




**GSA WRITING
SEMINAR**


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UNIVERSITY OF
NEBRASKA
MEDICAL CENTER




Today's Session

Paragraph, Sentence Organization, and Transitions
Grammar Review
Clarifying Ideas and Avoiding Ambiguity
Eliminating Wordiness & Avoiding Redundancy
Activating Sentences – Active & Passive Voice
Editing and Proofreading Tips



**Paragraph,
Sentence
Organization and
Transitions**

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Paragraph, Sentence Organization, and Transitions

Engage the Reader

- Your paragraphs flow and tell a story.
- Your paper has logical organization.
- Your terms are defined.
- Data and theories are communicated.
- Your sentences are dynamic, active, and *changing*.
- Your sentences are linked using transitions.

Paragraph, Sentence Organization, and Transitions


Keep Your Writing Interesting

- Follow basic sentence and paragraph structure.
- Use the stress position, or the position of emphasis.
- Vary sentence length.
- Let the subject do the work. Activate sentences.
- Avoid expletive constructions (e.g., such as there are, it is – do not add meaning)
- Eliminate redundant phrases

Paragraph, Sentence Organization, and Transitions

Engage the Reader –
Tell a story from beginning to end

- **Introductory Paragraph**
 - Broad, conceptual overview
- **Body**
 - Supporting information
- **Summary Paragraph/Conclusion**
 - Summary/Conclusion



Paragraph, Sentence Organization, and Transitions

Elementary Review – Paragraphs and Sentences

Paragraphs: Introductory Sentence. Body. Conclusions & Transitions.

Sentences: Subject and verb.

- **Subject - Noun or Pronoun** (replaces person place or thing)
- **Verb(s)** – Show Action. Use Action Verbs.
- **Conjunctions** – Connect (and, but, or).

Paragraph, Sentence Organization, and Transitions

Elementary Review – Modifiers

- **Adverbs:** How, when, where, or to what extent the verb performs.
- **Prepositions:** Ex., with, at, by, to, in, for, from, etc. Note, correct usage of 'of' and 'for'
- **Adjectives:** What kind? Which one? How many?
 - Avoid Nouns as Adjectives – add prepositional phrases. *Examples.*
 - *Plant disease diagnosis requires both traditional and new techniques.*
 - *The diagnosis of diseases of plants requires both traditional and new techniques.*
 - *The diagnosis of plant disease requires both traditional and new techniques.*

Paragraph, Sentence Organization, and Transitions

Engaging the Reader - Transitions

For continuing a common line of reasoning
consequently, furthermore, additionally, also...

To change line of reasoning
however, on the other hand, but, yet, nevertheless, despite...

Contrast and Comparison
contrast, conversely, instead, likewise, on one hand, similarly...

Emphasis
above all, chiefly, with attention to, especially, particularly, singularly...

Exemplifying
chiefly, especially, for instance, in particular, markedly, namely, including...

Exception
aside from, barring, beside, except, excepting, excluding, save...

Paragraph, Sentence Organization, and Transitions

Engaging the Reader - Transitions

Consequence
accordingly, as a result, consequently, for this reason, hence

Generalizing
as a rule, as usual, for the most part, generally, usually

Illustration
for example, for instance, for one thing, as an illustration, as an example,

Similarity
comparatively, coupled with, correspondingly, identically, likewise, similar

Restatement
in essence, in other words, namely, that is, that is to say, in short, in brief

Sequence
at first, first of all, to begin with, in the first place, at the same time, for now,


Paragraph, Sentence Organization, and Transitions

Stress Position

- Subject = Old Information
- Verb = Action
- **Stress Position** = New Information
 - *Examples:*
 - Although the treatment is highly effective, it has significant side effects.
 - Although the treatment has significant side effects, it is highly effective.
 - The treatment has significant side effects, but it is highly effective.


Grammar Review

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 **Grammar Review**

Magnitude v. Elevation
higher = elevation
increased = more


Logic v. Time
although, but, whereas = logic
since, as = time
because = logic
subsequently = time
consequently = logic

 **Grammar Review**

Singular v. Plural
phenomena = plural
phenomenon = singular
data = plural
datum = singular
criteria = plural
criterion = singular

Affect and Effect
affect = verb
effect = noun


Compliment and Complement
Compliment = Positive Statement
Complement = Adds to

 **Grammar Review**

Which & That
Which follows commas. Introduces non-essential clauses
 •The transmembrane protein CD22, which is a negative regulator of cellular signaling ...


That does not follow commas. Introduces essential clauses
 •By examining the pathway that negatively regulates cellular signaling, ...

i.e. & e.g.
i.e. = *id est*. That is.
 •Nucleic acids (*i.e.*, DNA and RNA)
e.g. = *exempli grati*. For example.
 •Macromolecules (*e.g.*, nucleic acids)

 **Grammar Review**


Parallel Verb Tense

- We will be testing our hypothesis using innovative methods to examine the data after we have analyzed it quantitatively.
- Using innovative methods, we will thoroughly test our hypothesis, examine the data, and quantitatively analyze our results.

 **Grammar Review**


Comma Usage

- **Can be used in place of parentheses.**
 - Cytokines (small cell-signaling protein molecules) pair to these receptors.
 - Cytokines, which are small cell-signaling protein molecules, pair to these ...
- **Used before 'which'**
- **Used before conjunction separating two *complete* statements. *Note: 'however' is not a connection***
- **Used after transition words (e.g., Furthermore, Next,)**
- **Used to separate strings of nouns (DNA, RNA, and tRNA)**
- ***Before Including.* Decided individually because a comma changes the meaning.**

 **Grammar Review**

Hyphen: Punctuation Rules
Used for compound noun phrases

- Use between nouns of equal importance (eye-opener)
- Use between two numbers spelled out (e.g., twenty-four)
- Use to link two nouns or words that modify another noun (e.g., real-time experiment, well-run practices)
- *Note, modifiers ending in 'ly' are not typically hyphenated.*

 **Grammar Review**


Hyphens: Clarify Longer Clauses

Three-hundred-year-old trees are an indeterminate number of trees that are 300 years old.
Three hundred-year-old trees are three trees that are 100 years old.
Three hundred year-old trees are 300 trees that are 1 year old.

Disease causing poor nutrition: A disease that causes poor nutrition
Disease-causing poor nutrition: Poor nutrition that causes disease

Multiple extra cellular signals: Many additional cellular signals
Multiple extra-cellular signals: Many signals that are outside the cell

Cancer causing mutagenesis: Cancer that causes mutagenesis
Cancer-causing mutagenesis: Mutagenesis that causes cancer



Clarifying Ideas & Avoiding Ambiguity

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Clarifying Ideas & Avoiding Ambiguity

Avoid Long Compound Noun Strings (or “Adjective Noun Strings”)

Be cautious when using long strings of nouns.

Noun Strings can form multiple meanings.

Properly use hyphens.

Use prepositions to break into modifying units.

To unravel, read the phrase backwards.

Clarifying Ideas & Avoiding Ambiguity

Revising Adjective Noun Strings

Original: Plant Disease Diagnosis Technology has become sophisticated.

Revision One: The technology of plant disease diagnosis has become sophisticated.

Revision Two: The technology of the diagnosis of diseases of plants has become sophisticated.

Clarifying Ideas & Avoiding Ambiguity

Unraveling Noun Strings: Examples

- building radon source location method
- *method for locating the source of radon in buildings*
- predicted ambient total suspended particulate concentrations
- *the predicted total concentration of ambient suspended*

Clarifying Ideas & Avoiding Ambiguity

Unraveling Noun Strings: Examples Cond.

- hospital employee relations improvement program
- *program to improve relations among hospital employees*
- polluted mine drainage technique preliminary analysis
- *a preliminary analysis of techniques for draining polluted mines*

Clarifying Ideas & Avoiding Ambiguity
Prepositional Phrases

Prepositions show a relationship between a noun or a pronoun and some other word in the sentence and modify.

Overuse of prepositional phrases can wear on your reader because he or she must put material on hold while determining what the phrases modify.

Clarifying Ideas & Avoiding Ambiguity
Reducing Prepositions Per Sentence

Original: An understanding of these recurring cytogenetic changes has led to the molecular dissection of specific chromosomal regions and has resulted in the isolation and cloning of various proto-oncogenes

Revision: Because we better understand these recurring cytogenetic changes, specific chromosomal regions have been molecularly dissected resulting in isolation and cloning of various proto-oncogenes

Eliminating Wordiness & Avoiding Redundancy

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Eliminating Wordiness & Avoiding Redundancy

Redundant Phrases

- Past History
- Completely eliminate
- Necessary prerequisite
- Refer back
- Absolutely essential
- actual facts
- Advance forward
- Advance planning
- Basic fundamentals
- Close proximity
- Collaborate together
- Desirable benefits
- Entirely eliminate
- Eradicate completely
- Fellow colleague
- Filled to capacity
- Final outcome
- Had done previously
- Integrate together
- Joint collaboration
- Knowledgeable experts
- Major feat/major breakthrough
- Merge together
- Originally created
- Past experience
- Reason is because
- Repeat again
- Revert back
- Same exact
- Single unit
- Slow speed
- Still persists

<http://grammar.about.com/od/words/a/redundancies.htm>

Eliminating Wordiness & Avoiding Redundancy

Activating Verbs

Is aware of/has knowledge of ... *knows*

Is taking ... *takes*

Are indicative of ... *indicate*

Are suggestive of ... *suggest*

In the event ... *if*

Eliminating Wordiness & Avoiding Redundancy

Phrases That You Can Omit

- Have a tendency to
- In the event that
- Manner
- In the process of
- All things considered
- Has the ability to
- As far as ___ is concerned
- In light of the fact that
- By means of
- For all intents and purposes
- Type of
- It seems that
- In the nature of
- At the same time as

Activating Sentences – Active and Passive Voice

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Activating Sentences – Active and Passive Voice

Let the Subject Do the Work

- **Keep subject and verb close.**

DNA polymerase gamma complex, which is composed of a 140 kDa catalytic DNA polymerase encoded by the POLG gene and a 55 kDa accessory subunit encoded by the POLG2 gene, replicates Mitochondrial DNA.

Mitochondrial DNA is replicated by the DNA polymerase gamma complex, which is.... ~or~ The DNA polymerase gamma complex replicates ...

- **Use active verbs and activate sentences.**

We will develop a cell line - rather than "A cell line will be developed."

The ICP data show - rather than "It can be seen from the ICP data..."

- **Avoid gerunds, i.e., verbs ending in 'ing'.**

Examples of active verbs: <http://www.cvisual.com/film-techniques/writer-action-verb-list.pdf>

Activating Sentences – Active and Passive Voice

Use Strong Action Words

Examples:

accelerate, compile, compose, delineate, describe, detect, determine, develop, elevate, evaluate, expand, formulate, generate, hypothesize, illustrate, implement, induce, inflict, instigate, interpret, isolate, maintain, manipulate, perform, placate, predict, prepare, prescribe, produce, promote, prompt, propel, protect, reduce, repair, research, support, synthesize, target, test, transfer, undertake, utilize, yield ...

Activating Sentences – Active and Passive Voice

Tense vs. Voice

Tense – Time. Past, Present, Future.

Voice – Relationship between Subject and Object. Who Does What.

Linking Verb – Neither Active or Passive (to be).

Activating Sentences – Active and Passive Voice

<u>Active Voice</u>	<u>Passive Voice</u>
<u>Subject – Verb - Object</u>	<u>Object – Verb – By Subject</u>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasizes the performer/subject. The subject is doing the action. The sentence is clear and dynamic. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasizes the object or recipient. Uses a form of the verb <u>to be</u> followed by a past participle. Can be indirect and wordy. Can be challenging to read.

Activating Sentences – Active and Passive Voice


Converting Passive to Active Voice

Passive Sentence:

- (Noun) (Verb phrase) By (Noun)
- The True Subject Is At The End**

- Find the true subject.
- Find the verb.
- Organize into subject-verb structure.


*Ex: The data were examined by our group.
Our group examined the data.*

 **Activating Sentences – Active and Passive Voice**

Converting Passive to Active Voice

The alcohol-dependent loss in many of the low molecular weight oxidative phosphorylation proteins **was prevented by** betaine supplementation.


Betaine supplementation **prevented** the alcohol-dependent loss in many of the low molecular weight oxidative phosphorylation proteins.

 **Activating Sentences – Active and Passive Voice**

Converting Passive to Active Voice

There were a number of points of discussion on the project and some concerns **were pointed out by** the reviewers.


The reviewers **pointed out** a number of points of discussion on the project and some concerns.

 **Activating Sentences – Active and Passive Voice**

Converting Passive to Active Voice

They **are** immunodominant proteins **released by** hookworms in their transition from free living to parasitism.

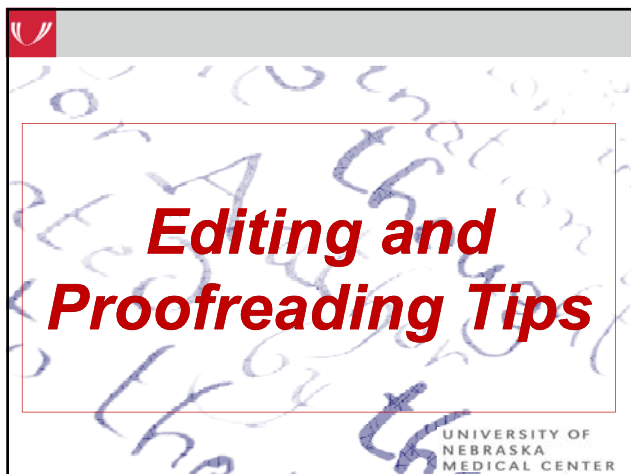
In their transition from free living to parasitism, hookworms **release** immunodominant proteins.

 **Activating Sentences – Active and Passive Voice**

Argument for the Passive Voice

Passive Voice redirects attention to the action (or the recipient):

- The performer is unknown, irrelevant, or obvious.
- The performer is less important than the action.
- The recipient is the main topic.



Editing and Proofreading Tips

Editing and Proofreading Tips

- Put the paper aside for awhile.
- Edit and proofread in blocks of time.
- Try changing the font and formatting.
- Use a highlighter to mark changes.
- Watch 'From' v 'Form' (grammar check may not catch it).
- Ctrl F for double spaces.

Editing and Proofreading Tips

Checklist

- ✓ Read out loud.
- ✓ Replace/unravel long noun phrases.
- ✓ Is your train of thought clear?
- ✓ Check sentence variety.
- ✓ Check that you do not use the same words and phrases over and over (thesaurus.com).
- ✓ Precise word choices.

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