

An inverted sentence reverses the normal subject-verb order, placing the subject at the end, where it receives unusual emphasis.

In golden pots are hidden the most deadly poisons.

— Thomas Draxe

Using parallel structure for emphasis

Parallel grammatical structure draws attention to paired ideas or to items in a series. (See 9.) When parallel ideas are paired, the emphasis falls on words that underscore comparisons or contrasts, especially when they occur at the end of a phrase or clause.

We must *stop talking* about the *American dream* and *start listening* to the *dreams of Americans*.

— Reubin Askew

In a parallel series, the emphasis falls at the end, so it is generally best to end with the item in the series you most want to emphasize.

My uncle often talks about growing up in Sudan — playing soccer, eating goat stew, and dodging bullets.

— Alec Hamza, student

15

Provide some variety.

When a rough draft is filled with too many sentences that begin the same way or have the same structure, try injecting some variety — as long as you can do so without sacrificing clarity or ease of reading.

15a Vary your sentence openings.

Most sentences in English begin with the subject, move to the verb and continue to the object, with modifiers tucked in along the way or put at the end. For the most part, such sentences are fine. Put too many of them in a row, however, and they become monotonous.

Words, phrases, or clauses modifying the verb can often be inserted ahead of the subject.

- Eventually a
 ▶ A few drops of sap eventually began to trickle into the bucket.

Like most adverbs, *eventually* does not need to appear close to the verb it modifies (*began*).

- Just as the sun was coming up, a
 ▶ A pair of black ducks flew over the pond, just as the sun was coming up.

The adverb clause, which modifies the verb *flew*, is as clear at the beginning of the sentence as it is at the end.

Adjectives and participial phrases can frequently be moved to the beginning of a sentence without loss of clarity.

- Dejected and down,
 ▶ Edward, dejected and down, nearly gave up his job search.

NOTE: When beginning a sentence with an adjective or a participial phrase, make sure that the subject of the sentence names the person or thing described in the introductory phrase. If it doesn't, the phrase will dangle. (See 12e.)

15b Use a variety of sentence structures.

A writer should not rely too heavily on simple sentences and compound sentences, as the effect tends to be both monotonous and choppy. (See 14b and 14c.) Too many complex or compound-complex sentences, however, can be equally monotonous. Try to achieve a mix of sentence types.

The major sentence types are illustrated in the following sentences, all taken from Flannery O'Connor's "The King of the Birds," an essay describing the author's pet peafowl.

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| SIMPLE | Frequently the cock combines the lifting of his tail with the raising of his voice. |
| COMPOUND | Any chicken's dusting hole is out of place in a flower bed, but the peafowl's hole, being the size of a small crater, is more so. |
| COMPLEX | The peacock does most of his serious strutting in the spring and summer when he has a full tail to do it with. |
| COMPOUND-COMPLEX | The cock's plumage requires two years to attain its pattern, and for the rest of his life, this chicken will act as though he designed it himself. |

For a fuller discussion of sentence types, see 50a.

15c Try inverting sentences occasionally.

A sentence is inverted if it does not follow the normal subject-verb-object pattern. Many inversions sound artificial and should be avoided, except in the most formal contexts. If an inversion sounds natural, however, it can provide a welcome touch of variety.

Set at the top two corners of the stage were huge
 ▶ Huge lavender hearts outlined in bright white lights. were set at
 ^ ^
 the top two corners of the stage.

In the revision, the subject, *hearts*, appears after the verb, *were set*. Notice that the two parts of the verb are also inverted — and separated from each other (*Set . . . were*) — without any awkwardness or loss of meaning.

Inverted sentences are used for emphasis as well as for variety (see 14f).

EXERCISE 15-1

Improve variety in each of the following sentences by using the technique suggested in brackets. Possible revisions appear in the back of the book.

To protect endangered marine turtles, fishing
 Fishing crews place turtle excluder devices in fishing nets.

^ ^
 to protect endangered marine turtles. [Begin the sentence with
 the adverbial infinitive phrase.]

- The exhibits for insects and spiders are across the hall from the fossils exhibit. [Invert the sentence.]
- Sayuri becomes a successful geisha after growing up desperately poor. [Move the adverb clause to the beginning of the sentence.]
- Researchers have been studying Mount St. Helens for years. They believe that earthquakes may have caused the 1980 eruption. [Combine the two sentences into a complex sentence.]
- Ice cream typically contains 10 percent milk fat. Premium ice cream may contain up to 16 percent milk fat and has less air in it. [Combine the two sentences as a compound sentence.]
- The economy may recover quickly if home values climb. [Move the adverb clause to the beginning of the sentence.]

EXERCISE 15-2

Edit the following paragraph to increase sentence variety.

Making architectural models is a skill that requires patience and precision. It is an art that illuminates a design. Architects come up with a grand and intricate vision. Draftspersons convert that vision into blueprints. The model maker follows the blueprints. The model maker builds a miniature version of the structure. Modelers can work in traditional materials like wood and clay and paint. Modelers can work in newer materials like Styrofoam and liquid polymers. Some modelers still use cardboard, paper, and glue. Other modelers prefer glue guns, deformable plastic, and thin aluminum and brass wire. The modeler may seem to be making a small mess in the early stages of model building. In the end the modeler has completed a small-scale structure. Architect Rem Koolhaas has insisted that plans reveal the logic of a design. He has argued that models expose the architect's vision. The model maker's art makes this vision real.

16 Tighten wordy sentences.

Long sentences are not necessarily wordy, nor are short sentences always concise. A sentence is wordy if it can be tightened without loss of meaning.

16a Eliminate redundancies.

Redundancies such as *cooperate together*, *yellow in color*, or *basic essentials* are a common source of wordiness. There is no need to say the same thing twice.

- ▶ Daniel ^{works} ~~is now~~ employed at a private rehabilitation center
working as a registered physical therapist.

Though modifiers ordinarily add meaning to the words they modify, they are redundant when their meanings are suggested by other words in the sentence.

- ▶ Martina ~~very quickly~~ scribbled her phone number on a greasy napkin.

The word *scribbled* already suggests that Martina wrote *very quickly*.

16b Avoid unnecessary repetition of words.

Though words may be repeated deliberately for effect, repetitions will seem awkward if they are clearly unnecessary. When a more concise version is possible, choose it.

- ▶ His third speech, delivered in Chicago, was an outstanding speech.
- ▶ The best teachers help each student ^{grow} become a better student both academically and emotionally.

16c Cut empty or inflated phrases.

An empty phrase can be cut with little or no loss of meaning. Common examples are word groups that weaken the writer's authority by apologizing or hedging: *in my opinion*, *I think that*, *it seems that*, and so on.

- ▶ ^O In my opinion, our current immigration policy is misguided.

Readers understand that they are hearing the writer's opinion.

Inflated phrases can be reduced to a word or two without loss of meaning.

INFLATED

along the lines of
as a matter of fact
at this point in time
due to the fact that
for the purpose of
in order to
in spite of the fact that
in the event that

CONCISE

like
in fact
now (or currently)
because
for
to
although (or though)
if

16d Simplify the structure.

Simplifying sentences and using stronger verbs can make writing more direct.

- ▶ The analyst claimed that because of volatile market conditions, she could not ~~make an~~ estimate of the company's future profits.

The verb *estimate* is more vigorous and concise than *make an estimate of*.

The colorless verbs *is*, *are*, *was*, and *were* often generate excess words.

- ▶ Investigators ^{studied} ~~were involved in studying~~ the effect of classical music on unborn babies.

The action (*studying*), originally appearing in a subordinate structure, has become a strong verb, *studied*.

The expletive constructions *there is* and *there are* (or *there was* and *there were*) can also lead to wordy sentences. The same is true of expletive constructions beginning with *it*.

- ▶ ^A ~~There is~~ another module ^A ~~that~~ tells the story of Charles Darwin and introduces the theory of evolution.

16e Reduce clauses to phrases, phrases to single words.

Word groups functioning as modifiers can often be made more compact. Look for opportunities to reduce clauses to phrases or phrases to single words.

- ▶ We took a side trip to Monticello, ~~which was~~ the home of Thomas Jefferson.

EXERCISE 16-1

Edit the following sentences to reduce wordiness. Possible revisions appear in the back of the book.

The Wilsons moved into the house ^{even though} ~~in spite of the fact that~~ the back door was only ten yards from the train tracks.

- Martin Luther King Jr. was a man who set a high standard for future leaders to meet.
- Alice has been deeply in love with cooking since she was little and could first peek over the edge of a big kitchen tabletop.
- In my opinion, Bloom's race for the governorship is a futile exercise.
- It is pretty important in being a successful graphic designer to have technical knowledge and at the same time an eye for color and balance.
- Your task will be the delivery of mailed correspondence to all employees in the company.

EXERCISE 16-2

Edit the following business memo to reduce wordiness.

To: District managers
 From: Margaret Davenport, Vice President
 Subject: Customer database

It has recently been brought to my attention that a percentage of our sales representatives have been failing to log reports of their client calls in our customer database each and every day. I have also learned that some representatives are not checking the database on a routine basis.

Our clients sometimes receive a multiple number of sales calls from us when a sales representative is not cognizant of the fact that the client has been contacted at a previous time. Repeated telephone calls from our representatives annoy our customers. These repeated telephone calls also portray our company as one that is lacking in organization.

Effective as of immediately, direct your representatives to do the following:

- Record each and every customer contact in the customer database at the end of each day, without fail.
- Check the database at the very beginning of each day to ensure that telephone communications will not be initiated with clients who have already been called.

Let me extend my appreciation to you for cooperating in this important matter.

17 Choose appropriate language.

Language is appropriate when it suits your subject, engages your audience, and blends naturally with your voice.

To some extent, your choice of language will be governed by the conventions of the genre in which you are writing. When in doubt about the conventions of a particular genre—lab reports, informal essays, business memos, and so on—consult your instructor or look at models written by experts in the field.

17a Choose an appropriate level of formality.

In deciding on a level of formality, consider both your subject and your audience. For most college and professional writing, some degree of formality is appropriate. In a job application, for example, it is a mistake to sound too breezy and informal.

TOO INFORMAL I'd like to get that sales job you've got on the website.

MORE FORMAL I would like to apply for the position of sales manager posted on LinkedIn.

In choosing a level of formality, above all be consistent. When a writer's voice shifts from one level of formality to another, readers receive mixed messages.

► Jorge's pitching lesson ^{began} ~~commenced~~ with his famous curveball, ^{thrown} ~~implemented~~ by tucking the little finger behind the ball. Next ^{revealed} ~~he elucidated~~ the mysteries of the sucker pitch, a slow ball coming behind a fast windup.

Words such as *commenced* and *elucidated* are inappropriate for the subject matter, and they clash with informal terms such as *sucker pitch* and *fast windup*.

17b Avoid jargon, except in specialized writing situations.

Jargon is special language used among members of a trade, discipline, or professional group. Sentences with jargon can be hard

to read. Use jargon only when readers will be familiar with it and when plain English will not do as well.

JARGON

We outsourced the work to an outfit in Ohio because we didn't have the bandwidth to tackle it in-house.

REVISED

We hired a company in Ohio because we had too few employees to do the work.

The following are common examples of jargon from business, government, higher education, and the military, with plain English alternatives in parentheses.

ameliorate (improve)	optimal (best, most favorable)
commence (begin)	parameters (boundaries, limits)
components (parts)	peruse (read, look over)
endeavor (try)	prior to (before)
facilitate (help)	utilize (use)
indicator (sign)	viable (workable)

17c Avoid most euphemisms and doublespeak.

Euphemisms — words or phrases substituted for words thought to sound harsh or ugly — are sometimes appropriate. We may use euphemisms out of concern for someone's feelings. Telling parents, for example, that their daughter is "unmotivated" is more sensitive than saying she's lazy. Tact or politeness, then, can occasionally justify euphemisms, but use them sparingly. Many euphemisms are needlessly evasive or even deceitful.

EUPHEMISM	PLAIN ENGLISH
correctional facility	prison
economically deprived	poor
preowned automobile	used car
revenue enhancers	taxes

The term *doublespeak* applies to any deliberately evasive or deceptive language, including euphemisms. Doublespeak is especially common in politics and business. Torture is described as *enhanced interrogation*, for example, and *downsizing* really means firing or laying off employees.

EXERCISE 17-1 Edit the following sentences to eliminate jargon, euphemisms, and doublespeak. You may need to make substantial changes in some sentences. Possible revisions appear in the back of the book.

After two weeks in the legal department, Kala has ^{mastered} worked
^{office} into the routine, ^{performance} of the office, and her ^{functional and self-} management skills have exceeded all expectations.

- In my youth, my family was under the constraints of difficult financial circumstances.
- In order that I may increase my expertise in the area of delivery of services to clients, I feel that participation in this conference will be beneficial.
- I am between jobs because my company downsized last fall.
- Government-sanctioned investigations into the continued value of after-school programs indicate a perceived need in the public realm at large.
- Let's do a deep dive into the numbers and notify all stakeholders of our findings.

EXERCISE 17-2

Edit the following email message to eliminate jargon.

Dear Ms. Jackson:

We members of the Nakamura Reyes team value our external partnering arrangements with Creative Software, and I look forward to seeing you next week at the trade show in Fresno. Per Mr. Reyes, please let me know when you'll have some downtime there so that he and I can conduct a strategizing session with you concerning our production schedule. It's crucial that we all be on the same page re our 2023–2024 product release dates.

Before we have some face time, however, I have some findings to share. Our customer-centric approach to the new products will necessitate that user testing periods trend upward. The enclosed data should help you effectuate any adjustments to your timeline; let me know ASAP if you require any additional information to facilitate the above.

Before we convene in Fresno, Mr. Reyes and I will agendize any further talking points. Thanks for your help.

Sincerely,

Sylvia Nakamura

17d In most contexts, avoid slang.

Slang is an informal and sometimes private vocabulary that expresses the solidarity of a group such as rock musicians or sports fans. Slang changes rapidly. For example, the slang teenagers use to express approval changes every few years; *cool*, *groovy*, *neat*, *awesome*, *sick*, and *dope* have replaced one another within the last several decades.

Although slang has a certain vitality, it is an informal code that not everyone understands. Avoid using it in academic writing, unless you have a specific purpose for doing so.

- ▶ Without ^{evidence,} the receipts, we can't move forward with our proposal.

17e Avoid sexist and noninclusive language.

Sexist and noninclusive language stereotypes or demeans people and should be avoided. Using inclusive language and recognizing individuals' chosen pronoun usage shows awareness of others. As you write for different audiences, keep in mind that words matter, and always select words that show respect for your readers.

Recognizing sexist and noninclusive language

Some sexist language is easy to recognize because it reflects genuine contempt for women: referring to a woman as a "babe," for example, or calling a lawyer a "lady lawyer."

Other forms of sexist and noninclusive language are less blatant. The following practices reflect stereotypical thinking: referring to members of one profession as exclusively one gender (teachers as women or computer engineers as men, for instance) or using different conventions when naming or identifying people of different genders.

STEREOTYPICAL LANGUAGE

After a nursing student graduates, *she* must face a difficult state board examination. [Not all nursing students are women.]

Running for city council are Boris Stotsky, an attorney, and Mrs. Cynthia Jones, a professor of English and mother of three. [The title *Mrs.* and the phrase *and mother of three* are irrelevant.]

Sometimes noninclusive language arises from the practice of using gendered pronouns to refer generically to persons of all genders, or from using the incorrect pronouns to refer to individuals.

GENDERED PRONOUNS

A journalist is motivated by *his* deadline. [Not all journalists are men.]

A good interior designer treats *her* clients' ideas respectfully. [Not all interior designers are women.]

When a student applies for federal financial aid, *he or she* is given an FSA ID. [Not all students identify as *he* or *she*.]

Similarly, terms including *man* and *men* were once used to refer generically to all people of that profession or group. Current usage demands gender-neutral terms.

INAPPROPRIATE**APPROPRIATE**

chairman

chairperson, moderator, chair, head

congressman

member of Congress, representative, legislator

fireman

firefighter

mailman

mail carrier, postal worker, letter carrier

to man

to operate, to staff

mankind

people, humans

manpower

personnel, staff

weatherman

forecaster, meteorologist

Revising sexist and noninclusive language

When revising sexist language, some writers substitute *he* or *she* and *his* or *her*. Others alternate female pronouns with male pronouns. These strategies are wordy, can become awkward or confusing, and are not inclusive of all individuals. Instead, use the plural or revise the sentence. You may also use the singular gender-neutral pronouns *they* and *them* to refer to individuals inclusively.

USING THE PLURAL

Journalists are motivated by *their* deadlines.

REVISING THE SENTENCE

A journalist is motivated by *a* deadline.

USING SINGULAR THEY

A journalist is motivated by *their* deadline.

For more examples of these revision strategies, see section 22.

NOTE: When using pronouns to refer to people, choose the pronouns that the individuals themselves would use. Some transgender,

nonbinary, and gender-fluid people refer to themselves by new pronouns (ze/hir, for example), but if you are unfamiliar with an individual's pronouns, *they* and *them* are acceptable gender-neutral options.

EXERCISE 17-3

Edit the following sentences to eliminate noninclusive language or sexist assumptions. Possible revisions appear in the back of the book.

Scholarship athletes

A scholarship athlete must be as concerned about ^{their} his academic performance as ^{they are} he is about ^{their} his athletic performance.

- Mrs. Geralyn Farmer, who is the mayor's wife, is the chief surgeon at University Hospital. Dr. Paul Green is her assistant.
- Every applicant wants to know how much he will earn.
- An elementary school teacher should understand the concept of nurturing if she intends to be effective.
- Our company is going to hire a new I.T. guy. He will update the server and set up remote desktops.
- If man does not stop polluting his environment, mankind will perish.

17f Avoid biased language.

Your writing should be respectful and free of stereotypical, biased, or other harmful language. Be especially careful when describing groups of people. Avoid outdated labels and generalizations; instead, consider how people identify, and use the language that they themselves would use. You may need to research current terms, but working to use the right identifying language is an important step in recognizing and respecting your audience.

► Harriet Tubman was an abolitionist who worked to free ^{enslaved Black Americans} colored slaves.

► The Supreme Court ruled that ^{same-sex couples} gays had the right to marry in all 50 states in 2015.

- ▶ At every building entrance, our school installed ramps accessible ^{people who use wheelchairs.} to the ~~handicapped~~.
- ▶ North Dakota takes its name from the ^{Lakota} ~~Indian~~ word meaning "friend" or "ally."

Negative stereotypes (such as "drives like an old lady") are of course hurtful. But even if you believe your generalization to be positive, it is harmful to make assumptions based on a person's or group's characteristics.

- ▶ It was no surprise that Greer, ^{an excellent math and science student,} a ~~Chinese-American~~, was selected for the honors chemistry program.

18 Find the exact words.

Two reference works (or their online equivalents) will help you find words to express your meaning exactly: a good dictionary, such as *The American Heritage Dictionary* or *Merriam-Webster* online, and a collection of synonyms and antonyms, such as *Roget's International Thesaurus*.

NOTE: Do not turn to a thesaurus in search of impressive words. Look for words that express your meaning exactly.

18a Select words with appropriate connotations.

In addition to their strict dictionary meanings (or *denotations*), words have *connotations*, emotional colorings that affect how readers respond to them. The word *steel* denotes "commercial iron that contains carbon," but it also calls up images associated with steel. These associations give the word its connotations—cold, hard, smooth, unbending.

If the connotation of a word does not seem appropriate for your purpose, your audience, or your subject matter, you should