Writing Effectively

Effective Subjects and Verbs:

- *The choice of verbs and nouns can greatly influence the way we perceive the effectiveness of a sentence.*
- *Do not mistaken academic language for needless complexity!*

Passive Voice vs. Active Voice
- *While the passive voice helps to focus on the object and not the "doer" of the verb, active voice is sometimes the better solution, as it creates simpler and direct sentences.*

Padding and overuse of words
- *Be efficient with your use of words. Avoid the use of empty phrases such as "the fact that" or "of course"*

Be direct
- *Avoid using unnecessary words (for example, the verbs "performed" or "utilized" are among these overused words/phrases in academic writing).*

The intention of the company was to expand its workforce. **A proposal was also made** to diversify the backgrounds and abilities of employees.

<u>VS</u>

The company intended to expand its workforce. It also proposed to diversify the backgrounds and abilities of employees.

After the company **made a decision to hire** more disabled workers, its **next step was the construction** of wheelchair ramps and other facilities.

<u>VS</u>

After the company decided to hire more disabled workers, it next constructed wheelchair ramps and other facilities.

The company **is now the leader** among businesses in complying with the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act. Its officers **make speeches** on the act to business groups.

<u>VS</u>

The company now leads other businesses in complying with the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act. Its officers speak on the act to business groups.

Exercise:
Rewrite the following sentences so that their subjects and verbs identify their key actors and actions.

Example: *The issue of students making a competition over grades is a reason why their focus on learning may be lost.*

-> Students who compete over grades may lose their focus on learning.

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1) The work of many heroes was crucial in helping to emancipate the slaves.

2) The contribution of Harriet Tubman, an escaped slave herself, included the guidance of hundreds of other slaves to freedom on the Underground Railroad.

3) A return to slavery was risked by Tubman or possibly death.

4) During the Civil War she was also a carrier of information from the South to the North.

5) After the war needy former slaves were helped by Tubman's raising of money for refugees.

Exercise:
The following sentences are too indirect. Rewrite them so that you avoid unnecessary words.
Example: *Tree structures can be utilized for dynamic storage of terms. ->*
-> Terms can be stored in dynamic tree structures.

1) Local packet transmission was performed to test error rates.

2) Duplication of data leads to reduction in network traffic.

3) The status of the system is such that a number of components are now able to be operated.

4) In respect to the relative costs, the features of memory mean that with regard to systems today disk has greater associated expense for the elapsed time requirements of tasks involving access to stored data.

5) Lincoln's claim that the Civil War was God's punishment of both North and South for slavery appears in the last part of the speech.

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6) The Federalists' argument in regard to the destabilization of government by popular democracy was based on their belief in the tendency of factions to further their self-interest at the expense of the common good.

7) The fear of the CIA was that a recommendation from the president to Congress would be for a reduction in its budget.

Effective order of information

Old before new

- *Readers prefer to read old information first and only then go to new information. This way it is easier for them to understand what you are trying to say.*
- *This works not only in individual sentences but also in paragraphs as a whole*
- *If you begin with the new, it might be too confusing for the reader and you are risking that the reader will be bored by the old later in the text*

How to calculate credits for classes taken in a community colleges is **another** issue that we must consider.

<u>VS</u>

Another issue that we must consider is how to calculate credits for classes taken in a community college.

<u>Exercise:</u>

Revise the following passage to improve the flow of information by putting the old information (in bold) first in each sentence.

Two aims—the recovery of the American economy and the modernization of America

into a military power—were **in the president's mind when he assumed his office.** The

drop in unemployment figures and inflation, and the increase in the GNP testifies to **his**

success in the first. But our increased involvement in international conflict without any

clear set of political goals indicates **less success with the second.** Nevertheless, increases

in the military budget and a good deal of saber rattling **pleased the American voter.**

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- *If you make the beginning too complex, it can be difficult for the reader to understand what you are actually trying to say.*

A sociometric and actuarial analysis of Social Security revenues and disbursements for the last six decades to determine changes in projecting deficits is the subject of this study.

<u>VS.</u>

In this study, we analyze Social Security's revenues and disbursements for the last six decades, using sociometric and actuarial criteria to determine changes in projecting deficits.

Exercise:

Look at your past writing. Does your writing follow the recommendations from this handout? Rewrite if necessary.

Semicolons – additional practice

1. <u>Two independent clauses</u>
Some people write with a word processor**;** others write with a pen or pencil.

2. <u>Clauses connected by conjunctive adverbs or linking expressions</u>
But however they choose to write, people are allowed to make their own decisions**;** as a result, many people swear by their writing methods.

3. <u>Avoiding confusion in a list with commas</u>
There are basically two ways to write: with a pen or pencil, which is inexpensive and easily accessible**;** or by computer and printer, which is more expensive but quick and neat.

4. <u>Avoiding confusion between clauses</u>
Some people write with a word processor, typewriter, or a computer**;** but others, for different reasons, choose to write with a pen or pencil.

Exercise: Decide whether the following sentences need a semicolon or not. Make corrections where necessary.

a) Cows, though their bovine majesty has been on the wane in recent millenia, are still one of the great species of this planet**;** domesticated, yet proud, they ruminate silently as we humans pass tumultuously by.

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b) Because cows smell; they offend me.

c) I like cows, however, I hate the way they smell.

d) The cow is brown, it is also old.

e) However people choose to write, they are allowed to make their own decisions, as a result, many people swear by their writing methods.

f) Some institutions require a lot of financial support from parents some require only a little.

g) There are basically two ways to write: with a pen or pencil, which is inexpensive and easily accessible, or by computer and printer, which is more expensive but quick and neat.

Exercise: Add linking phrases to make the following sentences work.

a) His followers did not respond to his change of heart as he hoped they would; _____ , a substantial amount still remained loyal to his group.

b) _____ , travel information is very important for route planning.

c) We suspect they are trying to hide something, _____ the need for an independent inquiry.

d) He _____ became the chairman of the party.

e) There is a serious problem in the district, _____ unemployment

f) This poses a threat to agriculture and the food chains, and _____ to human health.

g) Some of the studies show positive results, _____ others do not.

h) There is little chance that we will succeed in changing the law. _____ , it is important that we try.

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