

1) Warm-Up: The following was inserted into a wallet by the German manufacturer. Can you identify some of the mistakes and correct them?

We congratulate you for your decision. This article is delightfully handmade. The leather been used here is an unique and cannot be copied.

Each piece is an individual. The defects in skin like insect bites or thorn cracks and marginal colour variations etc. are not a mistake in the quality. They actually proof of and underline the genuineness of the popular natural products of leather.

2) For each excerpt, identify the source of the ambiguity: (1) improper syntax (word order), (2) missing comma, (3) unclear pronoun reference, or (4) grouping of conflicting words.

- 1) With the lid off the reactor core was exposed, allowing radioactive isotopes to escape.
- 2) We propose to provide the above engineering services hourly based on the following estimates.
- 3) Compared with the pollution of the average coal-fired plant, the thermal pollution of a nuclear power plant is less than 2 percent more.
- 4) Reductions up to 80% in heat and mass transfer coefficients were measured due to outgassing.
- 5) As airplane designs change the anti-ice systems also have to change.
- 6) Most people are diagnosed with phenylketonuria at birth.
- 7) The use of the thermal storage unit is limited to supplying low-pressure auxiliary steam because of insufficient excess energy from the undersized collector.
- 8) At this time, the Department of Energy is only considering Yucca Mountain as a possible storage site for nuclear waste. Other possible sites are excluded from discussion.
- 9) If the airplane waits too long to take off the de-ice fluid can dissipate.

Guidelines on Computer Science Writing:

I. Economy

The volume of information has been rapidly increasing in the past few decades. While computer technology has played a significant role in encouraging the information growth, the latter has also had a great impact on the evolution of computer technology in processing data throughout the years. Historically, many different kinds of databases have been developed to handle information, including the early hierarchical and network models, the relational model, as well as the latest object-oriented and deductive databases. However, no matter how much these databases have improved, they still have their deficiencies. Much information is in textual format. This unstructured style of data, in contrast to the old structured record format data, cannot be managed properly by the traditional database models. Furthermore, since so much information is available, storage and indexing are not the only problems. We need to ensure that relevant information can be obtained upon querying the database.

Do not compress texts too much!

Bit-stream interpretation requires external description of stored structures. Stored descriptions are encoded, not external.

Vs.

Interpretation of bit-streams requires external information such as description of stored structures. Such descriptions are themselves data, and if stored with the bit-stream they become part of it so that further external information is required.

II. Clarity

The results show that, for the given data, less memory is likely to be required by the new structure, depending on the magnitude of the numbers to be stored and the access pattern.

Vs.

The results show that less memory was required by the new structure. Whether this result holds for other data sets will depend on the magnitude of the numbers and the access pattern, but we expect that the new structure will usually require less memory than the old.

III. Style

As each value is passed to the server, the “heart” of the system, it is checked to see whether it is in the appropriate range.

Vs.

Each value passed to the central server is checked to see whether it is in the appropriate range.

SIMPLIFYING YOUR WRITING

Characters

1) Look at the three versions of the same sentence below. Which sentence is least clear?

1. The CIA feared the president would recommend to Congress that it reduce its budget.
2. The CIA had fears that the president would send a recommendation to Congress that it make a reduction in its budget.
3. The fear of the CIA was that a recommendation from the president to Congress would be for a reduction in its budget.

2) Why did you choose the sentence you chose? Try to highlight the characters, subjects, and verbs of each sentence.

One of the principles of a clear style: make the subjects of most of your verbs **short, specific, and concrete**.

If you make abstract nominalizations main characters and subjects, use as few other nominalizations as you can. Compare:

A **nominalization** is a replacement of a verb by a noun, often resulting in displacement of characters from subjects by nouns.

When a **nominalization** replaces a verb with a noun, **it** often displaces characters from subjects.

Exercise:

Before you revise these next sentences, diagnose them: 1) **Look** at the first six of seven words (ignore short introductory phrases). 2) **Find** the main characters. 3) **Skim** the passage for actions involving those characters. Then revise so that each has a specific character as a subject of a specific verb. To revise you may have to invent characters. Use *we*, *I*, or any other word that seems appropriate.

Example:

In recent years, the appearance of new interpretations about the meaning of the discovery of America has led to a reassessment of Columbus's place in Western history.

Revision: In recent years, some **historians** re-interpreted the discovery of America and consequently **they** reassessed Columbus's place in Western history.

1. Tracing transitions in a well-written article provides help in efforts at improving coherence in writing.
2. With the decline in network television viewing in favor of cable and rental DVDs, awareness is growing at the networks of a need to revise programming.

3. Decisions about forcibly administering medication in an emergency room setting despite the inability of an irrational patient to provide legal consent is usually an on-scene medical decision.

4. Resistance has been growing against building mental health facilities in residential areas because of a belief that the few examples of improper management are typical.

Introductory phrases

While introductory phrases can separate a statement into two (or more) shorter clauses, they can also negatively affect the flow of your text.

Exercise:

These sentences have long introductory phrases and clauses. Revise. Try to open your revised sentence with its point.

1. While grade inflation has been a subject of debate by teachers and administrators and even in newspapers, employers looking for people with high levels of technical and analytical skills have not had difficulty identifying desirable candidates.

2. Since school officials responsible for setting policy about school security have said that local principals may require students to pass through metal detectors before entering a school building, the need to educate parents and students about the seriousness of bringing onto school property anything that looks like a weapon must be made a part of the total package of school security.

Old before new

Generally, we order information from old to new. This flow of information is present on the sentence-level as well as the paragraph-level. Compare:

Competition by Asian companies with American companies in the Pacific is the first phase of this study. **Labor costs and the ability to introduce new products quickly in particular** are examined. **A plan that will show American industry how to reconstruct its facilities** will be developed from this study.

In the first phase of this study, **we** examine how **Asian companies** compete with American companies in the Pacific region. **We** examine in particular their labor costs and ability to introduce new products quickly. **We** develop from this study a **plan** that will show **American industry** how to restructure its facilities.

Exercise

Revise this passage to improve its old-new flow. Revise the sentences so that old information appears first.

The components of Abco's profitability, particularly growth in Asian markets, will be highlighted in our report to demonstrate its advantages versus competitors. Revenue returns along several dimensions— product type, end-use, distribution channels, etc.—will provide a basis for this analysis. Likely growth prospects of Abco's newest product lines will depend most on its ability in regard to the development of distribution channels in China, according to our projections. A range of innovative strategies will be needed to support the introduction of new products.