

# THE PARAMEDIC METHOD

## CHAPTER

# 1

## *Action*

1. Circle the prepositions.
2. Circle the "is" forms.
3. Find the *action*.
4. Put this action in a simple (not compound) active verb.
5. Start fast—no slow windups.
6. Read the passage aloud with emphasis and feeling.
7. Write out each sentence on a blank screen or sheet of paper and mark off its basic rhythmic units with a "/."
8. Mark off sentence length with a "/."

Since we all live in a bureaucracy these days, it's not surprising that we end up writing like bureaucrats. Nobody feels comfortable writing simply "Bill loves Marge." The system requires something like "A romantic relationship is ongoing between Bill and Marge." Or "Bill and Marge are currently implementing an interactive romantic relationship." Or still better, "One can easily see that an interactive romantic relationship is currently being fulfilled between Bill and Marge." Ridiculous contrived examples? Here are some real ones.

A businessman denied a loan does not suffer but instead says that "I went through a suffering process." A teacher does not say that "If you use a calculator in class, you will never learn to add and subtract," but instead "The fact is that the use of the calculator in the classroom is negative for the learning process." An undergraduate wants to say that "Every UCLA freshman needs to learn how to cope with crowds," but it comes out as "There can be little doubt that contending with the problem of overpopulation at UCLA is one thing that every freshman needs to learn how to do." A favorite Official Style habit adds "process" or "situation" or "factor" to every phrase. Instead of being invited "to recruit," a corporation is asked "to participate in the recruitment process." Instead of facing "a budget crunch," an administrator faces "a budget crunch situation." "Greed" becomes "the greed factor." Sometimes the inflation is pure air, a "gunfire weapon" for a

“gun.” A sign outside a courtroom reads not “No guns in court!” but “Firearms may not be brought into this court facility.” A university bureaucrat wants to make a generous offer: “To encourage broadband system use, the ACAD will pay all line charges for the next two years.” But instead, it comes out as: “In order to stimulate utilization of the broadband system, it is the intention of the ACAD to provide for central funding of all monthly line charges generated by attachment to the system over the period of the next two years.” A politician “indicates his reluctance to accept the terms on which the proposal was offered” when he might have said “No.” A teacher of business writing tells us not that “People entering business today must learn to speak effectively,” but “One of these factors is the seemingly increasing awareness of the idea that to succeed in business, it is imperative that the young person entering a business career possess definite skill in oral communication.” A French art historian talking about prehistoric cave wall paintings inflates them into “parietal representations” (Latin *paries* = “wall”).

All these people write, and maybe even think, in the Official Style. The Official Style comes in many dialects—government, military, social scientific, lab scientific, MBA flapdoodle—but all exhibit the same basic attributes. They all build on the same imbalance: a dominance of nouns and an atrophy of verbs. They enshrine the triumph, worshipped in every bureaucracy, of stasis over action. Real actions lurk furtively in the sentences I’ve just quoted—suffer, learn, cope, recruit, pay, speak—but they are swamped by lame “is” verbs, “shun” words (facilitation, intention, utilization), and strings of prepositional phrases.

This basic imbalance between action and inertia is easy to cure, if you want to cure it—and this book’s Paramedic Method tells you how to do it. *But when do you want to cure it?* We all sometimes feel, whatever setting we write in, that we will be penalized for writing in plain English. It will sound too flip. Unserious. Even satirical. In my academic dialect, that of literary study, writing plain English nowadays is tantamount to walking down the hall naked as a jay bird. Public places demand protective coloration; sometimes you must write in the Official Style. And when you do, how do you make sure you are writing a good

Official Style—if there is one—rather than a bad one? What can “good” and “bad” mean when applied to prose in this way?

*Revising Prose* starts out by teaching you how to revise the Official Style. But after you’ve learned that, we’ll reflect on what such revision is likely to do for you, or to you, in the bureaucratic world of the future—and the future is going to get only more bureaucratic, however many efforts we make to simplify it and its official language. You ought then to be able to see what “good” and “bad” mean for prose, and what you are doing when you revise it. And that means you will know how to socialize your revisory talents, how to put them, like your sentences, into action.

## PREPOSITIONAL-PHRASE STRINGS

We can begin with three examples of student prose:

This sentence is in need of an active verb.

Physical satisfaction is the most obvious of the consequences of premarital sex.

In response to the issue of equality for educational and occupational mobility, it is my belief that a system of inequality exists in the school system.

What do they have in common? They have been assembled from strings of prepositional phrases glued together by that all-purpose epoxy “is.” In each case the sentence’s verbal force has been shunted into a noun, and its verbal force has been diluted into “is,” the neutral copulative, the weakest verb in the language. Such sentences project no life, no vigor. They just “are.” And the “is” generates those strings of prepositional phrases fore and aft. It’s so easy to fix. Look for the real action. Ask yourself, who’s kicking who? (Yes, I know, it should be *whom*, but doesn’t *whom* sound stilted? In this book, we’ll stick with *who*.)

In “This sentence is in need of an active verb,” the action obviously lies in “need.” And so, “This sentence needs an active

verb." The needless prepositional phrase "in need of" simply disappears once we realize who's kicking who. The sentence, animated by a real verb, comes alive, and in six words instead of nine.

Where's the action in "Physical satisfaction is the most obvious of the consequences of premarital sex"? Buried down there in "satisfaction." But just asking the question reveals other problems. Satisfaction isn't a consequence of premarital sex, in the same way that, say, pregnancy can be. And, as generations of both sexes will attest, sex, premarital or otherwise, does not always satisfy. Beyond all this, the contrast between the clinical phrasing of the sentence, with its lifeless "is" verb, and the life-giving power of lust in action makes the sentence seem almost funny. Excavating the action from "satisfaction" yields "Premarital sex satisfies! Obviously!" This gives us a lard factor (LF) of 66% and a comedy factor even higher. (You find the LF by dividing the difference between the number of words in the original and the revision by the number of words in the original. In this case,  $12 - 4 = 8$ ;  $8 \div 12 = .66$ . Think of a LF of one third to one half as normal, and in your own writing don't stop revising until you've removed it. The comedy factor in prose revision, though often equally great, does not lend itself to numerical calculation.)

But how else do we revise here? "Premarital sex is fun, obviously" may be a little better, but we remain in thrall to "is." And the frequent falsity of the observation stands out yet more. Revision has exposed the empty thinking. The writer makes it even worse by continuing: "Some degree of physical satisfaction is present in almost all coitus." Add it all together and we get something like, "People usually enjoy premarital sex" (LF 79%). Right. At its worst, academic prose makes us laugh by describing ordinary reality in extraordinary language.

Now for the third example.

In response to the issue of equality for educational and occupational mobility, it is my belief that a system of inequality exists in the school system.

A diagram reveals the problem and points to a lurking action.

In response  
to the issue  
of equality  
for educational and occupational mobility,

it **is** my belief that a system

of inequality exists  
in the school system.

A string of prepositional phrases, then a form of the verb "to be" (usually "is"), then more prepositional phrases. But sandwiched in the middle lurks, furtive and afraid, the real *action* of the sentence: "it is my belief that." Change that from the "is" form to the active voice, and we have *an action*. Somebody *believes* something. Everything before and after this action amounts to a single phrase—"gender inequality." So we have this revision.

I believe that gender inequality exists in the schools. (9 words instead of 26; LF 65%)

The drill for this problem stands clear. Circle every form of "to be" (*is, was, will be, seems to be, have been*, etc.) and every prepositional phrase (*of, in, by, through, from*, etc.). Then find out who's kicking who and start rebuilding the sentence with that action. Two prepositional phrases in a row turn on the warning light, three make a problem, and four demand immediate surgery. Look for the real *action* hidden behind the "is" and prepositional phrases. So here:

#### Original:

The history of new regulatory provisions **is** that there **is** generally an immediate resistance **to** them.

What hides behind "is that there is"? *Resistance*. And behind that? *Resist*! Now we need an *actor*. We have to invent one, but clearly "people in general" are acting here. So:

#### Revision:

People usually resist new regulations.

Five words instead of 16, for a LF of 69%. The two original prepositional phrases have been eliminated. The action—*resist*—stands clear. A little practice in this kind of revision and, instead of writing “There are many ways in which people resist change,” you’ll write “People resist change in many ways.”

The action lies in an even deeper grave of prepositions in this example:

The project is likely to result in a minor population increase in the city from families relocating to the site from outside the community.

Chart first:

The project  
**is** likely  
**to** result  
**in** a minor population increase  
**in** the city  
**from** families relocating  
**to** the site  
**from** outside the community.

The classic Official Style formula: an “is,” an infinitive “to” phrase, then five prepositional phrases in a row. For once, we have a clear actor—“The project.” We’ll start there. What is the project *doing*? What verb would express “a minor population increase from outside the city to inside the city”? How about “attract”? What is being “attracted”? Families. It all falls into place.

**Revision:**

The project will probably attract new families to the city.

Good work: (1) 24 words cut down to 5, for a LF of 58%; (2) five prepositional phrases and one infinitive phrase shrunk to one prepositional phrase; (3) above all, a clearly defined *action*—“attract.”

Sometimes authors go to grotesque lengths to hide the action from their readers. Look at an undergraduate disqualifying himself or herself from membership in a creative writing class: “The type

of writing that I have an interest in is in the area of creative writing.” To get into the class, write instead “I want to study creative writing” (17 words into 6: LF 66%).

Or take this simple example:

**Original:**

There are several examples of this selection process present in the Listerine ad.

**Revision:**

The Listerine ad exemplifies this selection process.

Sometimes potential actions are smeared across the whole sentence. Here’s a favorite of mine:

**Original:**

These are disturbed habitats (e.g., roadsides, vacant lots) vegetated by weedy colonizing species which depend on repeated disturbances for their existence.

The Official Style is at its silliest in describing ordinary things like weeds. It just can’t stand giving them their plain, ordinary names. A weed has to become “a weedy colonizing species.” Now, where’s the action? Well, we have a choice:

*disturb*  
*vegetate*  
*colonize*  
*depend*  
*disturb* [again]  
*exist*

Which offers the central action? None of them. There *isn’t any* central action. My guess is that the central, though unexpressed, *action* amounts to this:

**Revision:**

Weeds *grow* faster in empty spaces.

If I have guessed right, we've reduced 21 words to 6, for a LF of 71%. Not bad for government work. Now another Official Style smear job:

Perception is the process of extracting information from stimulation emanating from the objects, places, and events in the world around us.

A diagram helps:

Perception  
**is** the process  
**of** extracting information  
**from** stimulation emanating  
**from** the objects, places, and events  
**in** the world  
**around** us.

Again, look at the possible actions:

*perceive*  
*process*  
*extract*  
*inform*  
*stimulate*  
*emanate*

*Actor* is clear, and *action*, too: "Perception extracts information." The rest of the sentence goes into a single prepositional phrase: "from the outside world."

**Revision:**

Perception extracts information from the outside world.

Profound? No. Clear? Yes. Instead of 21 words, 7, for a LF of 66% exactly. And a five-to-one prepositional-phrase kill ratio.

Sometimes in revision you want so badly to emphasize the central action that you ruthlessly cut away surrounding details.

Next, a sentence from an environmental impact statement:

Pelicans may also be vulnerable to direct oiling, but the lack of mortality data despite numerous spills in areas frequented by the species suggests that it practices avoidance.

You want to dig out the "avoid" in the Official Style "practices avoidance." And it is clear who is doing the avoiding: the pelicans. So this:

**Revision:**

Pelicans seem to survive oil spills by avoiding the oil.

Have I left out anything essential in getting from 28 words to 10 (LF 64%)?

Official Style sentences smother action the way foam puts out a fire. Look at these strings from a lawyer, a scientist, and an historian:

Here **is** an example *of* the use *of* the rule *of* justice *in* argumentation.

One *of* the most important results *of* the presentation *of* the data **is** the alteration *of* the status *of* the elements *of* the discourse.

Another index *of* the breadth *of* the dissemination *of* Christian literature *in* this period **is** the appearance *of* translations *of* Christian scriptural documents *into* a variety *of* provincial languages.

The *of* strings are the worst of all. They seem to reenact a series of hiccups. When you revise them, you can feel how fatally easy the "is" + prepositional-phrase Official Style formula is [!] for prose style. They blur the central action of the sentence—you can't tell what is actually going on. Let's try revising.

**Original:**

Here is an example *of* the use *of* the rule *of* justice *in* argumentation.

"Rule of justice" is a term of art, so we must leave it intact. After we have found an active verb—"exemplify"—buried in "is an example of the use of," the rest follows easily.

**Revision:**

This passage exemplifies argumentation using the rule of justice.

Now, how about the second sentence? It represents a perfectly symmetrical Official Style pattern: String of prepositional phrases + "is" + string of prepositional phrases. Let's diagram it for emphasis:

One

*of* the most important results  
*of* the presentation  
*of* the data

**is** the alteration

*of* the status  
*of* the elements  
*of* the discourse.

Notice the formulaic character? The monotonous rhythm? The blurred action? Try reading it aloud: *of* dadadum, *of* dadadum, *of* dadadum. I'm not sure what this sentence means, but the action must be buried in "alteration." Start there, with an active, transitive verb—"alter." How about "Presentation of the data alters the status of the discourse elements"? Or, less formally, "The status of the discourse elements depends on how you present the data." Or it may mean, "You don't know the status of the elements until you have presented the data." At least two different meanings swim beneath the formulaic prose. To revise it you must *rethink* it.

Now, the third sentence. Diagram first:

Another index  
**of** the breadth

**of** the dissemination  
**of** Christian literature  
**in** this period

**is** the appearance

**of** translations  
**of** Christian scriptural documents  
**into** a variety  
**of** provincial languages.

The standard Official Style sandwich: "is" between two thick layers of prepositional phrases. We know what to do: Generate an active, transitive verb, and get rid of those thick slices of prepositional phrases. Now, make no mistake about it; it is *hard* to figure out the central action in this sentence. Let me take a stab at it. First, we'll select an *actor*.

Translation of Christian scriptures into provincial languages . . .

Now, what is this "translation" *doing*?

shows how broadly Christian literature is disseminated. . . .

So how about this:

Translations into provincial languages show how broadly Christian scriptures were disseminated in this period.

It is not the greatest revision in the world, but we have cut the sentence length in half and reduced the prepositional phrases from eight to two. Often in revising an academic Official Style you discover, as here, that the root assertion is blurred and confused.

One more example of action-burial, this one in a shallow grave. A police report goes this way:

Subject officer attempted to enter his vehicle in order to report for work. He was confronted by a skunk who denied him entrance into his vehicle. An officer-involved shooting occurred, resulting in the demise of the skunk.

"An officer-involved shooting occurred, resulting in the demise of the skunk," instead of "He shot the skunk," shows the Official Style at its fullest and finest.

## "BLAH BLAH IS THAT" OPENINGS

The formulaic slo-mo opening often provides your first taste of the Official Style. It delays and weakens the main action verb when (or *if*) you get to it. *The fact of the matter is that* we all fall into this habit. Let's look at some typical examples of what we will call the "Blah blah *is that*" opening from students, professors, and writers at large:

What I would like to signal here *is that* . . .

My contention *is that* . . .

What I want to make clear *is that* . . .

What has surprised me the most *is that* . . .

All that really means *is that* . . .

The upshot of what Heidegger says here *is that* . . .

The first *is that* . . .

The point I wish to make *is that* . . .

What I have argued here *is that* . . .

The important fundamental to remember *is that* . . .

My opinion *is that* on this point we have only two options . . .

My point *is that* the question of the discourse of the human sciences . . .

The fact of the matter *is that* the material of this article is drawn directly from . . .

Finally, the result of the use of all these new techniques and methods *is that* . . .

The one thing that Belinda does not realize *is that* Dorimant knows exactly how to press her buttons.

Easy to fix this pattern; just amputate the mindless preludial fan-fare. Start the sentence with whatever follows "Blah blah *is*

*that* . . ." On a computer it couldn't be simpler: Do a global search for the phrase "is that" and revise it out each time it occurs.

~~The upshot of what~~ Heidegger says ~~here is that~~ . . .

~~My opinion is that on this point~~ we have only two options . . .

~~My point is that the question of~~ the discourse of the human sciences . . .

~~The fact of the matter is that~~ the material of this article is drawn directly from . . .

We can even improve my favorite from this anthology:

~~The one thing that~~ Belinda does not realize ~~is that~~ Dorimant knows exactly how to press her buttons.

By amputating the fanfare, you *start fast*, and a fast start may lead to major motion. That's what we're after. Where's the *action*?

Writers addicted to the "blah blah *is that*" dead-rocket opening often tie themselves in knots with it. One writes: "The position **we are at is this**." Another: "The traditional opposite notion **to this is that there are** . . ." And a third, a university professor, in an article accurately titled "On the Weakness of Language in the Human Sciences," offers this spasmodic set of **thises**, **thats**, and **whats**:

Now **what** I would like to know specifically **is this**: **what is** the meaning of **this** "as" **that** Heidegger emphasizes so strongly when he says **that** "that which is explicitly understood"—**that is**, **that** which is interpreted—"has the structure of something as something"? My opinion **is that** what Heidegger means **is that** the structure of interpretation (*Auslegung*) is figural rather than, say, intentional. (My emphasis.)

In escaping from Houdini straightjackets like this, a couple of mechanical tricks come in handy. Besides eliminating the "is's" and changing every passive voice ("is defended by") to an active voice ("defends"), you can squeeze the compound verbs hard, make every "are able to" into a "can," every "seems to succeed in

creating" into "creates," every "cognize the fact that" (no, I didn't make it up) into "think," every "am hopeful that" into "hope," every "provides us with an example of" into "exemplifies," every "seeks to reveal" into "shows," and every "there is the inclusion of" into "includes."

Then, after amputating those mindless *fact that* introductory-phrase fanfares, you'll start fast. After that fast start, get to the central action as soon as you can. Instead of "the answer is in the negative," you'll find yourself saying "No."

## THE PM

We now have the beginnings of the Paramedic Method (PM):

1. Circle the prepositions.
2. Circle the "is" forms.
3. Find the *action*. Who's kicking who?
4. Put this action in a simple (not compound) active verb.
5. Start fast—no slow windups.

Let's use the PM on a more complex instance of blurred action, the opening sentences of an undergraduate psych paper:

The history of Western psychological thought has long been dominated by philosophical considerations as to the nature of man. These notions have dictated corresponding considerations of the nature of the child within society, the practices by which children were to be raised, and the purposes of studying the child.

Two actions here—"dominate" and "dictate"—but neither has fully escaped from its native stone. The prepositional-phrase and infinitive strings just drag them down.

The history  
of Western psychological thought . . .  
by philosophical considerations  
as to the nature  
of man . . .  
...

of the nature  
of the child  
within society . . .  
by which children . . .  
to be raised . . .  
of studying . . .

In asking "Where's the action?," "Who's kicking who?," we next notice all the potential actions fermenting in the nouns: *thinking* in "thought," *consider* in "considerations," more *thinking* somewhere in "notions." They hint at actions they don't supply and so blur the actor-action relationship still further. We want, remember, a plain active verb, no prepositional-phrase strings, and a natural actor firmly in charge.

The **actor** must be: "philosophical considerations as to the nature of man."

The **verb**: "dominates."

The **object** of the action: "the history of Western psychological thought."

Now the real problems emerge. What does "philosophical considerations as to the nature of man" really mean? Buried down there is a question: "What is the nature of man?" The "philosophical considerations" just blur this question rather than narrow it. Likewise, the object of the action—"the history of Western psychological thought"—can be simply "Western psychological thought." Shall we put all this together in the passive form that the writer used?

Western psychological thought has been dominated by a single question: What is the nature of man?

Or, with an active verb:

A single question has dominated Western psychological thought: What is the nature of man?

Our formulaic concern with the stylistic surface—passives, prepositional phrases, kicker and kickee—has led to a much more focused thought.

The first sentence passes its baton awkwardly to the second. "Considerations," confusing enough as we have seen, become "these notions" at the beginning of the second sentence, and these "notions," synonymous with "considerations" in the first sentence, dictate more but different "considerations" in the second. We founder in these vague and vaguely synonymous abstractions. Our unforgiving eye for prepositional phrases then registers "*of* the nature *of* the child *within* society." We don't need "within society"; where else will psychology study children? And "the nature of the child" telescopes to "the child." We metamorphose "the practices by which children were to be raised" into "child-rearing," and "the purposes in studying the child" leads us back to "corresponding considerations of the nature of the child within society," which it partly overlaps. But we have now a definite actor, remember, in the first sentence—the "single question." So a tentative revision:

This basic question leads to three others: What are children like? How should they be raised? Why should we study them?

Other revisions suggest themselves. Work out a couple. In mine, I've used "question" as the baton passed between the two sentences because it clarifies the relationship between the two. And I've tried to expose what real, clear action lies hidden beneath the conceptual cotton-wool of "these notions have dictated corresponding considerations."

#### Revision:

A single question has dominated Western psychological thought: What is the nature of man? This basic question leads to three others. What are children like? How should they be raised? Why should we study them?

### A PAUSE FOR REFLECTION

This two-sentence example of student academic prose requires reflection. First, the sentences boast no grammatical or syntactical mistakes. Second, they need not have come from a student. Any

issue of a psychology journal or text will net you a dozen from the same mold. How else did the student learn to write them? Third, few instructors reading this prose will think anything is wrong with it. Just the opposite. It reads just right; it sounds *professional*. The teacher's comment on this paper reads, in full: "An excellent paper—well conceived, well organized, and well written—A+." Yet a typical specimen sentence from it makes clear neither its main actor nor action; its thought consistently puffs into vague general concepts like "considerations" and "notions"; and its cradle-rocking monotonous rhythm puts us to sleep. It reveals a mind writing in formulas, out of focus, above all a mind putting no pressure on itself. The writer is not thinking so much as, on a scale slightly larger than normal, filling in the blanks. You can't build bridges thinking in this muddled way; they will fall down. If you bemuse yourself thus in a chemistry lab, you'll blow up the apparatus. And yet the student, obviously bright, has been invited to write this way and rewarded for it. He or she has been doing *a stylistic imitation*, and has brought it off successfully. Chances are that the focused, plain-language version I've offered would get a lower grade than the Official Style original. Revision is always perilous and paradoxical, but nowhere more so than in the academic world. Not so perilous, though, as bridges that fall down or lab apparatus that blows up. In the long run, it is better to get your thinking straight and take your chances.

### WHEN "IS" IS OK

OK. We've been practicing the first five rules of the PM. Let's repeat them.

1. Circle the prepositions.
2. Circle the "is" forms.
3. Find the *action*. Who's kicking who?
4. Put this action in a simple (not compound) active verb.
5. Start fast—no slow windups.

At the center of this grouping stands the search for *action*. In the Official Style, action usually comes in only one flavor—"is." We've been revising "is" into transitive, active verbs that impart the breath of life.

But rules don't always work and exceptions exist, if not to disprove the rules, then to encourage common sense in applying them. To conclude this chapter, let's look at two passages that take an extreme stand toward "is." The first one uses nothing else. The second abjures it entirely.

First, a passage built on "is." It is from a famous military historian's discussion of the Battle of Agincourt.

Agincourt is one of the most instantly and vividly visualized of all epic passages in English history, and one of the most satisfactory to contemplate. It is a victory of the weak over the strong, of the common soldier over the mounted knight, of resolution over bombast, of the desperate, cornered and far from home, over the proprietorial and cocksure. Visually it is a pre-Raphaelite, perhaps better a Medici Gallery print battle—a composition of strong verticals and horizontals and a conflict of rich dark reds and Lincoln greens against fishscale greys and arctic blues. . . . It is an episode to quicken the interest of any schoolboy ever bored by a history lesson, a set-piece demonstration of English moral superiority and cherished ingredient of a fading national myth. It is also a story of slaughter-yard behavior and of outright atrocity.

The passage is built on a backbone of "is." I've supplied the repetitions only implied by the text in **[boldface brackets]**.

Agincourt **is**

one of the most instantly and vividly visualized of all epic passages in English history, and

**[is]** one of the most satisfactory to contemplate.

It **is** a victory

of the weak over the strong,

**[It is a victory]**

of the common soldier over the mounted knight,

**[It is a victory]**

of resolution over bombast,

**[It is a victory]**

of the desperate, cornered and far from home, over the proprietorial and cocksure.

Visually it **is**

a pre-Raphaelite, perhaps better a Medici Gallery print battle—a composition of strong verticals and horizontals and a conflict of rich dark reds and Lincoln greens against fishscale greys and arctic blues. . . .

It **is** an episode

to quicken the interest of any schoolboy ever bored by a history lesson,

**[It is]**

a set-piece demonstration of English moral superiority and cherished ingredient of a fading national myth.

It **is** also

a story of slaughter-yard behavior and of outright atrocity.

Goodness! Everything I've been preaching against! "Is" plus strings of prepositional phrases. But the prose works in this instance because it possesses a shape, a repetitive, chorus-like pattern of similar elements until, in the last sentence, the prose shape remains the same but the sense constitutes a 180-degree inverted climax. Sentence shape matters. Shape attracts our attention and our exploration of the Official Style must consider how such attraction works.

Now for the opposite extreme, an excerpt from an article from the field of artificial intelligence which makes its point by banishing "to be" completely.

To devise a new kind of logic we must escape from the old metaphysics. I shall indicate how I have tried to do this. One valuable technique which I recommend, I shall apply in writing this essay. I shall endeavor to write this essay without using the verb "to be." By doing so, I shall subject myself, in an informal way, to an essential discipline which a logic of action should impose, formally, upon its users. This discipline