


The Best Single Tool for Writing Sentences That are Easy for Your Reader to Understand*

- (1)  **Most of the time, state *who* is doing something in the *subject* of your sentence, and *what* that *who* is doing in your *verb*.**

- (2) Template

Syntax:	Subjects	Verbs
Semantics:	characters/agents/doers: Who did it?	actions: What did they do?

- (3) In each main and embedded clause, mark the lexical head of the subject NP with “S” and the tensed verb with “V”. Underline the semantic agent and double-underline the action. Then rewrite the sentence in a way that satisfies template (2).

- (a) There has been an affirmative decision for program termination.

- (b) An evaluation of the program by us will allow greater efficiency in service to clients.

- (c) Our lack of information prevented determination of committee action effectiveness in fund targeting to areas of greatest assistance need.

- (d) The more effective presentation of needs by other Agencies resulted in our failure in acquiring federal funds, despite intensive lobbying efforts on our part. (Hint: Begin with *Because* or *Although* or *If*.)

- (e) The closure of the branch and the transfer of its business and nonunionized employees constituted an unfair labor practice because the purpose of obtaining an economic benefit by means of discouraging unionization motivated the closure and transfer.

- (4) Passive clauses violate the actor-action template.

“Choose the passive when you don't know who did it, your readers don't care [or already know] who did it, or you don't want them to know who did it” (Williams 83).

Change each of these sentences to active, following the actor-action template.
Then evaluate: decide which of the sentences are best left as passives, and why.

- (a) Your figures were reanalyzed to determine their accuracy. Results will be announced when it is judged appropriate.

- (b) Home mortgage loans now are made for 30 years. With the price of housing at inflated levels, those loans cannot be paid off in any shorter period of time.

- (c) For many years federal regulations concerning the use of wiretapping have been ignored.

- (d) The author's impassioned narrative style is abandoned and in its place a cautious treatment of theories of conspiracy is presented. But the moment the narrative line is picked up again, he invests his prose with the same vigor and force.

- (e) The ability of the human brain to arrive at solutions of human problems has been undervalued, because studies have not been done that would be considered to have scientific reliability.
