Sharpen Your Style

Dr. Harvey Lillywhite
Writing is 90% about the CONTENT and 10% about the PRESENTATION...
...the way a cargo ship is 90% about the cargo and 10% about the ship (unless the ship sinks)
an area of shared interest between reader and writer

7 Systems in any Text Affect Usefulness and Readability

The HOCs—Higher Order Concerns
• Content (questions, answers, support)
• Organization (answer first, middle, last?)
• Document Design (previews, headings)

The LOCs—Lower Order Concerns
• PARAGRAPHS (topic first, middle, last?)
• SENTENCES (logical sentence core)
• Word Choices (accuracy, tone)
• Mechanics (punctuation, spelling, etc.)
Paragraph Shapes

(a) deductive       (b) hybrid       (c) inductive  (d) ???
Anatomy of the TOPIC SENTENCE

SUBJECT / PREDICATE

WHAT? / What About It?

The expense / was unsupportable.
The NWS observes the weather to safeguard the public. The NWS issues forecasts through both regional and local offices. These local forecasts cost the NWS about $2.6 million annually. Such an expense is questionable because local forecasts nearly duplicate regional forecasts.
Be sure to manage the sentence core.

**SUBJECT**  |  **VERB**  |  **OBJECT**
---|---|---
Who  |  is doing what  |  to whom?

Auditors  |  gave  |  comments.
The potential for inconsistent penalty administration within a decentralized management structure is exacerbated by the complexity of the penalty process within the IRS???
## IRS Sentence Revised

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTORS</th>
<th>ACTIONS</th>
<th>RECEIVERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The IRS</td>
<td>is potentially administering</td>
<td>penalties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>inconsistently</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**BECAUSE**

- it has a decentralized management structure and a complex **penalty process**.
The Wordiness Virus

1. **Weak Verb**—fails to state the true action

2. **Nominalization**—uses a noun that could have been a verb

3. **Misplaced or Missing ACTOR**—fails to appear as the grammatical subject (or has been omitted)

4. **Too Many Prepositional Phrases**—3+

5. **Redundancy**—actual or implied.
COORDINATION
Two clauses joined by coordination are given equal weight.

The fertilizer program functions on a self-sustaining basis, and all costs must be passed along to the farmer.

SUBORDINATION
Two clauses joined by subordination are given unequal weight.

Because the fertilizer program functions on a self-sustaining basis, all costs must be passed along to the farmer.
Which of these sentences expresses more confidence that the work can be completed?
(A) While travel funds remain limited, much can be accomplished with communication technology.

(B) While much can be accomplished with communication technology, travel funds remain limited.

Which of these sentences places greater emphasis on the Postal Service’s progress?
(A) Despite the barriers the U.S. Postal Service faces to streamline operations, it has undertaken significant modernization efforts.

(B) Despite undertaking significant modernization efforts, the U.S. Postal Service faces barriers in streamlining operations.
Although NSA funded it fully, the program did not achieve desired results.

The program did not achieve desired results, although NSA funded it fully.
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200-page ebook (lots of pictures)

Mindful Writing at Work

$9.97

available at QCGwrite.com