

Effective sentences

what makes a sentence effective?

Writing effective sentences

- ▶ “That writer does the most, who gives his reader the most knowledge, and takes from him the least amount of time.”

Charles Caleb Colton

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Writing effective sentences

▶ WHAT MAKES A SENTENCE EFFECTIVE?

- ▶ A sentence is effective when
 - ❖ it communicates its meaning in a clear and understandable way.

Writing effective sentences

- ❖ **it expresses a complete thought without using unnecessary words.**

parallelism

▶ What is it?

❖ Parallel structure means using the same pattern of words in a sentence or paragraph. This pattern can happen with words, phrases, or clauses.

▶ EX: hiking, walking, and running

to hike, to walk, to run

Parallelism

- ▶ Why is it important?
 - ❖ Having parallel structure shows that two or more ideas have the same level of importance.

parallelism

- ▶ This sentence does NOT contain parallelism:

- The coach told the players that they should get a lot of sleep, that they should not eat too much, and to do some warm-up exercises.

- ▶ Which phrase is out of place?

- ▶ to do some warm-up exercises

parallelism

- ▶ How can this sentence be fixed so that it does have parallel structure?
- ▶ The coach told the players **that they should** get a lot of sleep, **that they should** not eat too much, and **that they should** do some warm-up exercises.

Stringy sentences

▶ What is it?

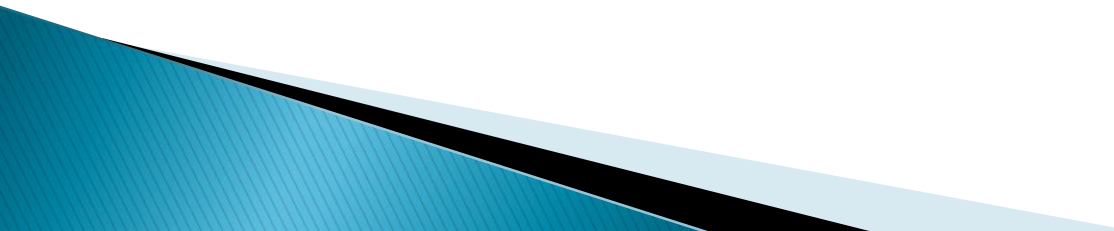
- ❖ A stringy sentence just goes on and on. It usually has too many independent clauses strung together with coordinating conjunctions like *and* or *but*.

Stringy sentences

▶ Why is it ineffective?

- ❖ Because it goes on and on, a stringy sentence may cause its reader to lose interest or to be confused about how the ideas are related.

Stringy sentences

- ▶ How can you fix a stringy sentence?
 - ❖ Break the sentence into two or more sentences
 - ❖ Turn some of the independent clauses into dependent clauses or phrases
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Stringy sentences– do not record

▶ This is an example of a stringy sentence:

❖ The fire alarm bell rang, and everyone started to file out of school, but then our principal came down the hall, and he said the bell had been rung by mistake, and we went back to class.

Stringy sentences

▶ How can we revise this sentence so that it contains two or more sentences?

❖ The fire alarm bell rang, and everyone started to file out of school. Then our principal came down the hall, and he said the bell had been rung by mistake. We went back to class.


Stringy sentences

▶ How can we revise this sentence so that it contains independent and dependent clauses?

❖ When the fire alarm bell rang, everyone started to file out of school. Then our principal came down the hall. He said the bell had been rung by mistake, and we went back to class.

Wordy sentences

▶ What is it?

- ❖ A wordy sentence is a sentence that contains too many words. It may have unnecessary words, repeat words, or use a level of vocabulary that is not necessary.
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Wordy sentences

▶ Why is it ineffective?


- ❖ When a sentence contains too many words, it makes the meaning of the sentence unclear and confuses people.

Wordy sentences

▶ How can you fix a wordy sentence?

- ❖ Do not use more words than you need.
 - ❖ Do not use fancy words where simple ones will do.
 - ❖ Do not repeat yourself unless absolutely necessary.
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Wordy sentences

- ▶ **WORDY:**– do not record
 - ▶ My friend Ken is a talented drummer who plays the drums with great skill.
 - ▶ **IMPROVED:**
 - ▶ My friend Ken is a talented drummer.
- 

Wordy sentences


- ▶ **WORDY:**– do not record
- ▶ In the event that we are unable to go to the movie, we can play basketball at Alicia's house.
- ▶ **IMPROVED:**
- ▶ If we cannot go to the movie, we can play basketball at Alicia's house.

Wordy sentences

- ▶ **WORDY:**– do not record
 - ▶ It would please me greatly if you would diminish the volume of your verbalizing during the time I am perusing this reading material.
 - ▶ **IMPROVED:**
 - ▶ Please be quieter while I am reading.
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Sentence variety

▶ What is it?

- ❖ Sentence variety occurs when the sentences in a paragraph begin in different ways, making the sentences more interesting.
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Sentence variety

▶ Why is it important?

- ❖ Basic English sentences begin with a subject and a verb. For example, *The theater was packed.* However, beginning every sentence with a subject makes your writing dull, or boring.

Sentence variety

▶ How can you create sentence variety?

❖ Create words, phrases, and dependent clauses out of sentences and combine them.

Sentence variety– do not record

- ▶ Notice how boring the following paragraph sounds.
- ▶ The theater was packed. Jan and I managed to find our seats. The play began thirty minutes late. We were bored. We read the program four times. Jan wanted to find out the reason for the delay. She asked an usher. The usher was amused. The usher said that the star's costume had been damaged by her dog. We laughed because the play was *Cats*.

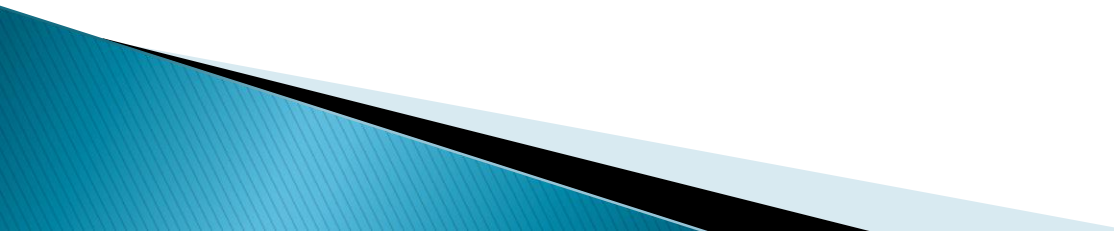
Sentence variety– do not record

- ▶ Now, notice how much more interesting the same paragraph sounds with varied sentence beginnings.
- ▶ Although the theater was packed, Jan and I managed to find our seats. The play began thirty minutes late. Bored, we read the program four times. To find out the reason for the delay, Jan asked an usher. Amused, the usher said that the star's costume had been damaged by her dog. We laughed because the play was *Cats*.

UWF WRITING LAB RULES OF THUMB FOR DANGLING AND MISPLACED MODIFIERS

From *Real Good Grammar, Too*
by Mamie Webb Hixon

Modifiers

- ▶ Modifiers are words, phrases, or clauses that provide description in sentences.
 - ▶ Essentially, modifiers breathe life into sentences.
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Modifiers

- ▶ Take a look at this "dead" sentence:

Stephen dropped his fork.

- ▶ Now read what several well placed modifiers can do:

Poor Stephen, who just wanted a quick meal to get through his three-hour biology lab, quickly dropped his fork on the cafeteria tray, gagging with disgust as a tarantula wiggled out of his cheese omelet, a sight requiring a year of therapy before Stephen could eat eggs again.

Dangling Modifiers

- ▶ are words or phrases which “dangle” because they have no word in the sentence to describe:
- ▶ *While taking a shower,* the doorbell rang.
- ▶ The doorbell was taking a shower?



Revise dangling modifiers

- ▶ by adding a headword—a noun or pronoun that is described:
- ▶ *While I was taking a shower, the doorbell rang.*
- ▶ OR
- ▶ *While taking a shower, I heard the doorbell ring.*

A Misplaced Modifier

- ▶ is placed too close to some other word that it does not intend to modify:
- ▶ *There is a car in the garage that has no windshield.*
- ▶ The garage has no windshield?



Revise misplaced modifiers

- ▶ by placing the modifier next to its headword:
- ▶ *In the garage, there is a car that has no windshield.*



Review C: Dangling & Misplaced Modifiers

1. Stapling the pages carefully, Tamika admired the report.

This sentence does not contain an error.

2. Covered with sweat from the hot sun, the ocean looked inviting.

Covered with sweat from the hot sun, I though the ocean looked inviting.

Review C: Dangling & Misplaced Modifiers

3. To iron my delicate silk shirt, the setting on the iron must be the correct temperature.

To iron my delicate silk shirt, I must set the iron on the correct temperature.

4. Before learning of the party, my weekend seemed boring.

Before learning of the party, I thought my weekend seemed boring.