

ing narrative with lists, and adding effective headings and subheadings.

...ina at Chapter 11 offers advice on editing and proofreading—and a chance to find errors strategically embedded in the advice itself. Go to real-timeupdates.com/bce8 and select Learn More in the Students section.

VARYING SENTENCE LENGTH

Using a variety of sentence lengths is a good way to maintain reader interest and control the emphasis given to major and minor points. Look for ways to combine a mixture of sentences that are short (up to 15 words or so), medium (15–25 words), and long (more than 25 words). Each sentence length has advantages. Short sentences can be processed quickly and are easier for nonnative speakers and translators to interpret. Medium-length sentences are useful for showing the relationships among ideas. Long sentences are often the best way to convey complex ideas, to list a number of related points, or to summarize or preview information.

Each sentence length has disadvantages as well. Too many short sentences in a row can make your writing feel choppy and disconnected. Medium sentences can lack the punch of short sentences and the informative power of longer sentences. Long sentences are usually harder to understand than short sentences because they are packed with more information; they are also harder to skim when readers are looking for key points in a hurry.

To keep readers' interest, look for ways to combine a variety of short, medium, and long sentences.

KEEPING YOUR PARAGRAPHS SHORT

Large blocks of text can be visually daunting, particularly on screen, so keep your paragraphs as short as possible. Short paragraphs, roughly 100 words or fewer (this paragraph has 57 words), are easier to read than long ones, and they make your writing look inviting. You can also emphasize ideas by isolating them in short, forceful paragraphs.

However, don't go overboard with short paragraphs at the expense of maintaining a smooth and clear flow of information. In particular, use one-sentence paragraphs only occasionally and only for emphasis. Also, if you need to divide a subject into several pieces in order to keep paragraphs short, use transitions to help your readers keep the ideas connected.

Short paragraphs are more inviting and tend to be easier to read.

USING LISTS AND BULLETS TO CLARIFY AND EMPHASIZE

In some instances, a list can be more effective than conventional sentences and paragraphs. Lists can show the sequence of your ideas, heighten their visual impact, and increase the likelihood that readers will find your key points. In addition, lists help simplify complex

Lists are effective tools for highlighting and simplifying material.