Clarity and Concision
Presented by the Libraries and the Eberly Writing Studio
Pre-Workshop Survey

http://tinyurl.com/yahwoxko
Eberly Writing Studio
All WVU students have the opportunity to work one-on-one with a trained peer consultant on everything from note-taking and pre-writing strategies to revision, editing, and effective presentation techniques.
Workshop Agenda

• Tip 1: Sentence Level Clarity
• Tip 2: Paragraph Level Clarity/Cohesion
• Tip 3: Style Choices - Passive Voice
Feedback on Writing

- ?
- awk.
- During college, multiple endeavors expanded upon this growing **my** interest in community health and leadership **grew**.
The fundamental purpose of scientific discourse is not the mere presentation of information and thought, but rather its actual communication. It does not matter how pleased an author might be to have converted all the right data into sentences and paragraphs; it matters only whether a large majority of the reading audience accurately perceives what the author had in mind.

Gopen and Swan’s “The Science of Scientific Writing.”
Sentence Level Clarity

Part of our evidence establishing that the p65 product was derived from uncleaved FAT1 and not from further proteolytic processing of the cleaved FAT1 heterodimer was obtained by the use of the furin-defective LoVo cells.

Read the following sentence. Can you summarize it?
This sentence is hard to read. Why do you think so?
Could benefit from commas/punctuation.
Background knowledge
Discipline specific jargon

Another answer: verb is buried.

Subject distant from verb

Part of our evidence establishing that the p65 product was derived from uncleaved FAT1 and not from further proteolytic processing of the cleaved FAT1 heterodimer was obtained by the use of the furin-defective LoVo cells.
Complete sentences have subjects, verbs, and objects (we are not paying attention to objects today). The subject names what the sentence is about and the verb tells us what the subject does or is.

Tip 1: Place verbs near subjects

S V
The boy ran.

Readers appreciate when the subject and verb are close together.
Subjects near verbs: Popular Example

Recently, Dr. Piombino-Mascalí and his colleagues have uncovered remnants of the smallpox virus in one of the mummies, gaining new insights into the origins of a deadly scourge that killed an estimated 300 million people in the 20th century alone.

Recent NYT article “The Mummies’ Medical Secrets? They’re Perfectly Preserved” retrieved June 2, 2017
General circulation models and downscaled regional models exhibit persistent biases in deep convective initiation location and timing, cloud top height, stratiform area and precipitation fraction, and anvil coverage.

“Cloud, Aerosol, and Complex Terrain Interactions (CACTI) Preliminary Science Plan”


Publication Date:
2017-02-01

Publisher:
ARM Climate Research Facility, Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, Richland, WA
Subjects distant from verbs

Part of our evidence establishing that the p65 product was derived from uncleaved FAT1 and not from further proteolytic processing of the cleaved FAT1 heterodimer was obtained by the use of the furin-defective LoVo cells.

Sentence is 36 words long, and there are 25 words between the subject and the verb. If readers have to wade through more than 6 or 7 words before they see the verb, they may forget the subject of the sentence and have to reread the sentence. Rereading of that sort impedes understanding/comprehension.
How to find the **S & V**

**S**: Who or what is doing the action?

**V**: What is the subject doing or feeling?

**Part** of our evidence establishing that the p65 product was derived from uncleaved FAT1 and not from further proteolytic processing of the cleaved FAT1 heterodimer **was obtained** by the use of the furin-defective LoVo cells.
First you have to figure out what’s going on in the sentence: The researchers believed that if they used one process, they would attain a desired result, but instead the another process yielded the desired result.
The p65 product was not derived from the further proteolytic processing of cleaved FAT1 heterodimer. Instead, p65 was derived from uncleaved FAT1 when furin-defective LoVo cells were used.

Adapted from p. 20 of *The Science of Scientific Writing*
Tip 2: Begin with Known Information; End with New Information

Readers can more easily grasp your content if you place information where they expect to find it.

- Place known information at the beginning of your sentence
- Place new information at the end of your sentence.

From Gopen and Swann’s “The Science of Scientific Writing
Known/New: Popular Example

Hundreds of skeletons have lain scattered around a crypt beneath a church in Vilnius, Lithuania, for centuries. But 23 of these remains are unlike the rest: Flesh wraps their bones, clothes cover their skin, and organs still fill their insides. They are mummies, and since they were recovered about five years ago, scientists have investigated their secrets, seeking insights into the lives of people in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries and the diseases they suffered.

“They are so well preserved that they almost look alive,” said Dario Piombino-Mascal, an anthropologist from Italy who has studied the mummies since 2011. Recently, Dr. Piombino-Mascal and his colleagues have uncovered remnants of the smallpox virus...
Known/New: Technical Example

The U.S. government, along with other governments, private corporations and organizations, invests significantly in research, development, demonstration and deployment (RDD&D) activities **KNOWN INFORMATION** in clean energy technologies, in part to achieve the goal of a clean, secure, and reliable energy systems **NEW INFORMATION**. While specific outcomes and breakthroughs resulting from RDD&D investment are unpredictable, it can be instructive to explore the potential impacts of clean energy RDD&D activities in the power sector and to place those impacts in the context of current and anticipated market trends. **This analysis builds on and leverages analysis by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) titled “Energy CO₂ Emissions Impacts of Clean Energy Technology Innovation and Policy.”** Similar to the DOE...

From Impact of Clean Energy R & D on the US Power Sector:
Activity 2
Key

[7] The U.S. power sector has undergone significant changes in recent years, as seen in Figure 1. [5] Substantial growth in natural gas generation has occurred over the most-recent decade, along with growth in wind and solar renewables and a sharp decline in coal generation. [2] After decades of continual growth, electricity sales have grown more solely over the last decade. [4] Electricity sales have grown at a compound annual rate of 0.27% since 2006 compared with annual growth rates typically in the range of 1% - 8% from 1960 to 2005 (EIA 2016c). [6] The combination of these trends has led to decreasing carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions from the power sector to levels not observed since 1993 (EIA 2016d). [3] These trends have been driven by reductions in the cost and performance of specific generation technologies, supporting policies, and market factors. [1] Many of these recent changes in the power sector have been enabled by previous investments in research, development, demonstration, and deployment (RDD&D) activities funded by the U.S. federal government, some state governments, other countries, private sector corporations, and other non-governmental organizations.
Known/New on a Macro Scale

The know/new strategy also works at the paragraph level: After reading the following topic sentences, what do you think paragraph will cover?

- The amount of renewable generation has been growing in recent years and reached 13.8% of total generation in 2013.
- Renewable generation shares also tend to plateau in the long term, as there are diminishing returns for both improved cost and performance of renewable technologies...
Known/New on a Macro Scale

After reading the section headings, what do you think will be covered?
• Renewables
• Natural Gas Generation
• Electricity System Cost
Tip 3: Passive Voice

What is passive voice?

- Samples were cooled on ice, returned to Arizona State University, and frozen until used.
- The number of animals in each chamber was then counted in one of two ways.

Subject of sentence is receiving the action rather than doing the action.

Samples from p. 4 of Writing Science in Plain English
Why is passive voice used?
Reasons for Passive Voice

Objectivity or Detachment
- *Data were obtained.*
- *Locust Ringer was applied periodically to keep the preparation moist.*

- action is important, but who did it is not.
Reasons for Passive Voice

To express a general truth:
• *Passive voice is used for reasons of style and tone*
Reasons for Passive Voice

When the actor is unknown:
• *The stone structure was built in 1787.*
Reasons for Passive Voice

To avoid blame or responsibility

- *Mistakes were made*
When not to use the passive voice

Original: *A number of things are revealed by these results.*

Revised: *The results reveal a number of things.*

eexample from: http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/passive-voice/

When the actor/subject is specified in the sentence via the word “by”
Take Aways

• Tip 1: Keep subjects close to their verbs.
• Tip 2: Build cohesion using known/new.
• Tip 3: Be intentional in your use of passive voice.
Post-Workshop Survey

http://tinyurl.com/ycxk2qs7
Visit the Eberly Writing Studio

SUMMER HOURS
M & W - 3:00 PM - 5:00 PM
T, TH, & F - 10:30 AM - 2:30 PM
LOCATION
G02 Colson Hall
WEBSITE
http://speakwrite.wvu.edu/writing-studio
Next Workshop

Writing Ethics: Monday, June 19
3:00 PM & 4:00 PM

For more details:
libguides.wvu.edu/technicalwriting
Works Cited


