthplace of their parents. Based on 51 in-depth interviews, the essay examines the experiences of second-generation return migrants from an interpretative perspective framed with post-colonial discourse. The article first considers the Bajan-Brits and issues of race in the UK

before their decision to migrate. It is then demonstrated that on ‘return’, in certain respects, these young, black English migrants occupy a liminal position of cultural, racial and economic privilege, based on their ‘symbolic’ or ‘token’ whiteness within the post-colonial context of Barbados. But this very hybridity and inbetweenness means that they also face difficulties and associated feelings of social alienation and discrimination. The ambivalent status of this transnational group of migrants serves to challenge traditional notions of Barbadian racial identity.⁸

Borderland spaces of identification and dis/location: Multiscalar narratives and enactments of Seto identity and place in the Estonian-Russian borderlands

ROBERT KAISER, U. OF WISCONSIN ELENA NIKIFOROVA, CENTRE FOR INDEPENDENT SOCIAL RESEARCH, ST. PETERSBURG

This article explores the cultural politics of memory and the reconfiguration of commemorative landscapes as one of the principal arenas within which the interiority and exteriority of place and identity are being re-narrated, contested, and re-enacted by actors and institutions representing a wide range of scalar stances. We treat place and identity as mutually constituted, dynamically interactive discursive and practical categories of becoming, and identify borderlands as multiscalar sites of imminence, where the interiority and exteriority of place and identity are re-narrated and re-enacted. Using a multiscalar network approach, we focus on the actors engaged in the cultural politics of memory in the southern Russian-Estonian borderlands. We conclude that borderlands are central multiscalar nodes where power, place and identity intersect, where the interior and exterior not only of Setomaa and Seto-ness, but also of Estonia and Estonian-ness, Russia and Russian-ness, and Europe and European-ness are reconfigured.⁹

Strategic ethnicity: The construction of multi-racial/multi-ethnic religious community GREGORY STANCZAK, WILLIAMS COLLEGE

This article highlights through one case the ways in which religious organizations provide an exploratory space for maintaining, reclaiming, and altering aspects of racial and ethnic identity within a racially and ethnically integrated community. Utilizing data from in-depth interviews and participant observation in Southern California, I suggest that within the organizational culture of the congregation, church leaders and individual members recursively construct an integrated identity through 1) the public framing and articulation of goals, 2) their religious organizational structure and resources, and 3) the lived experiences of members. I argue that a perceived reciprocal legitimacy emerges in this process through which religious claims affirm integration goals while, at the same time, observable integration within the congregation strengthens the acceptance of religious doctrine. I offer strategic ethnicity as a useful way of thinking about the transformation of racial experience and ethnicity into collective and individual tools with American Protestant congregations.¹⁰

Transnationalism or assimilation? Patterns of sociopolitical adaptation among Canadian business immigrants MARTIN MARGER, U. OF WINDSOR

This study analyses patterns of sociopolitical incorporation among immigrant entrepreneurs in Ontario who entered Canada under the auspices of the federal Business Immigration Program [BIP] between 1984 and 1994. The analysis focuses specifically on issues of transnationalism, adaptation to mainstream social and political institutions, and citizenship. In-depth interviews of a sample of BIP entrepreneurs reveal that, over a period of eight to eighteen years, respondents generally achieved a high level of political awareness, maintained weak transnational ties, and naturalized at an extraordinarily high rate. In the process of sociopolitical integration, respondents relied primarily on human forms of capital, especially English language proficiency and business skills, rather than on the social capital that inheres in ethnic communities and networks.¹¹

As opposed to the previous set of abstracts, these are an average of 50 words longer, with longer sentences. While these abstracts differ from one another in certain ways, they also share similarities. The style is mostly active voice, with some changing from active to passive back to active, and the language is heavy on theory and field-related jargon (especially in the first two, with phrases such as “hybridity and inbetweeness” and “dynamically interactive discursive and practical categories of becoming”). All end with conclusions. Three use “this article,” and one uses “this study.”

These abstracts clearly indicate the field-orientation of the papers, so that each case study constitutes a springboard for discussing one or more aspects of larger theoretical or methodological issues within the field itself. Although two of the six authors are connected to US universities, four are affiliated with institutions outside the US. The subjects under discussion are also wide-ranging in both location and age.

As for differences among the abstracts, only one ends by considering future research (“Strategic ethnicity”), and two use “we” or “I.” In addition, two (“Borderland spaces” and “Strategic ethnicity”) use the personal pronoun after an introductory modifying phrase beginning with “using” or “utilizing” (“using a multiscale network approach”/“utilizing data from in-depth interviews”), thereby avoiding the passive voice and the dangling modifier it would create.

The European writer thus finds in *Ethnic and Racial Studies* a journal open to research and studies from all over the world, provided that the paper relates the data, method, or results to wider theoretical or methodological discussions within the field. Papers focused primarily on subject matter would not fare as well.

Before turning to the actual structure of abstracts, you may find it useful to analyze abstracts from a very different journal that, like *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, publishes papers dealing with groups of people. By reading the following three abstracts from the same volume of *American Ethnologist*, what can you tell about the journal?¹²

Silences in history and nation-state: Reluctant accounts of the Cold War in Sarawak KEE HOWE YONG, NEW YORK U.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, thousands of rural Chinese Hakkas in Sarawak, Malaysia, just like millions of others throughout the Third World during the Cold War, were targeted as communists or communist sympathizers and were detained at correction centers or relocated into barbed wire-controlled villages. However, given such a past, most of these Hakkas remained extremely reluctant to give their representations of this history. As an anthropologist, I wanted to do something with this history that is contrary to the wishes of most of these Chinese Hakkas, and it is within the struggle with this evidential paradox that I attempt to engage social issues of memory intersubjectively, historically, and politically.¹³

The skewing of history in Mexico TREVOR STACK, U. OF ABERDEEN

In this article, I consider the attempt by a group of activists in west Mexico to uncover the history of their town. Attention focuses on how group members understood the genre of history and why they believed that mastering the genre would help to revitalize their community. I also look at the difficulties faced by the group in living up to its own understandings of that genre and particularly in obtaining the right kinds of evidence to substantiate history. I show that the genre of history in this instance was skewed such that the town’s history could only be known by persons in more central places, and I conclude by arguing that this linking of knowledge, place, and authority is typical of modern society.¹⁴

Buried alive: Imagining Africa in the Brazilian Northeast

JAN HOFFMAN FRENCH, U. OF RICHMOND

Many rural black communities in Brazil are currently petitioning for legal recognition as descendant communities of fugitive slaves (*quilombos*) under a provision in the 1988 Constitution of Brazil. In this article, I analyze the elaboration and transformation of a family story into a narrative about slavery in one such recognized quilombo. I then further analyze the narrative’s transformation into a play performed regularly by adolescent members of the quilombo. Because quilombo identity took shape in tandem with changes in the story, elements of the narrative have become crucial to the production of new bases for self-identification, solidarity, and conflict. At the same time, those transformations have been guided by, and continue to be associated with, practices, beliefs, and worldviews about race, color, ethnicity, and religion that were salient prior to the invocation of the constitutional provision. In addition to illustrating how law can be instrumental in transforming local cultural practices and self-understandings, the story told in this article adds to reexaminations of community as an invocation of positive associations tied to an assumed communal past.¹⁵

Despite the focus on particular ethnic communities, the papers in this sample from *American Ethnologist* differ greatly from those in *Racial and Ethnic Studies*. These three abstracts focus exclusively on the writer's *fieldwork*—what he or she has done with or about the ethnic or social group with whom he or she has worked, lived, or studied. Yet not one uses the word "fieldwork": it is so contextual that its mention would be superfluous. In each abstract, theory constitutes the framework that contextualizes and gives meaning to the fieldwork results. All three abstracts suggest narratives and discussions stemming from the writer's research with the group being researched; all use "I" at least twice, two use "in this article, I..." and "The skewing of history in Mexico" uses "I" four times.

Differences are clear, particularly as the third abstract is much longer (176 words as opposed to 110 and 124), and its approach shows less emotional involvement on the author's part. However, assuming for the sake of argument that these three abstracts constitute a representative sample, then the first two would form a pattern—relatively short abstracts framing papers entailing varying degrees of author activism. The first in particular ("Silences in history and nation-state") shows strong activism—"as an anthropologist I wanted to do something with this history"—and in that sense is not typical of most papers and may not be typical of this journal. These questions of whether a particular abstract is or is not representative returns us again to my initial point—that a proper journal analysis demands the perusal of a full year's worth of articles.

After years of teaching social scientists to find patterns in journal articles, I find that almost every journal shows a clear pattern in its abstracts, however small that pattern may be. For example, all abstracts may begin with the phrase "this article [analyzes/examines/explores]" or the last sentence may present conclusions but no reference to future research. The exception is usually a journal in its first year of publication, when it is still developing its audience and may have fewer submissions. However, once the journal becomes known and the editor has a chance to choose papers according to his or her standards for approach, content, and writing, a pattern will soon appear—especially in the abstracts.

If, however, at the end of your elimination analysis, you have chosen a journal that truly seems lacking in patterns, then pick an article organized closest to the way that you plan to organize yours, and use its abstract as your model. This idea of using abstracts as models leads naturally into the next phase of abstract analysis: defining their structures and extrapolating from those patterns to create your own.

Defining and understanding abstract structures

Every abstract has a structure. Even the most cursory analysis reveals either that all (or most) abstracts in a journal have a particular structure or that at least half of them do. Whichever the case, the writer should model his or her abstract on the

structural pattern most common to that journal. Therefore, abstract analysis must include not only content research, which involves the placement of content within an abstract, but also *linguistic research*—that is, research into both the language and the grammatical structure of each sentence.

In the social sciences, one of the most common patterns in abstracts is, as mentioned earlier, the three-part CARS ("Creating a Research Space") pattern that Swayles identified: to establish a research territory, establish a niche, and occupy the niche. (This pattern usually also appears, albeit with different wording, in the introduction.) The first sentence names the general territory, area, or field in which the work or study takes place (e.g., "most scholars in the field of _____ tend to conceive of Problem X in terms of the expansion of the welfare state"). The word "most" signals the reader that the writer is about to make a shift or establish a narrower niche in the next sentence.

If the territory does not need another background sentence, then sentence two will establish the niche (e.g., "very few political theorists analyze Problem X in the light of welfare state retrenchment, a very surprising development given the magnitude of current welfare state retrenchment and its potential effect on [situation Z]"). Again, if no more explanation is necessary at this point, the writer gives the purpose statement, clearly occupying the niche (e.g., "this paper examines Problem X within the context of welfare state retrenchment by investigating the relationship of Z to _____ in countries A and B").

Consider, for example, the first sentence in each of six abstracts from the same issue of *Social Forces*:

- Under conditions of uncertainty, we predict that development will be tied to the idiosyncrasy of organizational forms represented within local regions.¹⁶
- Most prior research testing the hypothesis of the social disorganization theory that residential instability increases crime has used cross-sectional data.¹⁷
- In this article I argue that evolutionary theorizing can help sociologists and feminists better understand gender inequality.¹⁸
- We assess the impact of the welfare state on cross-national variation in the gender wage gap.¹⁹
- This article argues that existing studies on cultural capital and educational success fail to distinguish the different channels through which cultural capital promotes educational success.²⁰
- In this study we examine whether and why human and social resources increase charitable giving.²¹

In terms of structure, three of these abstracts begin with a purpose statement ("we investigate," "we assess," "we examine"); two start with an argument that the pa-

per will put forward and defend ("in this article I argue" and "this article argues"); one starts with a prediction of an outcome ("under conditions of uncertainty, we predict"); and one begins with the territory ("most prior research...has used cross-sectional data") and moves straight to the niche.

Again, hypothetically assuming that these sentences constitute a representative sample, a writer interested in submitting to *Social Forces* thus would have two structural options: One is to follow the most common pattern of beginning with a purpose statement. The other is to choose an abstract structure (among the six) that best fits the writer's paper, and to model his or her abstract on it.

While many other patterns and variations exist, this "territory-niche-occupation of niche" makes an excellent jumping-off point for analyzing the linguistic structure of abstracts. Structure, in this instance, applies first to the overall outline of the abstract. Because abstracts must be short and pithy, they must do a lot of work in a very little space. The writer must ask the following questions: In the journal I have chosen, what does the first sentence of the abstract usually do? What does the second sentence do? And the third, the fourth...?

Here is an example of this process at work, in the abstract from "Explaining the wage gap: intra-industry trade, services linkages and falling transportation costs" by Jolanda Peeters and Albert de Vaal (*Journal of Economic Inequality*, 2003):

In the debate on globalisation and wage inequality within countries, Heckscher-Olin theory has featured prominently, yet fails to take into account that globalisation comprises much more than increased trade between advanced and less-advanced countries. This paper develops a framework that takes better heed of the many aspects of globalisation and thereby addresses a new channel through which globalisation might influence wage inequality. Our results indicate that to understand the impact of globalisation on wage inequality, one needs insight in the nature and stage of globalisation and the relative size of a country.²²

In this example, the structure is clear: The first sentence names both the territory (the prominence of a certain theory in a certain scholarly debate) and the niche (the failure of that theory to "account for" something important). The second sentence is the purpose statement ("This paper develops a framework that..."). The third gives the results, which include a new way of understanding an old problem.

Another illustration comes from "Skills and Occupational Attainment: A Comparative Study of Germany, Denmark, and the UK" by Martina Dieckhoff (*Work, Employment & Society*, 2008):

This article investigates the impact of initial education and training on labour market outcomes in Germany, Denmark, and the UK. Using the European Community Household Panel, the article analyses how workers with vocational training fare in comparison to both their untrained counterparts and those with higher

levels of general education. Three outcomes are examined: wages, the odds of being in a lower-skilled job and the odds of being in professional employment. The results show that returns to vocational training differ markedly across the three countries studied.²³

Again, the structure is straightforward: The first sentence is the purpose statement, explaining what the article will "investigate" and in which countries. The second sentence gives the data set and identifies what the article will analyze. The third sentence names the "outcomes" to be "examined," and the fourth gives the results.

The ability to identify the purpose of each sentence in an abstract is a necessary analytical tool. The following two sections offer two more tools as part of the overall strategy of abstract analysis.

Using alphabetical symbols to replace specifics

This section shows you how to conduct abstract analysis using alphabetical symbols to represent specific content. By using **A** and **B** instead of "Weberian theory" or "active citizenship," the writer steps back from the details of his or her paper and begins to survey the structural landscape from a wider perspective. The "**A** and **B**" substitutions are highly useful in this extrapolation process, because their non-specificity allows the writer to immediately grasp their application to other situations and other papers. Using these symbols also helps the writer to see the reasoning or argumentative structure underlying each sentence (e.g., "because of **A**, therefore **B**" or "**A** makes **B**, and therefore **C**, possible for **D** [kinds of] people in country **E**").

Consider the following abstract from "Ethics, Problem Framing, and Training in Qualitative Inquiry" by Jan Nespor and Susan L. Groenke (*Qualitative Inquiry*, 2009):

This article examines the ethical issues bound up in the ways research problems are initially framed: the questions asked, the temporal and spatial frames of the study, the ways participants are defined. It explores the consequences of thinking through ethical issues using recent reconceptualizations of *agency* and suggests extensions of the ways researchers define *participants* for ethical purposes. The article concludes by examining some of the reasons for the relative neglect of such issues in graduate research preparation.²⁴

In analyzing the structure of this abstract, I am neither suggesting that the structure is typical of abstracts in *Qualitative Inquiry* nor promoting it as preferable to any other abstract structure. I use it here because it is well written and short.

This preceding abstract has three sentences. The first states that "this article" *examines* certain specific issues "bound up in" certain specific problems: 1, 2, and 3. *Examines* is a strong verb, one of many that frame and drive the best abstracts—and the best academic writing in general. We can thus extrapolate from this highly specific sentence to a more general outline form:

This [article/paper] [examines] A kind of [issues] [bound up in/connected to/intrinsic to] B kinds of problems: 1, 2, and 3.

The second sentence states that the article *explores* the “consequences of” “thinking through” “ethical issues” through “using” “recent reconceptualizations” of “agency,” and that the article *suggests* “extensions” of the ways in which researchers “define participants” for “ethical” purposes. Within this specific sentence we can see the following structure:

[It] *uses* [new/recent] understandings of D to *explore* the “consequences of” [thinking through/considering] A issues through C, and *suggests* [extensions] of the ways in which researchers *define* E people for A [purposes/reasons].

This sentence continues the use of strong active verbs: *use*, *explore*, *think through*, *suggest*, *define*.

The third sentence gives the conclusions, which include further “examining” of the “reasons” for “the relative neglect of such issues” in “graduate research preparation.” We can easily break this sentence down to its essential core:

[The article] *concludes* by *examining* [some] reasons for the [relative/general] neglect of A issues in [a specific process or context within the field].

Here, too, the writers continue their use of strong active verbs—*conclude* and *examine*.

Putting these sentences together, we get the following overall structure for a short abstract that reevaluates research issues or theoretical or methodological issues within a field:

This [article] [examines] A kind of [issues] [bound up in/connected to/intrinsic to] B kinds of problems: 1, 2, and 3. [It] *uses* [new/recent] understandings of D to *explore* the “consequences of” [thinking through/considering] A issues through C, and *suggests* [extensions] of the ways in which researchers *define* E people for A [purposes/reasons]. [The article] *concludes* by *examining* [some] reasons for the [relative/general] neglect of A issues in [a specific process or context within the field].

Beyond the larger structure of the abstract (that the paper examines X in relation to Y, uses new ideas of Z to explore X issues for specific reasons, and concludes by examining reasons for the neglect of X in a specific place or among a specific group of people), the grammatical structure is also clear. The writing is vigorous and concise, covering a lot of territory in only three sentences, with active voice verbs in all three independent clauses. Although some passive voice shows up in the initial sentence (“are framed/are defined”), the driving force of the three sentences is active. The writers also twice use participial phrases (“using recent.../by examining...”).

Were this sample structure to typify the structure of abstracts in *Qualitative Inquiry*, then all the writer would need to do is to construct his or her abstract in either

the same or a roughly similar pattern. Once a writer successfully constructs one or two such A and B models from published abstracts, he or she can also begin to successfully write both the models and the polished sentences that fit his or her journal of choice.

Abstract templates for the alphabetical symbol method

This subsection offers a sampling of abstract templates using the alphabetical symbol method (some use A and B, some use X and Y, and some need both sets). The parenthetical comments after each “sentence” remind the writer of its purpose:

1. An abstract for a paper on a specific research topic with specific interview data [6 sentences]
 - This paper describes and analyses.... (what paper does)
 - The two research questions posed were.... (underlying questions leading to data)
 - The first question was handled through X, with Y findings.
 - The second question was handled through A, with B findings.
 - Conclusions are....
 - It remains to be seen whether.... (points to future research)
2. For a long abstract in a journal that specializes in or prefers theoretical articles [11 sentences]
 - Concept of X has until recently been [of marginal interest]. (establishes territory, hints at a new direction or approach to come)
 - However, [interest now appearing/need for interest].... (establishes niche)
 - To date, literature has conceptualized/seen X only as Y. (hints at new approach)
 - “In this paper I/we suggest.... [seeing X as Z] (establishes new way of viewing X)
 - This [niche] is important/necessary/critical because.... (establishes importance of niche/approach)
 - [Past history] led to [old way] of seeing X as Y. (honors, rather than criticizes, earlier researchers)
 - However, [more recent history] is different. (shows reason for now seeing X differently)
 - [This event/group/political change] is the first sign of a change demanding that we view X differently. (becomes more specific about previous statement)

- If [past history] led to [old way] of seeing **X**, now [present occurrences] have potential for new consciousness.
 - [Gives one example proving previous two statements]
 - This article is speculative because it intends to stimulate discussion and establish a new research agenda for [the study of/work on **X**].
(gives aim of paper)
- 3. An abstract for theoretical or methodological analysis [6 sentences]**
- The literature on **A** has focused attention on **B** processes....
(tells reader immediately that writer will do something different)
 - Even with the influence of **B**, the “literature remains imprecise.”
(sets up reason to create new niche)
 - We use **C** to examine **D**. (identifies niche)
 - Our analysis shows.... (gives findings)
 - Despite **E**, we find no evidence of **F**. (conclusions about findings)
 - We argue **G** and consider its implications.
(makes point, looks towards future research)
- 4. Abstract for paper using specific data to study conditions causing **X****
[4 sentences]
- The authors examine the conditions [causing **X**]. (sets up purpose)
 - This study [draws on theories of **ABC** to examine how....]
(sets up methodology)
 - To expose the mechanisms at work, this study also assesses....
(fine-tunes both purpose and methodology)
 - Using **DEF** models, the authors find.... (presents overall findings)
- 5. Abstract for paper involving both historical background and interview data [6 sentences]**
- [Background, uniqueness of case]
 - To understand **X**, paper (based on interview data) draws on [person’s] theory. (provides theoretical basis)
 - The paper argues that **X** often creates **Y** and eventually **Z**. (gives purpose)
 - lays out both structure and themes:
“The first part of the paper highlights two themes:”
 - i. the first is that **A** contests idea **B** and suggests **C**.
 - ii. the second is that **D** is shaped by **E**, not **F**.

- continues layout but with *contrast*: In the second part of the paper, however, the relationship to **D** is disrupted by **G**.
- names data and returns to original theme: Three such cases are discussed as examples of **X**.

Using “purpose phrases” to replace specifics

Another approach to analyzing abstract structure is to replace specific content with words, phrases, or short clauses denoting the purpose of the sentence. This method focuses less on the sentence structure itself and more on the argumentative purpose of each sentence. This method, too, uses **A** and **B** or **X** and **Y** as necessary. Here is the same illustration I used for the symbolic approach:

This article examines the ethical issues bound up in the ways research problems are initially framed: the questions asked, the temporal and spatial frames of the study, the ways participants are defined. It explores the consequences of thinking through ethical issues using recent reconceptualizations of *agency* and suggests extensions of the ways researchers define *participants* for ethical purposes. The article concludes by examining some of the reasons for the relative neglect of such issues in graduate research preparation.

The first sentence states that the article examines three issues in the framing of research problems. It is the purpose statement. The second sentence, using the verb “explores,” further refines and specifies what the article is examining and gives the methodology. The third sentence gives the conclusion. Therefore, using the *purpose phrases* model, you would come up with a structure looking something like the following:

- Purpose (This article examines **X** issues in framing three **Y** problems: 1, 2, 3.)
- Refining of purpose/methodology (It explores the consequences of thinking through **X** issues using **Z** methodology.)
- Conclusions (“The article concludes....”)

Abstract templates for using “purpose phrases”

This subsection presents sample templates for the *purpose phrase* method:

1. A classic abstract, using “we,” for a survey article [5 sentences]
 - This paper surveys.... (what the paper generally covers)
 - We confine our focus to 3 [areas/questions]: (specific niche within larger survey area)
 - The areas are 1, 2, and 3.
 - We [reconstruct/analyze].... (what paper specifically studies)
 - We conclude....

- 2.** Classic abstract for just about any paper, depending on journal [5 sentences]
 - Background (Until the early [1990s]....)
 - Territory (At that time, **X** was happening)
 - Niche (As conventional explanations of **X** have failed, the authors use **Y** approach)
 - Occupying niche (**Y** clearly explains what happened in these instances of **X**)
 - Results/conclusions (This analysis suggests....)

- 3.** Abstract for a paper about problems with methodology issues [7 sentences]
 - (First two sentences) name subject and give quick background description
 - Problem with studying subject (Estimating cause is “complicated” because....)
 - Proposed solution (We propose a solution based on **X**)
 - Usefulness of proposed solution (This strategy exploits....)
 - Importance of results (Our results cast doubt on the widely held view that....)
 - Results

- 4.** Abstract for solving niche problem with new methodology [5-9 sentences]
 - Establishing importance of larger territory [1-2 sentences]
 - Naming smaller territory within it
 - Naming niche that is unoccupied because of methodological problems [1-2 sentences]
 - Occupying niche with new method that will overcome problems [1-2 sentences]
 - Important findings [1-2 sentences]

- 5.** Abstract for quantitative papers [4-5 sentences]
 - Establishing territory and niche (**X** plays central role in.... However....)
 - Occupying niche (To deal with ___ problem, we use microdata and present [#] results) [1-2 sentences]
 - Results

- 6.** Abstract for presenting a new model [3-4 sentences]
 - Purpose (We present a model of....)
 - Explanation of model (Model exhibits # of features that....)
 - Conclusion (Model sheds light on **X**, as well as on **Y**)

- 7.** Abstract for just about anything... [6 sentences]
 - Purpose (This paper [analyzes]....)
 - Reason for purpose
 - Background
 - Methodology
 - Findings
 - What findings suggest

Once you uncover the structure of a journal’s abstracts and either use these models or create your own, you are well on your way towards writing abstracts that match the style of the journal you have chosen.

When the writing is done, of course, the revision begins. While Part II covered pruning unnecessary language and Part III covered ensuring clarity through accurate grammar, Part VI covers both the development of style and essentials of the revision process. It also discusses several important additional aspects of the submission process.

PART VI

REVISION and (RE)SUBMISSION: Creating a Publishable Paper

Read and revise, reread and revise, keep reading and revising until your text seems adequate to your thought.¹

—JACQUES BARZUN

Over 200 years ago, Benjamin Franklin wrote: “Either write something worth reading or do something worth writing.”² Social scientists need to do both. Therefore, the quality of the writing must be as good as its contents, and scholars must be as good as writers as they are as thinkers, theorists, or researchers. If the writing is poor, it will not get published.

In the Anglo-American tradition, once we have organized our thoughts, outlined the paper, and created a first draft that reflects our best thinking, we then begin to study it for language and structure: What are its weaknesses? Is something in the wrong section or chapter? Should the discussion of X go in the literature review, the better to connect it with the discussion in the following theoretical section? As for language, do I mean to say “certainty” or “certitude”? Is “indicate” too weak here? Have I said the same thing twice in one paragraph? Am I bored or confused reading any part of it (because if I am, certainly the reader will be)? During this process, we create not one or two revisions but as many as it takes for the argumentation to be unshakable and the writing perfect.³

Revision is every writer’s time-consuming but necessary strategy for making his or her paper as publishable as possible. This part of the book therefore covers some highly useful aspects of developing style, revising the paper, and writing the letters that accompany its submission and resubmission (i.e., the response to the referees’ comments). To reiterate a statement from the introduction: “Your knowledge or research is only as useful as the accuracy and clarity with which you present it.” Every word counts—and that is where the revision process, however daunting, is the writer’s best friend.

chapter 18

RECOGNIZING, STUDYING, AND DEVELOPING STYLE

Proper words in proper places, make the true definition of a style.¹

—JONATHAN SWIFT

A good style must, first of all, be clear.²

—ARISTOTLE

Style is hard to identify and even harder to define. Ayn Rand cautions writers against consciously trying to create a style, noting that “[s]tyle is the result of subconscious integration.”³ Like Aristotle and Swift, she writes:

The first concern of style is clarity.... [A]pproximations will not do. They can occur in your first draft, but they are the first thing to look for in editing. Holding clarity as an absolute is the surest road first to a competent style, and perhaps eventually to a brilliant style of your own.⁴

In other words, first be clear. The rest will follow.

Good style is usually easy to recognize and hard to develop. We recognize it when reading a paper that reads easily, argues clearly and logically, and uses language beautifully without sending us scurrying to the dictionary. Just as visual artists learn their craft and develop their own style by initially copying the works of the great masters, so an academic writer needs to pay attention to—and copy down—the best writing that he or she reads. From copying and studying the style of those phrases and sentences, and those clause combinations and cause-and-effect constructions, will come the writer’s unique voice and best academic style.

While copying the actual words of others is plagiarism, copying their linguistic structures and framing patterns is not. The more that a writer copies these constructions by hand or by typing, the more these patterns imprint themselves on the brain, until they become incorporated into the writer’s own style. I urge all European social scientists to keep a file of such phrases and sentences for consultation during the revision process. Decide which structures best fit your argument, and try making that style of clause or sentence your own, in your own words. However, in cases of obvious stylistic flair, where even a change of nouns and verbs cannot mask the original writer’s voice (e.g., Jocelyn Viterna’s second paragraph, p. 192), you must avoid adopting the full structure.

Although you cannot imitate such distinct styles, you will find that admiring them and adding them to your archive will imprint them on your unconscious mind and help you to distinguish good writing from bad. That a journal has published someone’s paper does not necessarily mean that the style is worth emulating; much of the time, the subject and the framing language have as much to do with publication as a writer’s style.

This chapter considers style from several perspectives. First, it presents examples of excellent writing and of both linguistic and argumentative structure. Second, it discusses clause combining, showing you the different messages and connotations that different clause combinations carry. Third, it contains a sampling of suggestions from my large collection of stylistic “do’s and don’ts.” Last, it gives an overview of some of the differences between US and UK vocabulary, spelling, and grammar.

As you further develop your style in English, remember that “less is more,” and avoid falling in love with your own sentences. Many years ago I heard the Nobel laureate for literature, Isaac Bashevis Singer, give a lecture at which he said (I paraphrase from memory): “No matter how important your message or interesting your anecdote, if it gets in the way of your story, throw it out. The only thing that matters is the story.” The same goes for a paper—the only thing that matters is the writer’s argument. Anything that distracts or sidetracks the reader, no matter how interesting, is both poor argument and poor style.

Above all, heed the advice of Roger Ascham, a 16th century English scholar known for his writing style: “He that will write well in any tongue must follow this counsel of Aristotle: to speak as the common people do, to think as wise men do; and so should every man understand him, and the judgment of wise men allow him.”⁵

Examples of good English style

The sentences and paragraph excerpts in the following two subsections serve as models for both strong language (short, pithy sentences) and strong framing sentences and paragraphs. After commenting on the first few, I will let the rest speak for themselves.

Strong language and stylistic patterns

- “Rather than becoming a superstate or a mechanism to represent the enlightened national self-interests, the EU has metamorphosed into a third form. It has become a discursive forum whose function is to referee relationships and help coordinate activity among a range of players, of which the nation-state is only one. The EU’s primary role has become orchestral. It facilitates the coming together of networks of engagement that include nation-states but also extend outward to transnational organizations and inward to municipal and regional governments, as well as civil society organizations.”⁶

These four sentences have a stylistic pattern. The first sentence has a strong independent clause (preceded by a contrastive modifying phrase), and the following sentence illustrates and amplifies the point with excellent language and parallel structure. Sentences three and four repeat this pattern.

- “The globalization of capital flows creates new divides.”⁷
- “Europe is a kaleidoscope of cultural diversity.”⁸
- “European foreign policy is built on spreading peace rather than amassing power.”⁹

Short sentences like these, especially used intermittently as either topic sentences or paragraph-ending sentences, stay in the reader’s mind. Such sentences may look too simplistic to the European eye; however, as long as they have a strong argument to back them up and the writer does not use too many, the style is quite powerful because the words and phraseology are short enough to be memorable.

Strong framing

Some sentences and groups of sentences constitute excellent style primarily because they so brilliantly frame the argument (chap. 13). Some use the cause-and-effect technique, while others use transitional words, adjectives, and other carefully selected words to frame their meaning and the direction of their argument. Using some or all of such sentence constructions (and especially any that tend to recur in your journal of choice) will better frame your paper and make your writing more elegant. Some examples follow (italics mine):

- *Compared to the few other cross-regional studies on the hypothesis, all of which focus on a single dimension of _____, we use a six-scale measurement model of _____.* We also explore the relationship between X and Y at regional and district levels.
- This paper advances a different explanation, one that....
- My emphasis on _____ stands in sharp contrast to most arguments about _____, which imply....
- *Given these findings, this paper investigates two channels through which [type of people] might improve their social position: [1 & 2].*
- *Moreover, the existence of individuals who are X, but who use the [tools/ habits] of Y, basically challenges traditional _____ ideas about Z.*
- These arguments run parallel with those concerning the social impact of _____.
- *Although the X hypothesis does not exhaust all the questions that Y raises about the relationship between Z and Z+1, it remains of pivotal significance for understanding the societal effects of Z+2.*

- These results mean that, *for [country X]*, the findings are inconclusive. *Yet in [continent Y], longitudinal one-country studies mostly refute the ABC hypothesis.*
- *X kinds of research projects into _____ development have been few in number and confined to Iberia.* They have, moreover, led to *contradictory conclusions.*
- *Because of these competing and unclear views of policy implications, both of which invoke strong arguments, I will test opposing hypotheses regarding the effects of X on Y and its control over Z. I will test both arguments in three areas of opinions about Z: [1/2/3].*
- *Although the other regions are more heterogeneous on these factors, controlling for them is nevertheless necessary. In doing so, one not only tests for alternative explanations of X differences in levels of Y but also gets information on the significance of Y in relation to other features of such societies.*
- *We intend to answer these three questions by empirically relating X characteristics and control variables to various aspects of Y.*
- *In analyzing these reforms, I proceeded in two steps. First, I retraced the decision-making procedures by means of A and B sources such as E, F, and G. Second—to systematize the rich qualitative data—I coded the positions of the actors on five aspects of the reforms: (a), (b), (c), (d), and (e).*

Using these few examples and many like them as models, younger scholars (and others) can then turn to clause combination and recombination as a useful technique for improving the sophistication of their style.

Clause combination and recombination

Clauses, in their many forms, constitute the building blocks of sentences—and thus of style. This section presents a basic overview of clause combination, starting with three simple examples that form the “refresher” foundation for the examples that follow. Knowing both why and when to combine (or recombine) clauses differently is the first step in the creation of a publishable writing style.

Each of these examples starts with two to four clauses, followed by possible combinations and a short commentary:

John likes the taste of coffee. John likes to drink coffee.

Because John likes the taste of coffee, he likes to drink coffee.

John likes drinking coffee because he likes the taste [of coffee].

John drinks coffee because he likes the taste.

(The three rewrites reflect the cause-and-effect relationship between the two clauses.)

Anna does social research. Anna writes papers.

Anna does social research and writes papers. (and)

Anna not only does social research but also writes papers. (not only...but also)

Anna both conducts social research and writes papers. (both...)

Because Anna does social research, she writes papers. (cause...effect)

As a social researcher, Anna writes papers. (cause...effect)

Because Anna is a social researcher, she [therefore] has to write papers. (cause...

effect)

(This situation entails either cause-and-effect or both-and.)

I need sleep. I am tired.

I need sleep when I am tired. (situation is time-bound)

When I am tired, I need sleep. (same situation, reversed clause positions)

Whenever I am tired, I need sleep. (same situation, but now time implication is that such times are more frequent or episodic)

I need sleep because I am tired. (effect followed by cause)

Because I am tired, I [therefore] need sleep. (cause followed by effect)

Because I need sleep, I am tired. (reversed cause followed by effect)

I am tired because I need sleep. (reversed effect followed by cause)

The second section conceptualizes the nature of these practices.

It uses A and B's classic notion of X.

This model helps capture the intrinsic ways in which Y does Z.

The second section conceptualizes the nature of these practices by using A and B's classic notion of X. (by + "verb + ing")

This model helps capture the intrinsic ways in which Y does Z.

The second section conceptualizes the nature of these practices by using A and B's classic notion of X, as this model helps capture the intrinsic ways in which Y does Z. (This sentence turns the third clause into a dependent "cause" clause.)

Using A and B's classic notion of X—which helps capture the intrinsic ways in which Y does Z—the second section conceptualizes the nature of these practices. (This sentence starts with verb + "ing" to focus on what the section does, as in "by doing A, B does C.")

Using A and B's classic notion of X, which helps capture the intrinsic ways in which Y does Z, the second section conceptualizes the nature of these practices. (This sentence is the same as the previous one, using commas instead of dashes.)

By capturing the intrinsic ways in which Y does Z through the use of A and B's classic notion of X, the second section conceptualizes the nature of these practices. (This sentence reverses the first two clauses and changes the second one to a phrase.)

Most children in residential care continue to have relations with their biological family (if possible).

Residential care is supposed to be the place from which the child's everyday life evolves.

Most children in residential care continue to have relations with their biological family (if possible). However, residential care is supposed to be the place from which the child's everyday life evolves.

(The new sentence shows contrast, using "however.")

Most children in residential care continue to have relations with their biological family (if possible), but residential care is supposed to be the place from which the child's everyday life evolves.

(This version shows contrast within same sentence, using "but.")

While most children in residential care continue to have relations with their biological family (if possible), residential care is nevertheless supposed to be the place from which the child's everyday life evolves.

(Here contrast is framed at the start of the sentence, reinforced by the addition of "nevertheless" in the second clause.)

Although children in residential care continue to have relations with their biological family (if possible), residential care is supposed to be the place from which the child's everyday life evolves.

(This sentence is the same as the previous one, substituting "although" for "while" and omitting "nevertheless.")

Residential care is supposed to be the place from which the child's everyday life evolves, even though most children in residential care continue to have relations with their biological family (if possible).

(The focus and clauses are now reversed, with "even though" in the second clause.)

At some of the institutions we studied, care is mainly viewed as a relational matter.

This points to the significance of having dedicated adults on the staff.

They are ready to engage in demanding patterns of interaction with troubled children.

At some of the institutions we studied, care is mainly viewed as a relational matter, pointing to the significance of having dedicated adults ready to engage in demanding patterns of interaction with troubled children and youth.

(The first clause remains dependent, followed by an independent clause that is still passive. The unclear pronoun "this" disappears, replaced by verb + "ing.")

The subject of the third clause disappears, and the clause itself turns into a long adjective phrase following the noun that the “they” had represented.)

Some of the institutions we studied view care mainly as relational, partly because they have dedicated staff, who are ready to engage in demanding patterns of interaction with troubled children.

(The first two clauses merge, with the dependent clause becoming the subject of a now active voice independent clause, followed by an adjective clause beginning with “who.” The structure, because of the “because,” is now “effect followed by cause.” In addition, the comma before “who” tells the reader that all staff are “ready to engage” and that that is essentially what “dedicated” means.)

Some of the institutions we studied view care mainly as relational, because they have dedicated staff who are ready to engage in demanding patterns of interaction with troubled children.

(Without the comma before “who,” the meaning of this sentence has changed. Now “dedicated” is semi-defined by the “ready to engage...” phrase. The new implication is that having “dedicated staff” is not enough, that one needs “dedicated staff who are ready to engage....” Thus a particular form of dedication is now defined as essential.)

Some of the institutions we studied view care mainly as relational, as they have dedicated staff who are ready to engage in demanding patterns of interaction with troubled children.

(This sentence is the same as the previous one, replacing “because” with “as.” Although technically having the same meaning here as “because,” “as” has the effect of softening the cause-and-effect impact.)

Clause combining—some things to avoid

The following three combinations of clauses create bad writing—and therefore bad style. Learn to recognize and avoid them.

1. Dangling modifiers: the passive voice + a clause reduced to a modifying phrase (p. 90):

- To analyze the problem, the following assumptions have been made.
- The following assumptions were made in analyzing the problem.

Neither of these examples is grammatically correct (or clear) English. Whoever is doing the analyzing must be the subject of the independent clause, as in

- To analyze the problem, I/we made the following assumptions.
- I/we made the following assumptions when analyzing the problem.

However, the first of these examples is preferable, because it places the “to analyze” phrase right next to the subject it is modifying. You can achieve the same result with the second sample sentence by doing the following:

- When analyzing the problem, I/we made the following assumptions.

2. “Cause + effect + cause” constructions, especially repetitive ones:

- Due to its data structure, the ABC data set allows us to compare different models and underlying assumptions, as the data contains detailed information on a relatively large sample of displaced workers.
- Given that the approach to ___ is gender-biased, the results will be skewed, as any bias in one direction or another will affect the findings.

Use only one “cause” clause in any one sentence.

In the first example, while the second cause is repetitive in terms of the purpose it serves, its language is more specific. The writer should thus use it to replace the first one:

- As the ABC data set contains detailed information on a relatively large sample of displaced workers, it allows us to compare different models and underlying assumptions.

In the second example, the effect has two causes, which the writer should combine in the same place in the sentence:

- Given that the approach to ___ is gender-biased and that any bias in one direction or another will affect the findings, the results will be skewed.

Both of these rewrites use compound verbs in a “cause” clause, followed by the “effect” clause. In English we frequently use compound verbs to show multiple causes, multiple effects, etc.

3. Clause combinations so labyrinthine as to be unreadable:

By using a human capital approach, he explains overeducation as a temporary phenomenon, only observed at certain stages of the life cycle and consequently the lower wage for the overeducated is a temporary phenomenon.

“Cause and effect” makes no sense in this sentence. Therefore, split the sentence into at least two sentences, making the first clearly lead into the second:

Using a human capital approach, he explains overeducation as a temporary phenomenon, observed only at certain stages in the life cycle. He therefore concludes that lower wages for the overeducated likewise constitute a temporary phenomenon.

Remember—the more complex or theoretical the piece, the shorter the sentences have to be, and the clearer the connections between them.

Some “do’s and don’ts” for both style and word choice

This section includes both general and highly specific suggestions for what to do and

what not to do when writing in English. Some will help you to improve your style as you write and rewrite. Others will ensure that you choose the right word for the meaning you intend.

- Use abstractions, theories, and philosophizing only if doing so (a) fits the context of the paragraph or section and (b) does not interrupt the flow of a factual or anecdotal narrative (underlining mine, to indicate what may belong elsewhere but not does belong in this paragraph).

First draft

Through the inscription of *flexjob* employees as “the weak” in the public discourse of “the open labor market,” this type of job (as well as its holder) is separated from the sphere of commercial exchange of labor. It seems that inherent in the discourse of the open labor market—which preconditions the “naming” of someone “weak” in order to be evoked as a discourse of social solidarity at all—there is a tendency to underline what we could call the “allowance” or “subsidy” dimension of the job. By evoking the discourse of “the weak” the duality dimension of the job is diminished and the job is categorically pushed out of the commercial exchange sphere and into what we could call the exchange sphere of “redistribution” or “gift giving.”

Rewrite

Through the labeling of *flexjob* employees as “the weak,” this type of job (as well as its holder) is separated from the sphere of commercial exchange of labor. Inherent in the discourse of the open labor market is a tendency to stress the “allowance” or subsidy dimension of the job. By using the term “the weak,” speakers diminish the dual dimension of the job and categorically push it out of the commercial exchange sphere and into that of “redistribution” or “gift giving.”

- Use modifiers to make generic or general nouns specific. Never leave it to the reader to guess what you mean. Leave no interpretation to chance:

Being beaten by other children is seen here as a sign of conflict and as a sign of relational problems.

[What kind of conflict—inner, social, parental, interpersonal?]

- Avoid the use of jargon whenever possible [advice from the senior editor of an international medical journal]:

Individual-specific characteristics *contribute negatively to* the wage gap, i.e., in favor of women.

[Replace “contribute negatively to” with “narrow.”]

- Immediately follow initial mentions of general terms with the appropriate specifics:

For policy concerns, the topic of wage mobility is thus important, because by studying wage mobility, insight is gained into an important *aspect* of the flexibility of the labour market.
[What aspect? State it here, now, before continuing.]

- Use “also” in only one of four places (never at the start of a sentence):

- after the verb “to be” (I am also tired/he is also a Ph.D. candidate)
- between the subject and the verb (she also studies sociology)
- in between verbs of two words or more (they have also been published)
- in “not only...but also” constructions

- Always put reasons (e.g., “because” clauses or phrases) and “conditionals” (phrases or dependent clauses beginning with words like *unless, until, if, before, after*) at the *beginning* of the sentence:

Poor: Labor market experience is defined by years since finishing education, because actual labor market experience is not available in the German and US data.

Good: Because actual labor market experience is not available in the German and US data, labour market experience is defined by the number of years after finishing one’s education.

- Anticipate reader’s questions and answer all of them within the text (italics mine):

Similarly, [Famous Scholar] (2000) finds that introducing an actuarially fair benefit formula induces a shift of the cumulative distribution of retirement age *to the right*. *The effects* are most powerful for very early retirement. However, calculations on the basis of [Famous Scholar] show that the marginal effects of *this introduction* are quite limited. In fact, the average retirement age rises only by 0.45 years.

- What does “to the right” mean—older? younger? Will your reader know?
- What “effects”? Of what? Or of whose?
- Because the phrase “of this introduction” is *two sentences away* from the verb “introducing,” it is too far away for the reader to easily understand the reference. Instead, be specific. Use “introducing such a benefit formula.”

In addition, eliminate—and never again use—the phrase “in fact,” because all of your work is supposed to be fact. While normally you would instead use “indeed,” here you should combine the two sentences and rewrite thus:

However, calculations on the basis of [Famous Scholar] show that the marginal effects of introducing such a benefit formula are *so limited that* the average retirement age rises only by 0.45 years.

- When using abstractions, be sure to define, explain, or otherwise connect your terminology to the subject under discussion (italics mine):

Informational capital is here defined as institutionalized educational certificates having a symbolic value (ref.), operating as both skills (ref.) and symbolic capital (ref.). Furthermore, informational capital is defined as *skills in terms of specific knowledge about different relations and things, which can be either abstract or concrete*. Thus, informational capital has a symbolic value by being recognized and acknowledged as *distinguished capital*.

 - What kind of skills? personal? group (i.e., cultural)? academic? If “just any kind of” skills, then how do these “skills,” as abstractly defined, related specifically to the subject at hand?
 - Always ask yourself: in what way does this abstract concept or definition further my reader’s understanding of the new information (or new approach to old information) that I am presenting?
 - If you haven’t explained or defined your abstraction clearly or fully, the “thus” that follows will make no sense to the reader—because you have not clearly shown the cause-and-effect relationship.
 - What is “distinguished capital”? Is it professional jargon? Will the reader know what it means or where it comes from? How does it fit both the paragraph and the overall subject of the paper?
- When quoting famous scholars, avoid using quotations that are badly written and hard to read. Sentences that work well in French or German, for example, may be too long or complex for readers to be able to read easily in English. The same holds true for famous scholars who are native speakers of English but poor stylists. Instead, use the power of paraphrase. Use your own words to tell the reader in clear sentences, with the proper sequence of ideas, what the scholar said—and then, of course, cite the article or book.
- Avoid the generic “you” in professional papers:

Other UK studies have shown that outsourcing has a limiting negative effect on the labour market except when you look at....
 [Your reader can be a “we,” as in “When we look at the labor market...”]
 —but only if “we” in your paper does not also mean you and other writers.]
- Use “I” for single authors and “we” for multiple authors. Each has an advantage. The single author may then use “we” to include both writer and reader;

whereas multiple authors may use the more comfortable “we,” they must use it only in reference to themselves.

- When you have several points to make, do not use “first” if you do not have a “second.” Do not use “second” if you don’t have a “first.” Avoid “-ly” (e.g., “firstly”). Use “third/fourth” instead of “finally” to emphasize that you have more than two or three points to make.
- When defining terms, be certain not to use them in the definition itself. Moreover, be certain that the definition actually defines the word you have in mind:

Poor: In the rest of this paper I will refer to displaced wage earner, defined as displaced wage earners coming from....

- In sentences with a series of three or more items, always put the longest one last:

The instruments used in this study are whether or not the father or the mother of the interviewee has been prescribed medication for genetically determined illnesses/health problems related to obesity (in any of the years in the administrative data period), the age of the individual’s parents, and the parents’ mortality status in 2000.

Rewrite

The instruments used in this study are the age of the individual’s parents, the parents’ mortality status in 2000, and whether or not the father or the mother of the interviewee has been prescribed medication for genetically determined illnesses/health problems related to obesity (in any of the years in the administrative data period).

Word meanings, subtleties, and differences

The following sample definitions or discussions of specific words will show you what to look for in your own writing while developing your style. (For more examples, see chap. 19).

- Avoid using “interesting”—it is usually the kiss of death in academic writing, because it marks the writer as a student, not a professional. As everything you write is supposed to be interesting, find a stronger, more specific adjective:

France provides an *important/useful/valuable/helpful/instructive* case, because of the country’s long history of....
- Avoid using “it is assumed” and “it is expected”—but when you convert these verbs to active voice, use them correctly. They have different meanings.

- Given a possible problem with X, we *assume* that....
[This sentence tells the reader that you are making an assumption directly from the existence of a probable problem.]
- Given a possible problem with X, we *expect* that....
[This sentence tells the reader that the existence of a possible problem leads you to hypothesize a certain type of (probable) outcome.]

In other words, “assume” tells the reader about an underlying assumption relative to the problem, whereas “expect” tells the reader that you are making a causal assumption or hypothesis.

- Avoid using “to” when you mean “through,” as the wrong word can change the meaning of your data.

“To” refers to the time before the final date begins (i.e., *up to* but not including):

“The data set covers 1999 *to* 2003” suggests to the reader that the data set begins on January 1, 1999, and ends on December 31, 2002.

“Through” means all the way *through to the end* of something:

“The data set covers 1999 *through* 2003” definitely tells the reader that it runs from January 1, 1999, all the way through to the end of 2003 (i.e., December 31, 2003).

- Avoid the phrase “*whether* X and *how/what* Y”: It negates the meaning of “whether,” because it assumes the “how” or “what.” Good writers always use “*whether...and, if so, how/what...*”:

This study examines *whether* [certain people] have difficulties finding skilled employment, *and, if so, what* strategies they use....

- Always double-check meanings in a good dictionary. For example, “religiosity” is a word in transition, as journals use it according to either its original meaning or a new meaning. While the usage now appears to depend on either the field or the journal, I have some useful suggestions. “Religiosity” used to refer exclusively to someone’s putting on a show of extreme piety to gain social status or to impress others (i.e., being “holier than thou”). The connotation of the word was negative, i.e., too much religious talk and behavior to be genuine. Now, however, some journals and dictionaries use it to mean “religious piety” (i.e., being truly, deeply religious). First, therefore, be sure that the dictionary you are using is up to date. Second, depending on the usage in the journal, consider avoiding this word and substituting the right one(s) for your purpose. Use the following examples as a guide:

- We have a variable for levels of religious observance.
[This sentence suggests how often an individual says prayers, performs religious practices, or goes to a church, synagogue, temple, or mosque.]
- We have a variable for [levels of] religious piety.
[This sentence suggests, say, a scale of 1-5 for a respondent’s self-evaluation as to how religious he or she is.]

Thus a good guideline is that using a different word is always better than using the wrong one.

UK vs. US vocabulary, spelling, and grammar

Although almost everything a European writer needs to know about the difference in UK vocabulary, spelling, and grammar is available online or in reference books, this section offers you a few pointers to help you distinguish between the two.

UK vs. US vocabulary

Always double-check both British and American word usage (depending on which journal you are submitting your paper to) to make sure that you are using the correct word for the form of English you have chosen. For example, in American English “scheme” implies a sneaky or dishonest plan or method. Instead, use *plan*, *program*, or *approach*. Likewise, “share” in American English has to do mostly with money (“shares of stock” or “their share of the profits”). Use *percentage* when you are giving statistical data.

Following is a short list of differences in common words and phrases in academic writing or correspondence from editors:

UK	US
amongst	among
antenatal	prenatal
billion (1,000,000,000,000)	trillion
cashback	rebate
do a deal	make a deal
downmarket/upmarket	downscale/upscale
fee (for school)	tuition
“first in, last out”	“last hired, first fired”
fortnight	two weeks
full stop	period
hence	[no hence] therefore, thus, consequently
homogeneous	homogenous (also “homogeneous”)
inverted commas	quotation marks
opening time	business hours
post	mail

postgraduate student	graduate student
queue (noun) / queue up (verb)	line / line up
reading [academic field]	majoring in [academic field]
redundancy (be made redundant)	layoff (be laid off)
sack (an employee)	fire
scheme	plan, program
share	percentage
spell (of contiguous time)	period
stand for election	run for office
tax rise	tax raise
term	semester (also "term")
tender	bid
tuition for	study of
vacate one's post	leave (<i>or</i> resign from) one's position
while	whilst

A computer search under “UK English vs. US English” will result in any number of sites for long alphabetized lists of different meanings for the same words, and of words in one kind of English that do not exist in the other (e.g., “hence”—which exists in US English but is considered old-fashioned). Some sites allow their readers to submit words about which they have questions. At least one site lists American words that one should never use in the UK, where they have sexual connotations that they do not have in the US. (The reverse situation also applies.)

UK vs. US spelling

Again, both book and online dictionaries contain spelling information. Nonetheless, always rely on the journal’s contributor guidelines. Certain patterns are obvious, such as the UK “ou” in some words where the US usage is simply “o”: labour/labor, etc. However, while words that end in “-ize” in US English used to always end in “-ise” in UK English, many UK and European journals are now accepting “-ize” endings, for either all such verbs or only specific ones.

Other general spelling pattern differences include the following (UK first, US second):

-ll vs. -l (panellist vs. panelist)
-ae vs. -e (aeon vs. eon)
-oe vs. -e (foetus vs. fetus)
-tre vs. -ter (centre vs. center)
-gramme vs. -gram (programme vs. program)
-logue vs. -log (catalogue vs. catalog) (although US English uses both)
-ence vs. -ense (defence vs. defense)
-ugh vs. -f (draughtswoman vs. draftswoman)
-iss vs. -ise (premiss vs. premise)

Here is a very brief list of common academic words spelled differently in the two countries:

UK	US
cypher	cipher
inflexions	inflections
in so far as	insofar as
judgement	judgment
licence	license
manoeuvre	maneuver
per cent	percent
practise (verb)	practice

UK vs. US grammar

As this subject is long and complex, this section offers only some highlights:

- UK English omits “the” in certain expressions where US English includes it (e.g., *in hospital/in the hospital*).
- UK English treats most collective nouns (particularly those referring to institutions) as plurals, whereas US English distinguishes between their usage as a complete group and as individual members of the group:

The government *are* announcing.... (UK)

The government *is* announcing.... (US)

The jury *is* still deliberating. (US collective singular)

The jury *have* gone home for the evening. (US collective plural)

Despite its grammatical correctness, this last sentence sounds strange to American ears, so we are likely to rewrite it to emphasize the individuals involved:

The *members of the jury* have gone home for the evening. (US collective plural)

- UK English uses only the present perfect (e.g., *has [done]*) for past actions that have effects on a present moment, whereas US English uses simple past as well.

He has recently vacated his post. (UK)

He has recently left his position./He recently left his position. (US)

- In certain instances, UK English uses the verb “go” in the present perfect where US English uses “be” in the simple present:

The refugees *have gone* missing. (UK)

The refugees *are* missing. (US)

Overall, the European writer's wisest course of action is to keep a file of vocabulary and grammar differences, read journals carefully for vocabulary and structure, use both book and online references—and always ask their American or British colleagues for advice. The more you learn the differences, the less you will have to revise your language as you progress in your writing career.

In sum, style comprises the choice of type of English (e.g., CAN, UK); the individual writer's combination of words, phrases, and clauses; the writer's framing techniques; the writer's organization and argumentation; and, most difficult to pinpoint or define, the writer's unique flair for making his or her paper come alive for the reader. In terms of the psychology of reading in English, clarity and Aristotelian argumentation are paramount. All the rest is up to you.

chapter 19

REVISING, REVISING—AND REVISING AGAIN

None of my writings has been either so carefully composed or so sedulously corrected as this. After it had been written as usual twice over, we kept it by us, bringing it out from time to time, and going through it *de novo*, reading, weighing, and criticizing every sentence.... The *On Liberty* was more directly and literally our joint production than anything else which bears my name, for there was not a sentence of it which was not several times gone through by us together, turned over in many ways, and carefully weeded of any faults, that we detected in it.... The *On Liberty* is likely to survive longer than anything else that I have written.¹

—JOHN STUART MILL

In writing you can make a silk purse out of a sow's ear, but first you have to create the sow's ear.

Your first draft is the sow's ear.²

—CHARLES PARNELL

Rewriting is the essence of writing well: it's where the game is won or lost.³

—WILLIAM ZINSSER

While every academic writer knows that revision is necessary, the emphasis that revision receives within different linguistic communities varies widely. For example, in a journal analysis seminar, when some of the participants were questioning the need for conducting analyses at the level of detail that I was proposing, a Scandinavian social scientist told a story that goes right to the heart of such cultural differences.

She had just returned from a professional meeting attended primarily by Americans and Danes. Every attendee received copies of everyone else's papers. She was amazed to find that the American papers stated anywhere from "draft #10" to "draft #16." By contrast, she laughed, the Danish researchers had all written "draft #1" on

theirs, because no Dane would want to admit that he or she had needed a second draft. She came away impressed by the importance that native speakers of English attach to the process of revising the organization, content, and language of professional papers.

Yet even in the English linguistic community, revision means different things to different people. Most students, according to Nancy Sommers in “Revision Strategies of Student Writers and Experienced Writers,” consider revision as rewording, and approach it with a “thesaurus philosophy of writing.”⁴ Like many of their European counterparts, these students focus on substituting or pruning words rather than on revisiting and reconsidering the entire structure of the argument in light of the reader’s needs, knowledge, and expectations. By contrast, experienced writers consider revision very differently:

The experienced writers see their revision process as a recursive process—a process with significant recurring activities—with different levels of attention and different agendas for each cycle. During the first revision cycle their attention is primarily directed towards narrowing the topic and delimiting their ideas. At this point, they are not as concerned as they are later about vocabulary and style. The experienced writers explained that they get closer to the meaning by not limiting themselves too early to lexical concerns.⁵

Because the writer in the Anglo-American tradition is completely responsible for clarity, because the use of the fewest possible words signals intellectual prowess and sophistication, and because the belief that “writing is thought made visible” is an inextricable part of the academic culture, revision has a long and noble history on both sides of the English-speaking Atlantic. As mentioned earlier, *poor writing in English translates as poor thinking*. Given that “there is...only good rewriting,” the purpose of revision is to prune away every unnecessary word, phrase, or clause; to ensure that every idea is where we want it; and to proofread until our eyes ache—all in the interests of submitting a paper that an editor will take pleasure in reading.

In *A Rhetoric for Writing Teachers*, Erika Lindemann writes: “We must decide, first of all, whether what we’ve written suits us, represents what we honestly want to say; then we’ve got to determine if a reader can make sense of it.”⁶ Fortunately, if you have done your outlining before writing your draft, much of that sense-making work is behind you—but not all of it. Rather than viewing revising as an unpleasant chore, approach it with the same meticulous attention you give to your research.

Before discussing the details of revising, many of which you already know, I offer the writing of this book as an example. I cannot begin to remember how many times I changed the order of the chapters or the sections, or how many times I added or deleted material from specific chapters, decided and re-decided what should go in a certain chapter rather than in the previous one (or vice versa), and reconstructed

the outline of the book. What I do recall is that I did all of these things, and many more, so many times that my head was spinning. As a teacher, I wrote the material the way that I teach it; then, as a writer, I took out entire sections—or moved them elsewhere—because they work well in a classroom but not in a book. Even now, I am still not certain that I made all the best decisions. A writer almost never is.

This chapter assumes that you have finished your first draft and therefore have applied or are still applying everything you learned from the first four strategies. You have even written a second or third draft to clean up any weaknesses in your argumentation, to weed out redundancies, and to fix grammar mistakes. You may also have done your best to write clearly and imaginatively. Now is the time for you to go through a final checklist, to look for the misuse of words (a problem that most second or third language speakers cannot avoid)—and to learn to proofread professionally.

A final checklist

Every European writer needs to ask a series of final questions at the end of what should be a fifth, eighth, or twelfth revision—not a second or third. Following is a basic checklist for what you think is the final revision:

- Have I omitted any necessary information?
- Have I kept a pet quotation or anecdote, even though it does not fit the flow of the argument?
- Does my argument proceed logically? Is it airtight?
- Have I named and countered all possible objections?
- Have I considered and minimized all disadvantages?
- Have I anticipated and answered all my reader’s questions?
- Have I defined all my terms—and in the right place?
- Have I used any technical language or jargon that the reader is not likely to know?
- Does each sentence, and then each paragraph, flow smoothly and logically into the next?
- Are any of my sentences not in the same style as the rest of the paper? Is one section full of more jargon than another? If so, does that language need changing?
- Does *everything* in the paper (e.g., from the number of sections to the order of the sections) match the style of articles in the journal?
- Have I proofread every word and punctuation mark?

Last, and possibly as important as all the rest combined, has a native speaker of English edited the draft? Have I made certain that this person is not necessarily a good friend or neighbor but someone highly skilled in writing or editing active voice academic writing?

Checking word usage

The difference between the almost right word and the right word is really a large matter—it's the difference between the lightning bug and the lightning.⁷

—MARK TWAIN

As word usage needs checking, even for native speakers, books on style and current usage line the reference shelves of bookstores in all English-speaking countries. This section offers some distinctions between and among words I commonly see misused in European papers in the social sciences.

- “However” does not have the same meaning as “nevertheless” or “nonetheless” (these last two are interchangeable):

When you use “however,” you signal the reader that you are *disagreeing with or taking back* a piece of what you have just said.

The literature mentions three factors that bear on this problem.
However, of the three, two do not apply here, because....

When you use “nevertheless” or “nonetheless,” you signal the reader that *despite the accuracy of the previous statement* (i.e., despite your agreeing with it), additional factors need considering.

The Nordic welfare states have many things in common, e.g., X, Y and Z.
Nevertheless, differences in ____ affect the ways in which each state approaches....

- The meaning and usage of “in contrast” and “in contrast to” differ from that of “contrary” or “contrary to”:

“In contrast” means that you are going to compare one group, country, methodology, etc. to another:

In contrast, Portugal has a higher....
In contrast, this methodology is preferable for analyzing....

While “in contrast to” has the same meaning, it sets up the contrast with a noun object:

In contrast to Spain, Portugal has a higher....

However, “contrary to” often entails doing something about the group, country, or methodology, so that its meaning is more that of *opposition* than of contrast:

Contrary to our expectations, *we find* that....
Contrary to the polling predictions, *voters chose*....

- “Comprise” and “constitute,” both excellent academic verbs, have different meanings:

Use “comprise” with the larger subject that includes or encompasses all its smaller parts—but only if that large subject is singular:

The institute comprises seven departments.
The EU comprises [# of] member states.

If you want to use “comprise,” but you have a plural subject and want to avoid the weak verb “to be,” reframe the subject in the singular:

→ The socio-demographic *characteristics are* age, gender....
→ The *set of socio-demographic characteristics comprises* age, gender....

A possible synonym for “comprise” is “consist of.”

But use “constitute” when smaller plural items make up the composition of the large one:

In the US, twelve people constitute a jury.
These three choices constitute the options available to the retiree.
Parliamentary bills A1 and A2 constitute the legislation on....

- Avoid following certain transitive verbs (e.g., *assess, reflect*) with a “that” clause:

NO: We *assess* that the problem needs correction.
YES: We *determine/conclude* that the problem needs correction.
NO: Table 1 *reflects* that there was an increase in....
YES: Table 1 *reflects* the increase in....

Always use a dictionary complete enough to contain “vt” or “tr” (verb transitive) and “vi” or “intr” (verb intransitive) information for verbs.

- Avoid the term “so-called.” Most European scholars appear to labor under the misapprehension that “so-called” means “this is what ____ is called.” Nothing could be further from the truth. In English, “so-called” is an insult, suggesting that someone, for example, is not what he or she claims to be: “That so-called doctor probably never went to medical school!”

Remove “so-called” from your academic vocabulary unless you wish to insult someone or something—and that is not usually a good idea.

- Avoid making assumptions based on a word you use in your language or on a similarity of that word to one in English.

For example, “preservatives” in American English are food additives that “preserve” the shelf life (and therefore the sales value) of a food product, whereas in French the word means “contraceptives.” Some European researchers use “family reunion” to refer to the reunification of family members after some have emigrated elsewhere, while in English it means a big gathering of geographically distant family members for a celebration. Yet when I showed a particular group of European sociologists that the literature used “family *unification/reunification*” and asked why, after having read the literature, they had insisted that “family reunion” was the right term, their answer uniformly was, “Oh, but that’s how we say it in [our language].”

Yet another example is the German “*eventuell*”—a word every easy to confuse with the English “eventually.” The German word, however, means “probably,” whereas the English word is much more definite, suggesting an almost *certain* outcome.

Proofreading

Computers have made what looks like proofreading so easy with “spell checking” software that most academic writers no longer realize that “spell checking” is not proofreading. No software program can understand your every thought. It will catch spelling errors, not *meaning* errors—and I am referring to more than mistakes like “bare” when you meant “bar” or the very misleading “now” when you meant “not.”

These software programs do not know that you meant “causal,” not “casual,” or “stigmatization,” not “stigmata” (marks resembling the wounds on the crucified body of Jesus). Even worse, if your subject is, say, the relationship between Christians and Jews in a certain country and you type “Jets” or “Jests” when you mean to type “Jews”—and you let the software do the “proofreading”—the typographical error will make you look unprofessional indeed.

Learning to proofread professionally is easy. It simply takes time, something that many scholars say they do not have. Yet if they have spent months, if not years, on their research and writing, why would they essentially sabotage that work by “not having enough time” to make the paper look professional? The answer may lie in an attitude mentioned earlier, namely, that many scholars see their research as primary and the paper as secondary. *But the reverse is true: the paper is the world's only proof that the scholar ever did the work.*

Proofreading requires nothing but a hard copy (accurate proofreading on a computer is all but impossible) and a blank sheet of paper. If you are proofreading someone else's paper, read it through once, very quickly, for an overview of the contents. If proofreading your own paper, skip this introductory phase. You need only two steps.

Step one is to cover each page that you are proofing with the blank sheet of paper, so that your eye can focus on only one line at a time. (Without using this sheet, you may think you are proofing, but your “bored” eyes are wandering up and down the other lines on the page, so that you are merely scanning, not proofing.) Read every word aloud if that helps. If, to proofread the punctuation, you need to lower the sheet by several lines to see the structural development of an entire sentence, remember afterwards to return the top of the sheet to its original place.

Step two is to work backwards. Place the blank sheet of paper over most of the page, so that you can see only the bottom line. Then read against meaning, from right to left, moving upwards line by line. This counterintuitive method interrupts your unconscious assumptions about what the text should say, so that your eyes see only what is on the page. By counteracting your mental expectations, you catch typographical errors and mistakes that you might have otherwise missed.

If you have the good fortune of receiving page proofs, ask a colleague to read them with you. One of you will look at the proofs while the other looks at the original manuscript. The one with the original manuscript reads aloud every word and every punctuation mark, even spelling aloud words that look strange or complex, while the other person checks the proofs for accuracy. Reading page proofs with a partner is always the best way of ensuring an error-free publication.

Once you have completely revised your paper for every possible error, the last step is sending it off. The next chapter takes a pragmatic look at the writing of the submission letter—and, if you are lucky, writing the resubmission letter and the response to the referees' comments.

chapter 20**WRITING SUBMISSION
AND REVISION LETTERS:**

Nearly all advanced graduate students and new assistant professors demonstrate astounding naïveté in their non-substantive professional dealings.¹

—DANIEL HAMERMESH

Just as your abstract creates an editor's first impression of your paper, the cover letter or email is often the editor's first impression of you as a professional. If that short, simple message is either rambling or full of grammar and spelling mistakes, the editor will expect the worst of your paper before he or she has even read it. As every word in English counts, and as first impressions count, this chapter takes a brief look at the submission letter and includes a longer, much more important discussion about how writers should respond to referees' comments.

Cover letters

The formula for cover letters in the Anglo-American tradition is so basic that it should need little discussion—except that I find too many beginning social scientists in Europe either saying too much or not bothering to proofread their few sentences, as if this email or letter were just another administrative chore. Remember that native speakers of English always judge people by how they write, including typographical and punctuation errors.

Fortunately, help is at hand in the form of an excellent article by economist Daniel S. Hamermesh, "The Young Economist's Guide to Professional Etiquette" (*Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 1992). If you are not an economist, do not let the title mislead you: this article, along with a number of others available on Hamermesh's website, speaks to young social scientists. Hamermesh covers the nuts-and-bolts of developing a network, writing acknowledgments, being sensible about the review process, analyzing different kinds of reviews, etc. About the cover letter, he writes:

A cover letter for your submitted paper might be: "Please consider the enclosed manuscript, 'Paper Title,' for possible publication in the *Review of Economic Nonsense*. I look forward to your response on this paper." If a submission fee is enclosed, mention it. Nothing else is needed. Do not summarize the paper, bally-hoo it, tell the editor why the journal is appropriate, or discuss your personal or professional problems.²

After that clear advice, little else need be said. Another version of the opening line might be: "I am submitting 'Paper Title' for your consideration for publication in *Journal of Incomplete Analyses*." However, if the submission guidelines ask you to explain the appropriateness or uniqueness of your paper, e.g., JBR guidelines (p. 204), then do so.

Above all, carefully proofread the letter before you send it off.

Responses to reviewer or referee comments

Young social scientists in particular often have no idea how to respond to referee comments. Some of these young professionals, unacquainted with the unwritten rules of the process, become understandably defensive: "If I make all those changes, it will change my paper completely. If they liked it so much, why are they asking me to change it?" This chapter focuses on the format, language, and etiquette of the response, not the reasonableness of a writer's reactions. Most of you know that the final paper often barely resembles the one the scholar initially submitted. Nonetheless, I include Hamermesh's general advice on reading between the lines of the editor's accompanying letter: "A good rule is that, unless the door has been slammed in your face, or you cannot in good conscience comply with the editorial suggestions, you should resubmit the paper."³

Hamermesh is right. Too many social scientists tell the same story from their early years in the field—that they received so "terrible" a "revise-and-resubmit" letter that they saw no point in resubmitting. Only months or years later, when they showed the letter to a more seasoned colleague, did they discover that the journal would likely have published their resubmission had they made the proposed changes.

When responding to an editor's or referee's comments (or both), the writer must remember that his or her paper is not the center of the editor's universe. Between the date that the editor sends the referee comments and the date that the writer sends the response, the editor will be busy with other papers and other responsibilities. Yet too many European social scientists send response letters that assume that the editor has the referees' comments on his or her desk when the response letter or email arrives. Writing "I have changed _____" or "I have added _____" in the absence of a context is the single biggest mistake that the writer can make. Here is a well-intentioned example:

- The introduction has been rewritten to include more theory.
- We describe the measures—whether they have been used in previous research or constructed for this study specifically. One measure was designed for the _____ study (from which the sample in the current study is taken), while the other measures have been used in previous research on [group]. We refer to these studies when describing the measures.
- We describe the sample and the analyses in more detail.

From a page-long list that continues in this vein, the editor has no idea what the referee said or where the writer made the changes—or specifically what the changes consisted of.

The second mistake is either to ignore a referee's comments or to show a lack of appreciation for his or her work. As referees receive neither pay nor credit for their work, not acknowledging the value of their suggestions is bad form.

The best strategy for responding to referee comments, in hopes of getting the paper published, is for the writer to decide whether the comments are legitimate and whether he or she can meet their requirements. For example, one young European researcher had a referee insist that she use a completely different method for her major analyses. She knew that this "recommended" method could not work for her purposes, and she guessed that the referee did not understand the kind of statistical analyses she had run. But rather than ignoring or arguing over the comment, she wrote a carefully worded letter to the editor (along with her responses to the other comments). She thanked the referee for the suggestion and straightforwardly explained step by step, in five pages, why the suggested method did not apply to her work. She sent it in, assumed that she had just killed her submission chances, and forgot about it. Two months later, to her astonishment, she received an acceptance. The editor had considered her well-reasoned response and had agreed with her position.

The crucial point of this anecdote is (1) the calm and courtesy with which this researcher responded and (2) her carefully argued, step-by-step approach, in which no emotional reaction appeared. Let's consider courtesy first. The writer must be grateful without being obsequious. Following are samples of the type of language that skilled writers use in their responses:

- I applied this helpful suggestion to....
- I take into account the highly valuable point that....
- As referee 2 has suggested, I have changed....
- Thanks to this comment, the revised article now more clearly focuses on....
- In response to this comment, we have strengthened....
- This useful comment has led us to reconsider the central thesis in light of....
- I thank the referee for this helpful comment.
- This revision makes much more clear how we draw our conclusions.
- I considerably reduced the extended empirical example as suggested by reviewer 2. Instead, I emphasize the relevance of the case and link it more directly to both the theoretical framework and the practical consequences of [problem] for [specific group].

These examples illustrate appropriate levels of professional courtesy and appreciation, particularly if the accompanying letter from the editor suggests that he or she agrees with all or some of the referees' comments. While the last two examples do not explicitly thank the referee, they do so implicitly by showing how the suggestions have led the writers to improve the quality of their papers.

The letter accompanying the response should likewise be appreciative, including sentences along these lines: "We greatly appreciate the editor's and the referees' suggestions on ways of improving the article. These comments indeed allowed us to strengthen the article, and we have reorganized and rewritten it according to the recommended changes."

Equally important, however, to constructing a professional response is the cutting-and-pasting of the referees' comments *into the body of the response*. No editor wants to receive a separately attached copy of the referee comments along with the response, because having two documents would force him or her to read back and forth between them. Most experienced scholars inform the editor in the cover letter that the referee comments will appear in sequence, each followed by a specific response. The response letter should also indicate the pages and paragraphs where the changes occur, so that the editor can immediately turn to them to decide whether the writer has done a proper job.

The following response excerpts come from a paper later accepted for publication. As you read them, pay attention to both the courteous language and the amount of detail:

The reviewer comments are flush left.

Our responses to the comments are indented.

Reviewer one.

1. The quantitative analysis presents just two simple results with a misleading conclusion.... On the basis of the presented information, all conclusions remain *speculative*.

This apt comment has been central to our revision of the paper. We have expanded the quantitative analysis from two to five pages (pp. 7-11); in the process a second author joined the paper, to ensure the quality of the substantial revision of this part of the article.

Table 1 has been expanded, and now contains the information suggested by the reviewer, differentiating between.... As the table is differentiated by _____, this revision thus also provides information on _____. Furthermore, to expand our analysis of the impact of X, Table A1 in the newly added appendix demonstrates that _____, a point we now make on page 11.

The reviewer also calls attention to possible effects of Z differences. This comment led us to expand our analysis of the register data. We have added an analysis of Z difference, showing that the majority of _____ are _____. We now show this finding in tables A2 and A3 in the appendix.

This new analysis of Z differences also reveals that [these people] have a much lower rate of ABC than [those people]. This information we discuss on page 11, where we also provide a new figure (fig. 2). In line with the design of the general article, we have added qualitative information on _____ with large Z differences on page 19.

We thank the reviewer for having brought the question of the effects of Z differences to our attention, as it has expanded and improved the article's analysis of [subject].

2. The qualitative analysis, which is the central part of the paper, *uses no clear sampling strategy*. Theoretical sampling would have been appropriate to distinguish different types of _____ *ex ante*. This may be because a clear theory-based research question is missing: Whereas the literature review concentrates on the causes of X and the related choices, the analysis of the qualitative data refers more to the consequences (which could and should have been analytically separated from the “reasons” respondents give in their interviews). Thus, it remains *unclear* which research questions are raised, *which* answers are given, and *how* this paper contributes to the existing body of literature on _____ sociology.

In our revision of the paper we have added a section (pp. 11-12) on the exploratory nature of the qualitative part of the research. The interviews were conducted with a life history approach that invites interviewees to construct a narrative of their lives with minimal interference from the researcher. The resulting data is thus not shaped by the interviewer's questioning the way it may be in other, more structured ways of interviewing.

Consequently, this method is well suited for generating new research topics that hitherto have received little research interest. In the present case it was indeed the interviewees' recurrent narratives about _____ that spurred the subsequent analysis of quantitative data sources.

As to the research question and the answers that the article provide, the revised article now has both a more clearly stated research question (p. 2) and provides a more clearly stated answer to the question posed (p. 21).

Indeed, in the revised article we now show, first, that the topic is under-researched in a European context; second, we address this lack by combining multiple data sources; and, third, we compare our findings to available country-of-origin data, which enables us to document what changes _____ brings about in the _____. We thus believe that the article in its present form clearly contributes to the existing literature on _____ among _____.

The writers of this response did their work correctly. They put the referee comments in the proper place, they graciously thanked the referees for their comments, and they showed their appreciation and professionalism in both explaining the changes and citing the page numbers and tables.

Sometimes the writer needs or chooses to disagree with the referee—and often in cases where the referees ask for very different changes. In such instances, the writer should show that he or she has carefully considered the comment(s) before courteously disagreeing. The writers of the very different examples that follow did just that [italics mine]:

- The section on child protection legislation has been extended, particularly in the British context. Referee 2 points to the attempt to influence policy and practice in British children's homes and calls for a further discussion of these legislative initiatives. I mention these British initiatives in the revised article. *However, the theory has not altered the main argument of the section—that the law is a poor guide to institutional practice—but rather strengthened and supported it.*
- Reviewer 2 finds that the article over-theorizes the issue (using [Famous Scholar]), while *Reviewer 1 calls for* more (organizational) theory to account for the ambiguities of values in [general subject]. *The revised article attempts to strike a compromise by (1) reducing the introduction to the thinking of [Famous Scholar] and concentrating on the relevance of their analysis to the empirical field of [narrower subject], and (2) introducing another related branch of organizational theory [name] at a later stage of the analysis (p. 19).*
- While I added some comments about potentials for further research to the conclusion, the strict word limit has prevented more detailed considerations.

Occasionally an editor will request a summary of the revisions, as opposed to a detailed list. Even so, the more specific the summary, the more certain the editor can be that the writer has taken the referee comments seriously. Here are some excerpts from one such response, which uses boldface to distinguish the referee's comments from the writers' responses:

We have summarized the review comments in six points. Below each point we explain the changes we have made to accommodate the reviewer's comments:

The sections of the paper that describe the lagging of the explanatory variable and the _____ approach need clarification. Specifically, it is unclear why both the _____ approach and lagging of the explanatory variable are required, and footnote 4 is unclear.

The paragraph in the Methods section (last paragraph on p. 15) that describes the use of the _____ approach and the lagging of the explanatory variable has been rewritten so that it explains why it is necessary to use the _____ approach. For the lagging of the case management interview variable ("ABC"), we make this choice because we expect that it will take some time before the ABC has an impact on [subject]. To test the justification of this choice, we tested whether a variable with unlagged values of ABC was significant. The results of this test, which supports ABC being lagged, are now mentioned in footnote 4 on p. 12.

The previous version of footnote 4: [version follows]

We agree that the last part of this footnote (from "Furthermore" on) was unclear. Broadly speaking, it showed that measurement errors in the data lead to problems of backwards causality, and that we have solved this problem by lagging _____ one month. As this issue purely concerns how we have corrected for an error in the data, and because it is highly technical and thus might confuse the reader, we suggest skipping this part of the footnote.

The first part of footnote 4 remains unchanged.

We have followed the suggested changes in vocabulary:

- P. 6, middle paragraph, "2.23 times bigger" is now "2.23 times larger."
- P. 6, last paragraph, "from the mentioned studies" is now "from the previously mentioned studies."
- P. 13, last paragraph, "increases fast" is now "increases quickly."

Unclear/sparse description of certain covariates (in table 1 on p. 40), especially with respect to "tertiary education" and "previous employment degree."

The description of the following covariates in Table 1 has been changed:

- "Tertiary education" is now labeled "postsecondary education," and the contents of the three categories of the variable are explained in table footnote number 1.
- The definition and calculation of "previous employment degree" is explained in table footnote number 2.[etc.]

While the writing in this last example is highly direct (a quality that editors appreciate), the excerpts in the following example are notable for their use of strong verbs and full explanations:

Memo: revisions on paper for [Journal]: "Title of Paper"

Page 1

I have changed the abstract in compliance with the comments of referee 2, sharpening the points and relating them more directly to the contents of the article.

Pages 3-5

As suggested by referee 2, I now define and clarify the nature of the empirical studies and the methods used. In addition, I also explain the strategic reasons for employing X as the main empirical case. Thus, while the article is based on ethnographic studies in twelve institutions, the X institution represents an "extreme case" that the article uses to exemplify and point out the more general traits of the subject. This change should make clear that the aim of the article is not to carry out a "compare-and-contrast" analysis of the institutions under study but to discuss common conditions for professional _____ work in X institutions.

The introductory methodological and analytical elaborations are simultaneously in harmony with referee 1's request that I make more general reflections on the particularity of the case. I now specify that the dilemmas and ambiguities inherent in professional discourses on "[main subject]" are highly general and not related specifically to the cultural context of [country]. This argument is further substantiated by a new analytical section, which I added towards the end of the article (see pp. 17-19).

Pages 11-13

Throughout the revised article, I have placed the project more solidly in relation to existing research. The most relevant references are on page 7 as part of the discussion on "_____"; I point out the scarcity of studies dealing with the actual practices of _____ and return to this point towards the end of the article (pp. 19-20).

Paying attention to referee comments about language is absolutely necessary. These comments may point out country differences in the use of terms—and make the critical difference in whether the journal will publish the paper. The following excerpt is a good example:

Reviewer two:

1. My major concern is that the definition of "immigrant" is unclear. On p. 9, we are told that _____% of survey respondents were excluded because they were married to a "native Dane." Aren't the children of [country]-born immigrants in Denmark "native Danes"? It would be helpful if the author(s) clarified how they are treating those who (1) came to Denmark as adults, (2) came as children, and (3) were born in Denmark of [country]-born parents.

We thank the reviewer for this helpful comment. We now clarify the categories used on page ___ and in the quantitative analysis in notes 3-5 (p. __). Indeed, children born in Denmark of two [country]-born parents are registered as “immigrant descendants,” even if they hold Danish citizenship, a categorization practice that has been central to making this study possible.

2. Given the growth in *non-family living* throughout Europe, I was surprised to read that “basic” household types are “nuclear” and “extended.” Perhaps call them “family households”?

This comment has led us to change the introduction, so we now talk about three basic household types, including “single-person households.”

I was also interested in the choice of the term of “dependent children” since many include as “nuclear” couples those with adult, fully employed children.

As children may indeed be adults and fully employed, we have now reworded the article so that we no longer use that term.

As the language of the response letter is the writer’s last direct chance to impress the editor with his or her professionalism, I include some more sample sentences here for you to study and emulate:

- As referee 2 had also similarly suggested strengthening the focus on the gendered structures of [type of] [field], I have done so through a complete revision of the paper. I now start out in the field of X in general, and move from here to the emerging field of [specific gender type] of X.
- In line with the recommendations of this referee, we also provide fewer direct quotations and a more descriptive summary.
- Theoretically, the article can now better further our understanding of the tight connection between possible “X’s” and processes of Y and Z. Furthermore, the article now demonstrates how the connection between X and Y is a driving force behind different ____s that may aid [certain group] in obtaining access to [certain areas of] the labor market.
- As previously mentioned, we have changed the framework of the analysis. In the search process we considered Famous Scholar’s notion of X [as the referee had suggested], but found Another Famous Scholar’s concept of Y more suitable. Indeed, we only learned of A.F. Scholar’s work through our search for an alternative framework. As the concept Y has greatly furthered the analysis of the empirical material, we are very happy for the recommendation that we find an alternative to the framework of [older] Famous Scholar.

- As I mentioned in my reply to referee 1, this advice inspired me to completely rewrite the article. I now draw on the full range of interviews and analyze a broader range of adaptive strategies.

If you follow both the suggestions and the examples in this chapter, as well as all of those throughout this book, you greatly increase your chances of receiving an editorial reply like one of the two that follow. While the first is highly complimentary, the second should be every non-native speaker’s dream reply:

This is a terrific revision of the paper, a mixed set of data on [group] in [country]. All noted concerns were addressed fully and systematically. I wish all revisions were so responsive.



Your writing is far clearer than that in many of the papers I see from native speakers of English.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This is the section in which I, as the writer, am to “tell you what I told you.” But rather than using your valuable time to restate every topic in the table of contents or review every point and sub-point, I instead want to assure you that applying the basic principles of Anglo-American academic writing is the key to getting published in English. The more you write in the active voice, the more unnecessary words or distracting material you prune from your writing, and the better you frame your abstracts, paragraphs, and sections, the happier every editor and reviewer will be with your papers.

Likewise, conducting a journal analysis will lead to your submitting your paper to the best possible journal, just as carefully revising and proofreading every word constitute wise uses of your time. The easier your paper is to read, and the more suitable its contents and your writing style are to the journal, the better your chances for publication.

Even though I wish that this book had more room for additional tips on revising or more examples of stylistic pitfalls to avoid, you will find the explanations and discussions of the five major strategies of critical use to your success as a published social scientist. True, no method is foolproof, and no editor or reviewer is as predictable as a writer might hope. Moreover, however skilled you are as an English speaker or as a writer in your native tongue, writing in English will always present challenges of various kinds. Nevertheless, I know from experience that the more you study and apply these five writing strategies, the better a writer you will become and the more you will learn in the process.

As a teacher, editor, and consultant, I remain deeply impressed with the commitment, thoughtfulness, hard work, and intellectual prowess of the many European students, scholars, and researchers with whom I have had the honor of working—and whose work I have seen published. I wish you the same success.

NOTES

Introduction to Content

1. Connor, Ulla, *Contrastive Rhetoric: Cross-cultural aspects of second-language writing*. The Cambridge Applied Linguistics Series, Cambridge University Press: Indiana, 1996, p. 5.

chapter 1

1. Whorf, Benjamin Lee, "Language, Mind, and Reality," *Language, Thought, and Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf* (ed. John B. Carroll). The M.I.T. Press, 1972, p. 252.
2. Connor, Ulla, *Contrastive Rhetoric*, p. 20.
3. *Applied Economics Quarterly*, www.diw.de/sixcms/detail.php/237633, p. 1.
4. Connor, *Contrastive Rhetoric*, p. 5.
5. Ibid., pp. 37-45.
6. Ibid., pp. 63-65.
7. Ibid., pp. 15-16.
8. Stockdale, Percival. *Lectures on the Truly Eminent English Poets*. London: D. N. Shury, for the author, 1807, 2:504-505.
9. Anonymous. "Sunday Schools." *The Evangelical Guardian and Review* 1 (1817):106.
10. Although the attribution of this statement to Justice Brandeis appears throughout the internet, its initial appearance and attribution was in an unfootnoted article in 1957. Long conversations with, and research by, Brandeis scholars and librarians in both Massachusetts and Kentucky reveal no document or speech in which Brandeis made the statement.
11. Privately shared personal correspondence with reviewer. Aug. 2009.
12. Privately shared personal correspondence with researcher. Aug. 2009.

chapter 2

1. Rand, Ayn, *The Art of Nonfiction: A Guide for Writers and Readers*, Plume, New York: 2001, p. 99.
2. White, E.B., as quoted in *Good Advice on Writing*, William Safire and Leonard Safir, p. 64 (N.Y.: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1992).
3. Pascal, Blaise, *Lettres Provinciales* (1657) no. 16, in *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, 6th ed., Elizabeth Knowles (ed.), Oxford University Press 2004, p. 587.
4. Privately shared personal correspondence. June 2008.
5. Rand, *The Art of Nonfiction*, p. 98.
6. This saying is attributed variously to Mary Heaton Vorse or Kingsley Amis.

Part II

1. Wittgenstein, Ludwig, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, as quoted in Safire, *Good Advice on Writing*, p. 45.
2. Strunk, William, Jr., and E.B. White, *The Elements of Style*, Macmillan: New York, 1972, p. 17.
3. Colton, Charles Caleb, as quoted in Safire, *Good Advice on Writing*, p. 56.
4. Zinsser, William, *On Writing Well*, 6th ed., HarperPerennial, New York: 1998, p. 17.

chapter 3

1. Orwell, George, "Politics and the English Language," *Why I Write*, Penguin Books, London 1984, p. 119.

chapter 4

1. LeGuin, Ursula K., *Steering the Craft*, The Eighth Mountain Press, Portland, OR, 1998, pp. 61-62.
2. Kilpatrick, James J., as quoted in Safire, *Good Advice on Writing*, p. 206.
3. Rand, *The Art of Nonfiction*, p. 123.

chapter 5

1. Orwell, *Why I Write*, p. 119.
2. Privately shared personal correspondence. September 2008.

Part III

1. Zinsser, *On Writing Well*, pp. 5-6.
2. Rand, *The Art of Nonfiction*, p. 101.

chapter 6

1. Graves, Robert, and Hodge, Alan, *The Reader over Your Shoulder: A Handbook for Writers of English Prose*, 2nd ed. (rev. & abridged), Vintage Books, New York: 1979, p. 95.
2. Matthews, Brander, as quoted in Safire, *Good Advice on Writing*, p. 44.

chapter 7

1. LeGuin, *Steering the Craft*, p. 68.
2. Orwell, *Why I Write*, p. 119.
3. Ferreira, Fernanda, "The misinterpretation of noncanonical sentences," *Cognitive Psychology* 47 (2003), p. 188.
4. Woodside, Arch G., Editor-in-Chief, *Journal of Business Research*, in additional guidelines that contributors receive upon acceptance of their paper.
5. Privately shared personal communication. July 2009.

chapter 8

1. LeGuin, *Steering the Craft*, p. 33.
2. Hall, Donald, and Birkerts, Sven, *Writing Well*, 9th ed., Longman, MA: 1998, p. 147.
3. Chomsky, Noam, *Syntactic Structures*, Mouton de Gruyter, 1957.

chapter 9

1. France, Anatole, in *Writers on Writing*, Winokur, John (ed.), Running Press: Philadelphia 1986, p. 62.
2. Strunk and White, *The Elements of Style*, p. 20.

chapter 10

1. Rand, *The Art of Nonfiction*, p. 103.
2. LeGuin, *Steering the Craft*, p. 31.
3. Rand, *The Art of Nonfiction*, p. 103.
4. Another style manual in common use by academic writers in North America, the UK, and Europe is *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, also published by the University of Chicago Press and often referred to as the "Turabian style" for the author of its

original edition, Kate Turabian. In common use by Ph.D. students in the mid-20th century, this manual for writing and formatting research papers is now in its 7th edition in both the US and the UK. This edition contains updates that bring its style and content closer to *Chicago*. In addition, some professional organizations publish journals that use guidelines specific to that field, e.g., the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (APA style)—and most academics and practitioners in those fields follow those guidelines. Other American journals (but fewer) use the *AP Stylebook*.

5. Sapir, Edward, "The status of linguistics as a science," *Language* 5: 207-14, 1929.

Part IV

1. Pascal, Blaise, *Pensées* (1670), in *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, p. 587.
2. Forster, E.M., in Winokur, *Writers on Writing*, p. 16.

chapter 11

1. Hall and Birkerts, *Writing Well*, p. 183.
2. Ibid. p. 183 (quoting Fowler, W.H., from *Modern English Usage*).
3. Tarrou, Jean Louis, Amanuensis Emeritus of French, University of Oslo, personal correspondence, Aug. 2009 (trans. by Carol Faulkner Peck).
4. Hall and Birkerts, *Writing Well*, p. 184.
5. Birkbeck Centre for Learning and Professional Development at the University of London. Academic writing for undergraduates. <http://www.bbk.ac.uk/study/ce/outlines/FFAE007H4ACA.doc>.
6. Rifkin, Jeremy, *The European Dream: How Europe's View of the Future is Quietly Eclipsing the American Dream*, Jeremy Tarcher, New York: 2005, p. 248.
7. Adapted from *Meteorology for Naval Aviators*, Vol. I, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, U.S. Navy, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973, p. 4-1.
8. Vitus, Kathrine, "The Agonistic Approach: Reframing Resistance in Qualitative Research," *Qualitative Inquiry* 2008:14.
9. For the final version, see Hohnen, Pernille, "Consumers without money: consumption patterns and new forms of citizenship among low-income families in Scandinavian welfare societies," Glendinning C. and Kemp, P. (eds.), *Cash and Care: Policy Challenges in the Welfare State*, Policy Press (2006), pp. 79-94.
10. Ibid.
11. Vitus, "The Agonistic Approach," p. 466.

chapter 12

1. Oates, Joyce Carol, as quoted in Safire, *Good Advice on Writing*, p. 54.
2. Aristotle, from *Rhetoric* (2268), in Connor, *Contrastive Rhetoric*, p. 65.
3. Connor, *Contrastive Rhetoric*, pp. 59-65.
4. Faigley, Lester, and Jack Selzer, *Good Reasons with Contemporary Arguments: Reading, Designing, and Writing Effective Arguments*, 3rd Ed., Pearson-Longman: 2007, p. 12.
5. Ibid., p. 12.
6. Aristotle, *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*, trans. and annotated by George A. Kennedy, Oxford University Press, 2007, pp. 20-21.
7. Ibid., p. 21.
8. Carpenter, G.R. *Elements of Rhetoric and English Composition*, 6th ed., MacMillan, New York: 1906, p. 1.

9. Ibid., p. 214.
10. <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsProdManSub.nav?prodId=Journal200979>.
11. Swales, John, *Genre Analysis: English in academic and research settings*. Cambridge University Press, 1990, pp. 137-165.
12. Béland, Daniel, and LeCours, André, "The Politics of Territorial Solidarity: Nationalism and Social Policy Reform in Canada, the United Kingdom, and Belgium," *Comparative Political Studies*, 2005, Vol. 38:6, pp. 676-7.
13. Pedersen, Axel West, "The privatization of retirement income? Variation and trends in the income packages of old age pensioners," *Journal of European Social Policy*, 2004, Vol. 14(1), p. 6.
14. Ibid, p. 6.
15. Béland and LeCours, "The Politics of Territorial Solidarity," p. 677.
16. Pedersen, "The privatization of retirement income?" p. 6.
17. Béland and LeCours, "The Politics of Territorial Solidarity," p. 677.
18. Pierson, Paul, "The New Politics of the Welfare State," *World Politics*, Vol. 48:2, 1996, pp. 143-44.
19. Rey, Jennifer M., "Changing gender roles in popular culture," *Variation in English: Multi-Dimensional Studies*, Susan Conrad and Douglas Biber (eds.), Pearson Education Ltd., 2001, p. 139.
20. Sorek, Tamir, "Between Football and Martyrdom: the bi-focal localism of an Arab-Palestinian town in Israel," *British Journal of Sociology*, 2005, p. 635-6.
21. Bowen, Elizabeth, as quoted in Safire, *Good Advice on Writing*, p. 67.
22. For learning to construct successful arguments in the Anglo-American tradition, I recommend the third edition of *Good Reasons with Contemporary Arguments: Reading, Designing, and Writing Effective Arguments* by Lester Faigley and Jack Selzer.
23. Béland and LeCours, "The Politics of Territorial Solidarity," pp. 697-700.
24. Privately shared personal correspondence from researcher. Aug. 2009.
25. Rand, *The Art of Nonfiction*, p. 80.
26. Ibid., p. 42.
27. Ibid., p. 54.

chapter 13

1. Scollon, Ron, and Suzanne Wong Scollon, *Intercultural Communication: A Discourse Approach*, 2nd ed., Blackwell, Oxford: 2002, p. 96.
2. Smith, Robin, "Logic," *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle* (Barnes, Jonathan, ed.), Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 29.
3. Parush, Iris, *Reading Jewish Women: Marginality and Modernization in Nineteenth-Century Eastern European Jewish Society* (trans. by Saadya Sternberg), Brandeis University Press, 2004, Preface.
4. Rifkin, *The European Dream*, pp. 249-50.
5. Viterna, Jocelyn S., "Pulled, Pushed and Persuaded: Explaining Women's Mobilization into the Salvadoran Guerrilla Army," *American Journal of Sociology*, 2006, Vol. 112:1, pp. 1-3.

Part V

1. Nicolson, Harold, as quoted in Safire, *Good Advice on Writing*, p. 27.

2. Corpus analysis is a computer-aided branch of applied linguistics using a “large and principled collection of natural texts, known as a ‘corpus,’ as the basis for analysis.” Biber, Douglas, Susan Conrad, and Randi Reppen, *Corpus Linguistics*, Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 4.
3. Deschouwer, Kris, “Editing the European Journal of Political Research,” *European Political Science*, 2007, Vol. 6:1, pp. 10-14.
4. Woodside, Arch G., personal correspondence. Aug. 2009.
5. Privately shared personal communication.

chapter 14

1. Eliot, T.S., in Winokur, *Writers on Writing*, p. 60.
2. American Economic Review, <http://www.aeaweb.org/aer/submissions.html>.
3. *Journal of European Social Policy*, <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsProdManSub.nav?prodId=Journal200915>.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. *British Journal of Sociology*, <http://www.wiley.com/bw/submit.asp?ref=0007-1315&site=1>.
7. Ibid.
8. *International Journal of Ageing and Later Life*, <http://www.ep.liu.se/ej/ijal/>.
9. *Child & Family Social Work* (website), “language” subsection of “manuscript format and structure,” <http://www.wiley.com/bw/submit.asp?ref=1356-7500&site=1>.
10. Ibid.
11. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, <http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/authors/cjmsauth.asp>.
12. Ibid.
13. Woodside, Arch G., “Paper Submission Requirements,” *Journal of Business Research*, via his email address on the JBR website.
14. *British Journal of Sociology*, <http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/118492688/home/ForAuthors.html>.
15. *Industrial Labor Relations Review (ILR Review)*, <http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/ilrreview/submissionGuidelines.html>.
16. Ibid.
17. *Feminist Economics*, http://www.feministeconomics.org/instructions_policies.html.
18. *Disability and Society*, <http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/authors/cdsolang.pdf>.

chapter 15

1. Jakobsen, Turf Böcker, “‘What Troubled Children Need’: constructions of everyday life in residential care,” *Children & Society*, Vol. 23:2, 2009.
2. *International Migration Review*, Vol. 40:3, 2006.
3. Shakespeare, Tom, “Cultural Representation of Disabled Peoples: dustbins for disavowal?” *Disability and Society*, Vol 9:3, 2004, pp. 283-299.
4. Hughes, Bill, “Bauman’s Strangers: impairment and the invalidation of disabled people in modern and post-modern cultures,” *Disability and Society*, Vol. 17:5, 2002, pp. 571-84.
5. Cox, Robert Henry, “The Social Construction of an Imperative: Why Welfare Reform Happened in Denmark and the Netherlands but Not in Germany,” *World Politics*, 2001, Vol. 53:3, 463-98.
6. *Journal of Labor Economics*, 2006, Vol. 24:2.

7. Loury, Linda Datcher, “Some Contacts Are More Equal Than Others: Informal Networks, Job Tenure, and Wages,” *Journal of Labor Economics*, 2006, Vol. 24:2.
8. Spitz-Oener, Alexandra, “Technical Change, Job Tasks, and Rising Educational Demands: Looking outside the Wage Structure,” *Journal of Labor Economics*, 2006, Vol. 24:2.
9. Privately shared personal correspondence from researcher.

chapter 16

1. Maurois, André, as quoted in Safire, *Good Advice on Writing*, p. 209.
2. This analysis, like those that follow throughout the chapter, come from personal correspondence with scholars and students who prefer to remain anonymous.

chapter 17

1. *Journal of Health Economics*, http://www.elsevier.com/wps/find/journaldescription.cws_home/505560/authorinstructions.
2. *Journal of Labor Economics*, 2006, Vol. 24:2.
3. Loury, Linda Datcher, “Some Contacts Are More Equal Than Others: Informal Networks, Job Tenure, and Wages,” *Journal of Labor Economics*, 2006, Vol. 24:2.
4. van Ours, Jan C., and Milan Vodopivec, “How Shortening the Potential Duration of Unemployment Benefits Affects the Duration of Unemployment: Evidence from a Natural Experiment,” *Journal of Labor Economics*, 2006, Vol. 24:2.
5. Smith, James P., “Immigrants and the Labor Market,” *Journal of Labor Economics*, 2006, Vol. 24:2.
6. Spitz-Oener, Alexandra, “Technical Change, Job Tasks, and Rising Educational Demands: Looking outside the Wage Structure,” *Journal of Labor Economics*, 2006, Vol. 24:2.
7. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 2006, Vol. 29:5.
8. Potter, Robert, and Joan Phillips, “Both black and symbolically white: The ‘Bajan-Brit’ return migrant as post-colonial hybrid,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 2006, Vol. 29:5.
9. Kaiser, Robert, and Elena Nikiforova, “Borderland spaces of identification and dis/location: Multiscalar narratives and enactments of Seto identity and place in the Estonian-Russian borderlands,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 2006, Vol. 29:5.
10. Stanczak, Gregory, “Strategic ethnicity: The construction of multi-racial/multi-ethnic religious community,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 2006, Vol. 29:5.
11. Marger, Martin, “Transnationalism or assimilation? Patterns of sociopolitical adaptation among Canadian business immigrants,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 2006, Vol. 29:5.
12. *American Ethnologist*, 2006, Vol. 33:3.
13. Yong, Kee Howe, “Silences in history and nation-state: Reluctant accounts of the Cold War in Sarawak,” *American Ethnologist*, 2006, Vol. 33:3.
14. Stack, Trevor, “The skewing of history in Mexico,” *American Ethnologist*, 2006, Vol. 33:3.
15. French, Jan Hoffman, “Buried alive: Imagining Africa in the Brazilian Northeast,” *American Ethnologist*, 2006, Vol. 33:3.
16. Ruef, Martin, and Kelly Patterson, “Organization and Local Development: Economic and Demographic Growth among Southern Counties during Reconstruction,” *Social Forces*, 2009, Vol. 87:4.
17. Hipp, John R., George E. Tita, and Robert T. Greenbaum, “Drive-bys and Trade-ups: Examining the Directionality of the Crime and Residential Instability Relationship,” *Social Forces*, 2009, Vol. 87:4.

18. Hopcroft, Rosemary L., "Gender Inequality in Interaction—An Evolutionary Account," *Social Forces*, 2009, Vol. 87:4.
19. Mandel, Hadas, and Michael Shalev, "How Welfare States Shape the Gender Pay Gap: A Theoretical and Competitive Analysis," *Social Forces*, 2009, Vol. 87:4.
20. Jæger, Mads Meier, "Equal Access but Unequal Outcomes: Cultural Capital and Educational Choice in a Meritocratic Society," *Social Forces*, Vol. 87:4.
21. Wiegking, Pamela, and Ineke Maas, "Resources that Make You Generous: Effects of Social and Human Resources on Charitable Giving," *Social Forces*, 2009, Vol. 87:4.
22. Peeters, Joëlle, and Albert de Vaal, "Explaining the wage gap: intra-industry trade, services linkages and falling transportation costs," *Journal of Economic Inequality*, 2003, 1:251.
23. Dieckhoff, Martina, "Skills and Occupational Attainment: A Comparative Study of Germany, Denmark, and the UK," *Work, Employment & Society*, 2008, Vol. 22:1.
24. Nespor, Jan, and Susan L. Groenke, "Ethics, Problem Framing, and Training in Qualitative Inquiry," *Qualitative Inquiry*, 2009, Vol. 15:6, p. 996.

Part VI

1. Barzun, Jacques, as quoted in Safire, *Good Advice on Writing*, p. 209.
2. Franklin, Benjamin, quoted on numerous websites and in numerous papers.
3. See, for example, Daft, Richard L., "Why I Rejected Your Paper and What You Can Do about It" in Cumming, L.L. and Peter J. Frost (eds.), *Publishing in the Organizational Sciences*, 2nd ed., Sage Publ., 1995.

chapter 18

1. Swift, Jonathan, in Winokur, *Writers on Writing*, p. 92.
2. Aristotle, in Winokur, *Writers on Writing*, p. 93.
3. Rand, *The Art of Nonfiction*, p. 105.
4. Ibid., p. 111.
5. Ascham, Roger, in Winokur, *Writers on Writing*, p. 60.
6. Rifkin, *The European Dream*, p. 215.
7. Ibid., p. 248.
8. Ibid., p. 247.
9. Ibid., p. 297.

chapter 19

1. Mill, John Stuart (from *Autobiography, Vol. I*), quoted in Capaldi, Nicholas, *John Stuart Mill: A Biography*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2004, p. 266.
2. Parnell, Charles, as quoted in Safire, *Good Advice on Writing*, p. 174.
3. Zinsser, *On Writing Well*, p. 84.
4. Sommers, Nancy, "Revision Strategies of Student Writers and Experienced Writers," quoted in Lindemann, Erika, *A Rhetoric for Writing Teachers*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1982, p. 183.
5. Ibid., p. 183.
6. Lindeman, Erika, *A Rhetoric for Writing Teachers*, p. 182.
7. Twain, Mark, from letter to George Baintain, October 15, 1888, quoted in <http://www.twainquotes.com/Lightning.html>.

chapter 20

1. Hamermesh, Daniel S., "The Young Economist's Guide to Professional Etiquette," *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 6:1, 1992, p. 169.
2. Ibid., p. 172.
3. Ibid., p. 173.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

I recommend various books on this list in five categories, with the following designations:

- ! = English rhetoric and Aristotelian argumentation
- * = English writing style
- = history of the English language
- = reference works (dictionaries, grammar and usage books, etc.)
- + = linguistics and contrastive rhetoric (including genre analysis)

American Economic Review. Submission Guidelines. American Economic Association.

<http://www.aeaweb.org/aer/submissions.html>.

Applied Economics Quarterly. Formatting your paper for publishing in Applied Economics Quarterly. DIW Berlin. www.diw.de/sixcms/detail.php/237633.

- ! Aristotle. 2003. *Topics, Books I and VIII*, with excerpts from related texts. Translated and commentary by Robin Smith. Clarendon Aristotle series. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- ! Aristotle. 2007. *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*. 2nd ed. Translated with introduction, notes and appendices by George A. Kennedy. New York: Oxford University Press.
- * Baker, Sheridan. 1984. *The Complete Stylist and Handbook*. 3rd ed. New York: Harper & Row.
- ! Barnes, Jonathan, ed. 2006. *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Baugh, Albert C. 2001. *A History of the English Language*. 5th ed. New York: Prentice Hall.
- Béland, Daniel, and André LeCours. 2005. "The Politics of Territorial Solidarity: Nationalism and Social Policy Reform in Canada, the United Kingdom, and Belgium." *Comparative Political Studies* 38: 676-703.
- + Biber, Douglas, Susan Conrad, and Randi Reppen. 1998. *Corpus Linguistics: Investigating Language Structure and Use*. Cambridge Approaches to Linguistics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- + Biber, Douglas, Ulla Connor, and Thomas A. Upton. 2007. *Discourse on the Move: Using corpus analysis to describe discourse structure*. Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Co.

Birkbeck Centre for Learning and Professional Development at the University of London. Academic writing for undergraduates. <http://www.bbk.ac.uk/study/ce/outlines/FFAE007H4ACA.doc>.

- Bodmer, Frederick. 1985. *The Loom of Language: An Approach to the Mastery of Many Languages*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co.

British Journal of Sociology. Author Guidelines. Wiley-Blackwell.
<http://www.wiley.com/bw/submit.asp?ref=0007-1315&site=1>.

British Journal of Sociology. Instructions to authors. Wiley-Blackwell.
<http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/118492688/home/ForAuthors.html>.

Capaldi, Nicholas. 2004. *John Stuart Mill: A Biography*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Originally published in John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography*, Vol. 1 (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer).

- * Carpenter, George Rice. 1906. *Elements of Rhetoric and English Composition*. 6th ed. New York: MacMillan.

Child & Family Social Work. Author Guidelines. Wiley-Blackwell.
<http://www.wiley.com/bw/submit.asp?ref=1356-7500&site=1>.

Childhood. Manuscript Submission Guidelines. Sage Publishing.
<http://www.sagepub.com/journalsProdManSub.nav?prodId=Journal200979>.

- Chomsky, Noam. 1957. *Syntactic Structures*. New York: De Gruyter Mouton.
- + Connor, Ulla. 1996. *Contrastive Rhetoric: Cross-cultural aspects of second-language writing*. The Cambridge Applied Linguistics Series. Indiana: Cambridge University Press.
- + Conrad, Susan and Douglas Biber, eds. 2001. *Variation in English: Multi-Dimensional Studies*. Essex, UK: Pearson Education Ltd.
- ! Corbett, Edward P.J., and Robert J. Connors. 1999. *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student*. 4th ed. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Cox, Robert Henry. 2001. "The Social Construction of an Imperative: Why Welfare Reform Happened in Denmark and the Netherlands but Not in Germany." *World Politics* 53: 463-498.
- Daft, Richard L. 1995. "Why I Rejected Your Paper and What You Can Do about It." In *Publishing in the Organizational Sciences*, 2nd ed., eds. L.L. Cumming, and Peter J. Frost. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Davidson, Mark. 2006. *Right, Wrong, and Risky: A Dictionary of Today's American Usage*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co.
- Deschouwer, Kris. 2007. "Editing the European Journal of Political Research." *European Political Science* 6:10-14.
- Dieckhoff, Martina. 2008. "Skills and Occupational Attainment: A Comparative Study of Germany, Denmark, and the UK." *Work, Employment & Society* 22: 89-108.
- Disability and Society. Instructions for Authors. Taylor & Francis.
<http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/journal.asp?issn=0968-7599&linktype=44>.
- Disability and Society. Editorial on Language Policy. Taylor & Francis.
<http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/authors/cdsolang.pdf>.
- ! Faigley, Lester, and Jack Selzer. 2007. *Good Reasons with Contemporary Arguments: Reading, Designing, and Writing Effective Arguments*. 3rd ed. New York: Pearson-Longman.
- ! Fairbairn, Gavin J., and Christopher Winch. 2006. *Reading, Writing and Reasoning: A Guide for Students*. 2nd ed. Maidenhead, UK: Open University Press.
- Feminist Economics. Editorial Policies. Routledge. http://www.feministeconomics.org/instructions_policies.html.
- Ferreira, Fernanda. 2003. "The misinterpretation of noncanonical sentences." *Cognitive Psychology* 47:164-203.
- Frank, Marcella. 1993. *Modern English: A Practical Reference Guide*. 2nd ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Regents/Prentice Hall.
- French, Jan Hoffmann. 2006. "Buried alive: Imagining Africa in the Brazilian Northeast." *American Ethnologist* 33:340-360.
- ! Garver, Eugene. 1994. *Aristotle's "Rhetoric": An Art of Character*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Gordon, Karen Elizabeth. 1993. *The Deluxe Transitive Vampire: A Handbook of Grammar for the Innocent, the Eager, and the Doomed*. New York: Pantheon.
- Gordon, Karen Elizabeth. 2003. *The New Well-Tempered Sentence: A Punctuation Handbook for the Innocent, the Eager, and the Doomed*. Boston, MA: Mariner Books.
- * Graves, Robert, and Alan Hodge. 1979. *The Reader over Your Shoulder: A Handbook for Writers of English Prose*. 2nd ed. New York: Vintage Books.

- * Hall, Donald, and Sven Birkerts. 1998. *Writing Well*. 9th ed. New York: Longman.
- Hamermesh, Daniel S. 1992. "The Young Economist's Guide to Professional Etiquette." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 6:169-179.
- Hipp, John R., George E. Tita, and Robert T. Greenbaum. 2009. "Drive-bys and Trade-ups? Examining the Directionality of the Crime and Residential Instability Relationship." *Social Forces* 87:1777.
- Hohnen, Pernille. 2006. "Consumers without money: consumption patterns and new forms of citizenship among low-income families in Scandinavian welfare societies." In *Cash and Care: Policy Challenges in the Welfare State*, eds. C. Glendinning and P. Kemp. Bristol, UK: Policy Press.
- Hopcroft, Rosemary L. 2009. "Gender Inequality in Interaction—An Evolutionary Account." *Social Forces* 87:1845.
- Hughes, Bill. 2002. "Bauman's Strangers: impairment and the invalidation of disabled people in modern and post-modern cultures." *Disability and Society* 17:571-584.
- International Journal of Ageing and Later Life. Instructions for Authors. Linköping University Electronic Press. <http://www.ep.liu.se/ej/ijal/>.
- Industrial Labor Relations Review. Submission Guidelines. Cornell University Press. <http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/ilrreview/submissionGuidelines.html>.
- Jæger, Mads Meier. 2009. "Equal Access but Unequal Outcomes: Cultural Capital and Educational Choice in a Meritocratic Society." *Social Forces* 87:1943.
- Jakobsen, Turf Böcker. In press. "'What Troubled Children Need': constructions of everyday life in residential care." *Children & Society*.
- Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies. Instructions for Authors. Taylor & Francis. <http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/authors/cjmsauth.asp>.
- Journal of European Social Policy. Manuscript Submission Guidelines. Sage Publications. <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsProdManSub.nav?prodId=Journal200915>.
- Journal of Health Economics. Guide for Authors. Elsevier. http://www.elsevier.com/wps/find/journaldescription.cws_home/505560/authorinstructions.
- Kaiser, Robert, and Elena Nikiforova. 2006. "Borderland spaces of identification and dis/location: Multiscalar narratives and enactments of Seto identity and place in the Estonian-Russian borderlands." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 29:928-958.
- Keyes, Ralph. 2006. *The Quote Verifier: Who Said What, Where, and When*. New York: St. Martin's Griffin.
 - ! Lakoff, Robin Tolmach. 1990. *Talking Power: The Politics of Language*. New York: BasicBooks.
 - * LeGuin, Ursula K. 1998. *Steering the Craft*. Portland, OR: The Eighth Mountain Press.
 - + Lindeman, Erika. 1982. *A Rhetoric for Writing Teachers*. New York: Oxford University Press.
 - Loury, Linda Datcher. 2006. "Some Contacts Are More Equal Than Others: Informal Networks, Job Tenure, and Wages." *Journal of Labor Economics* 24:299-318.
 - Mandel, Hadas, and Michael Shalev. 2009. "How Welfare States Shape the Gender Pay Gap: A Theoretical and Competitive Analysis." *Social Forces* 87:1873.
 - Marger, Martin. 2006. "Transnationalism or assimilation? Patterns of sociopolitical adaptation among Canadian business immigrants." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 29:882-900.
 - * McCloskey, Deirdre N. 2000. *Economical Writing*. 2nd ed. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, Inc.
 - McCrum, Robert, Robert MacNeil, and William Cran. 2002. *The Story of English*. 3rd rev. ed. New York: Penguin.

- Merriam-Webster's Dictionary of English Usage. 1994. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc.
- Michaels, Leonard, and Christopher Ricks, eds. 1980. *The State of the Language*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Miller, Casey, and Kate Swift. 1976. *Words and Women: New Language in New Times*. New York: Doubleday.
- Miller, Casey, and Kate Swift. 1981. *Handbook of Nonsexist Writing*. New York: Barnes & Noble.
- *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. 7th ed. 2009. New York: Modern Language Association of America.
- Nespor, Jan, and Susan L. Groenke. 2009. "Ethics, Problem Framing, and Training in Qualitative Inquiry." *Qualitative Inquiry* 15:996-1012.
- *New Hart's Rules: The Handbook of Style for Writers and Editors*. 2005. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- * Orwell, George. 1984. "Politics and the English Language." *Why I Write*. London: Penguin Books.
- van Ours, Jan C., and Vodopivec, Milan. 2006. "How Shortening the Potential Duration of Unemployment Benefits Affects the Duration of Unemployment: Evidence from a Natural Experiment." *Journal of Labor Economics* 24:351-378.
- *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*. 2004. Ed. Elizabeth Knowles. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Parush, Iris. 2004. *Reading Jewish Women: Marginality and Modernization in Nineteenth-Century Eastern European Jewish Society*. Trans. Saadya Sternberg. Lebanon, NH: Brandeis University Press.
- Pedersen, Axel West. 2004. "The privatization of retirement income? Variation and trends in the income packages of old age pensioners." *Journal of European Social Policy* 14:5-23.
- Peeters, Jolanda, and Albert de Vaal. 2003. "Explaining the wage gap: intra-industry trade, services linkages and falling transportation costs." *Journal of Economic Inequality* 1:251-280.
- Pierson, Paul. 1996. "The New Politics of the Welfare State." *World Politics* 48:143-179.
- Potter, Robert, and Joan Phillips. 2006. "Both black and symbolically white: The 'Bajan-Brit' return migrant as post-colonial hybrid." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 29:901-927.
- * Rand, Ayn. 2001. *The Art of Nonfiction: A Guide for Writers and Readers*. New York: Plume.
- Rey, Jennifer M. 2001. "Changing gender roles in popular culture." In *Variation in English: Multi-Dimensional Studies*, eds. Susan Conrad and Douglas Biber. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education Ltd.
- Rifkin, Jeremy. 2005. *The European Dream: How Europe's View of the Future is Quietly Eclipsing the American Dream*. New York: Jeremy Tarcher.
- Roget's International Thesaurus. 6th ed. 2002. Ed. Barbara Ann Kipfer. Glasgow, UK: Collins.
- Ruef, Martin, and Kelly Patterson. 2009. "Organization and Local Development: Economic and Demographic Growth among Southern Counties during Reconstruction." *Social Forces* 87:1743.
- + Scollon, Ron, and Suzanne Wong Scollon. 2002. *Intercultural Communication: A Discourse Approach*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Shakespeare, Tom. 2004. "Cultural Representation of Disabled Peoples: dustbins for disavowal?" *Disability and Society* 9:283-299.
- Sorek, Tamir. 2005. "Between Football and Martyrdom: the bi-focal localism of an Arab-Palestinian town in Israel." *British Journal of Sociology* 56:635-661.
- Smith, James P. 2006. "Immigrants and the Labor Market." *Journal of Labor Economics* 24:203-233.

- Smith, Robin. 2006. "Logic". In *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Spitz-Oener, Alexandra. 2006. "Technical Change, Job Tasks, and Rising Educational Demands: Looking outside the Wage Structure." *Journal of Labor Economics* 24:235-270.
- Stack, Trevor. 2006. "The skewing of history in Mexico." *American Ethnologist* 33:427-443.
- Stanczak, Gregory. 2006. "Strategic ethnicity: The construction of multi-racial/multi-ethnic religious community." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 29:856-881.
- Stockdale, Percival. 1807. *Lectures on the Truly Eminent English Poets*. Vol. 2. London: D. N. Shury.
- * Strunk, William, Jr., and E.B. White. 1999. *The Elements of Style*. New York: Pearson P T R.
- + Swales, John. 1990. *Genre Analysis: English in academic and research settings*. The Cambridge Applied Linguistics Series. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Swan, Michael. 2005. *Practical English Usage*. 3rd ed. New York: Oxford University Press.
- *The Canadian Style: A Guide to Writing and Editing*. 2nd ed. 2007. Toronto: Dundurn Press in co-operation with Public Works and Government Services Canada.
- *The Chicago Manual of Style*. 15th ed. 2003. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Turabian, Kate. 2007. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. 7th ed. Chicago Style for Students and Researchers. Eds. Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Twain, Mark. 1888. From letter to George Baintain, October 15, 1888. Quoted in <http://www.twainquotes.com/Lightning.html>.
- Viterna, Jocelyn S. 2006. "Pulled, Pushed and Persuaded: Explaining Women's Mobilization into the Salvadoran Guerilla Army." *American Journal of Sociology* 112:1-45.
- Vitus, Kathrine. 2008. "The Agonistic Approach: Reframing Resistance in Qualitative Research." *Qualitative Inquiry* 14:466-488.
- ! Weston, Anthony. 2000. *A Rulebook for Arguments*. 3rd ed. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co.
- + Whorf, Benjamin Lee. 1972. "Language, Mind, and Reality." In *Language, Thought, and Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf*, ed. John B. Carroll. Cambridge, MA: The M.I.T. Press.
- Wiepking, Pamela, and Ineke Maas. 2009. "Resources that Make You Generous: Effects of Social and Human Resources on Charitable Giving." *Social Forces* 87:1973.
- Winokur, John, ed. 1986. *Writers on Writing*. Philadelphia: Running Press.
- Woodside, Arch G. JBR Editor-in-Chief, Boston College. "Paper Submission Requirements." *Journal of Business Research*, via his email address on JBR website.
- Yong, Kee Howe. 2006. "Silences in history and nation-state: Reluctant accounts of the Cold War in Sarawak." *American Ethnologist* 33:462-473.
- * Zinsser, William Knowlton. 1988. *Writing to Learn: How to Write—and Think—Clearly about any Subject at All*. New York: Harper & Row.
- * Zinsser, William Knowlton. 2006. *On Writing Well: The Classic Guide to Writing Nonfiction*. 7th ed. New York: Collins.

PERMISSIONS

Applied Economics Quarterly. Formatting your paper for publishing in *Applied Economics Quarterly*. Copyright © by DIW Berlin. Used by permission of the publisher. • Aristotle. 2007. *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*. Trans. and annotated by George A. Kennedy. Copyright © by Oxford University Press, Inc. By permission of Oxford University Press, Inc. • Béland, Daniel, and André LeCours. 2005. "The Politics of Territorial Solidarity." *Comparative Political Studies* 38. Copyright © by Sage Publishing US. Used by permission of the publisher. • Excerpt from *Birkbeck Centre for Learning and Professional Development at the University of London*, Academic writing for undergraduates. Copyright © 2004 Birkbeck College, University of London. Used by permission of the publisher. • *Childhood*. Manuscript Submission Guidelines. Copyright © by Sage Publishing UK. Used by permission of the publisher. • Dieckhoff, Martina. 2008. "Skills and Occupational Attainment: A Comparative Study of Germany, Denmark, and the UK." *Work, Employment & Society* 22. Copyright © by Sage Publishing UK. Used by permission of the publisher. • Faigley, Lester, and Jack Selzer. 2007. *Good Reasons with Contemporary Arguments: Reading, Designing, and Writing Effective Arguments*. 3rd ed. Copyright © by Longman, an imprint of Pearson Education, Inc. Reprinted by permission of Pearson Education, Inc. • Hall, Donald, and Birkerts, Sven. 1998. *Writing Well*. 9th ed. Copyright © by Longman, an imprint of Pearson Education, Inc. Reprinted by permission of Pearson Education, Inc. • Hamermesh, Daniel S. 1992. "The Young Economist's Guide to Professional Etiquette." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 6. Copyright © by American Economic Association. Used by permission of the author. • Excerpt from *ILR Review*, Submission Guidelines. Copyright © 2009 School of Industrial and Labor Relations, Cornell University. Used by permission of Jami Carlacio (managing editor). • Excerpt from *Journal of Business Research*, Paper Submission Requirements. Copyright © 2010 Elsevier B.V. Used by permission of Arch G. Woodside (JBR Editor-in-Chief, Boston College). • *Journal of European Social Policy*. Manuscript Submission Guidelines. Copyright © by Sage Publishing UK. Used by permission of the publisher. • Excerpt from LeGuin, Ursula K. 1998. *Steering the Craft*. Copyright © 1998 by The Eighth Mountain Press. Reprinted by permission of The Eighth Mountain Press. • Lindeman, Erika. 1982. *A Rhetoric for Writing Teachers*. Copyright © by Oxford University Press, Inc. By permission of Oxford University Press, Inc. • Nespor, Jan, and Susan L. Groenke. 2009. "Ethics, Problem Framing, and Training in Qualitative Inquiry". *Qualitative Inquiry* 15. Copyright © by Sage Publishing US. Used by permission of the publisher. • *Why I Write* by George Orwell (Copyright © George Orwell, 1933) by permission of Bill Hamilton as the Literary Executor of the Estate of the Late Sonia Brownell Orwell and Secker & Warburg Ltd. • *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*. 2004. edited by Elizabeth Knowles. Copyright © by Oxford University Press. By permission of Oxford University Press. • Parush, Iris. 2004. *Reading Jewish Women: Marginality and Modernization in Nineteenth-Century Eastern European Jewish Society*. trans. by Saadya Sternberg. Copyright © University Press of New England, Lebanon, NH. Reprinted with permission. • Pedersen, Axel West. 2004. "The privatization of retirement income? Variation and trends in the income packages of old age pensioners." *Journal of European Social Policy* 14. Copyright © by Sage Publishing UK. Used by permission of the publisher. • From *THE ART OF NONFICTION* by Ayn Rand, edited by Robert Mayhew, copyright © 2001 by the Estate of Ayn Rand. Used by permission of Plume, an imprint of Penguin Group (USA) Inc. • From *THE EUROPEAN DREAM* by Jeremy Rifkin, copyright © 2004 by Jeremy Rifkin. Used by permission of Jeremy P. Tarcher, an imprint of Penguin Group (USA) Inc. • From *SOCIAL FORCES*, vol. 87, no. 4. Copyright © 2009 by the University of North Carolina Press. Used by permission of the publisher. www.uncpress.unc.edu • Viterna, Jocelyn S. 2006. "Pulled, Pushed and Persuaded: Explaining Women's Mobilization into the Salvadoran Guerilla Army." *American Journal of Sociology* 112:1. Copyright © by the University of Chicago Press. Used by permission of the publisher. • Vitus, Kathrine. 2008. "The Agonistic Approach: Reframing Resistance in Qualitative Research." *Qualitative Inquiry* 14. Copyright © by Sage Publishing US. Used by permission of the publisher. • Copyright © 1976, 1980, 1985, 1988, 1990, 1994, 1998, 2001, 2006 by William K. Zinsser. From *ON WRITING WELL*, Seventh (30th Anniversary) Edition, published by Collins. Reprinted by permission of the author.

INDEX

A

abstract. *See* paper
abstract analysis. *See* journal analysis
abstract structure
analyzing 238-241
using alphabetic symbols 241-245
using purpose phrases 245-247
active voice 68-69, 71-86, 116-117
conversion of passive voice to active 77-82, 94-96
definition 71
adjective. *See* grammar
adverb. *See* grammar
ambiguity 42-43, 54-55
Anglo-American rhetorical tradition 3-4, 8, 15-21, 38, 104, 143-144, 156-160, 167, 170, 178, 188, 249
appendix. *See* paper
Aristotelian logic 5-6, 18, 141, 158-160, 170, 184-185
See also Anglo-American rhetorical tradition; argumentation, Anglo-American argumentation, Anglo-American 5-6, 141, 158-160, 184-198
counter-arguments 141, 169-170, 188-189, 259
linguistic logic of English 185-188
See also framing; outlining; paragraphs/paragraphing
author analysis. *See* journal analysis

B

body. *See* paper

C

Chomsky, Noam. *See* transformational grammar
clause
adjective (*see* clause: relative)
combination 253-257
definition 24
dependent 24-25, 121, 124
embedding 25
essential/restrictive 63-67, 121, 124, 128
independent 24-25, 62, 92-94, 121, 123-124, 126-127, 136
nonessential/nonrestrictive 63-67, 121-122, 124, 128-129, 131
punctuation 121-124
relative 25, 121

compound

modifiers 132-133
nouns 133-134
numbers 135
See also punctuation: hyphens
conclusions. *See* fact vs. conclusions; paper; recommendations vs. conclusions
conclusion analysis. *See* journal analysis
conjunctions
adverbial 108, 120, 122-124
coordinating 108, 120-124
correlative 108-110
subordinating 24, 108, 120
content words. *See* vocabulary
contrastive rhetoric 4, 14-17
See also linguistic community, concept of; psychology of reading; writer responsibility
contributor guidelines. *See* submission guidelines
cover letter 274-275
cutting. *See* pruning

D

definitions 125, 155, 165-166, 260-261
direct object. *See* grammar
discussion. *See* paper

E

editing
for clarity 5, 22-23, 38, 53-55, 155-157, 185-188, 250
for strength 5, 29-31
editorial guidelines. *See* submission guidelines
elimination analysis. *See* journal analysis
embedding. *See* clause

F

facts vs. conclusions 173-175
framing 20, 188-191, 252-253
See also argumentation, Anglo-American

G

golden rule, the 21, 39, 209
See also writer responsibility
grammar
adjective 25, 38, 60, 87, 132-135, 173-174
adverb 32, 34-35, 38, 87, 133, 188
conjunction (*see* conjunctions)
direct object 69-71, 126

preposition 32, 70-71, 99-100, 126 (*see also* vocabulary: structure words)
pronoun (*see* pronouns)
verb (*see* verbs)
verbal (*see* verbals)
voice (*see* active voice; passive voice)
UK vs. US 63-67, 265-266

H

hedge words. *See* vocabulary

I

introduction. *See* paper

J

journal analysis 6, 199-202, 210, 230
abstract analysis 232-238 (*see also* abstract structure)
author analysis 212-215
conclusion analysis 218-221
elimination analysis 6, 201, 210-214, 221-222, 232-238
linguistic analysis 6, 43, 238-241
sample analyses 223-230
single journal analysis 215-218, 223-230
title analysis 214-215

L

linguistic analysis. *See* journal analysis
linguistic community, concept of 14-17, 22-23, 43, 46, 104-105, 142-143, 184, 267-268
modifier problems 87-103, 256, 258
dangling 90-103, 256
misplaced 89-90
solutions 97-103
squinting 87-88

N

necessary background. *See* paper

O

outlining
methods 178-183
purpose 178-180

P

paper 160-161
abstract 161, 175-177, 206, 231-232 (*see also* abstract structure)
appendix 175
body 161, 167-170
conclusions 170-175, 218-221
discussion 171-172
introduction 161-167

necessary background 161-162 (*see also* paper; introduction)

purpose statement 162-164, 171, 175 (*see also* paper: abstract; paper: introduction)

recommendations/future research 172-173 (*see also* recommendations vs. conclusions)

scope 164 (*see also* paper: introduction)
paragraphs/paragraphing 142-157

comparative 155-157

definition 142-146

examples 147-157

length 146-153

topic sentence 144-145, 147, 152-153

parallel structure 104-105

correlative conjunctions 108-110

meaning 106

rewriting 110-117

vertical/horizontal lists 106-108, 126-127

words and phrases 105

paraphrasing 168-169, 260

passive voice 68-85, 116-117

dangling modifiers 94-96, 256 (*see also* modifiers: dangling)

definition 72-74

rebuttal of justification for 82-85

recognizing 74-77

strategies for converting to active voice 77-82

patterning

abstract patterns 232-241

definition 232

techniques 241-247

See also abstract structures

phrase

definition 23-24

infinitive 97-98 (*see also* verbs)

participial 98-100 (*see also* verbs)

prepositional 70-71, 99-100, 121-122, 124 (*see also* grammar: preposition)

pronouns

demonstrative 56-59

it/they 59

personal 55-56

relative (*which* vs. *that*) 60-67

proofreading 272-273

pruning 30-31

cutting 36, 44-51

eliminating deadwood 36-43
eliminating hedge words 41-43
eliminating long words 38-39
eliminating redundancy 33-34, 36-38, 45-47
eliminating smothered verbs 39
shortening structure words/phrases 32-35
psychology of reading 3-4, 16, 20-21, 47, 53, 104-105, 142-143, 146
See also Anglo-American rhetorical tradition
punctuation 118-139
colons 125-127
commas 64-67, 121-129, 131, 136-138
dashes 127-128, 131-132, 138
ellipses 126, 139, 168-169, 287
hyphens 132-135 (*see also* compound)
importance of 118-119
introduction to 118-120
inverted commas (*see* punctuation: quotation marks)
parentheses 127-130, 139
quotation marks 124-126, 132, 137-138, 168-170, 260 (*see also* punctuation: quotation marks)

R
recommendations vs. conclusions 173-175
redundancy. *See* pruning
referee 19-20, 200-201, 274-283
resubmission letter 275-283
reviewer. *See* referee
revision 6-7, 19-21, 200-201, 204-205, 249, 267-270, 275-276
rhetorical tradition. *See* Anglo-American rhetorical tradition

S
scope. *See* paper
sentence
definition 23-25
editing 29-31, 49-51, 110-111
length 47-49
purpose 232, 238-241, 245-247
structure 38, 69-71, 241-245
spelling, UK vs. US 264-265

structure words. *See* vocabulary
style
definition 250-251
eliminating dangling modifiers 96-103
(*see also* modifiers: dangling)
examples 251-257
suggestions 257-263
(*see also* clause: combination; framing; vocabulary: usage)
style manuals 119-120
submission guidelines 15, 161, 202-209
submission letter. *See* cover letter
T
title analysis. *See* journal analysis
topic sentence 144-145, 152
See also paragraph/paragraphing: topic sentence
transformational grammar 92-93
V
verbs 23-24, 74-75, 94, 126, 186, 257, 261-262
transitive 69-71, 271
intransitive 69-71, 271
repetition 38
smothered 39
strong 85-86 (*see also* active voice)
verbals 23-24, 94
infinitive 97 (*see also* phrase: infinitive)
participial 98-99 (*see also* phrase: participial)
vertical/horizontal lists. *See* parallelism; punctuation
vocabulary
content words 32
hedge words 41-43, 187 (*see also* pruning: eliminating hedge words)
structure words 32-35 (*see also* pruning: shortening structure words/phrases)
transitional words 120, 147, 185-186, 188, 252-253 (*see also* conjunctions: adverbial)
UK vs. US 263-264
usage 38-43, 111, 185-188, 261-263, 270-272
W
writer responsibility 5, 17-18, 23, 53, 118, 203
See also Anglo-American rhetorical tradition

ABOUT NOVA

NOVA – Norwegian Social Research is an independent institute under the auspices of the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research. The institute aims to develop new knowledge of social conditions and mechanisms of change. Strategic areas of research include ageing and life-courses, comparative welfare, international migration, health and care provision, child protection, and youth studies. NOVA is among the largest social research institutions in Norway and has a multidisciplinary staff of nearly 100 researchers. NOVA has a strong engagement in international research and is currently leading a Nordic Centre of Excellence in Welfare Research.

www.nova.no
www.reassess.no

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Natalie Reid (M.A., TESOL) has been teaching English language skills throughout Europe, Japan, the Pacific, and the US for over 20 years, specializing in the areas of academic writing, contrastive rhetoric, and technical writing. She is the author of four books on American English language and culture, including *Dictionary of English Phrasal Usage* (Taishukan, Tokyo: 1985). In addition to having taught English as a second language in the International Studies Department at the University of California, Berkeley, she has also designed and taught language training workshops for native speakers of English in both the public and private sectors. Since the early 2000s she has been teaching academic writing to, consulting with, and editing papers and books for European social scientists and other professionals.

www.nataliereid.com
natalie@nataliereid.com

