

Developing Your Writing Style

When you write, it's not just what you're writing about that matters; how you communicate your ideas also affects how well your audience receives your message.

Aim for your writing to be:

- Concise
- Informative
- Interesting
- Coherent

The way you structure your sentences and organize your paragraphs can help your reader follow your argument, understand your analysis, and enjoy your writing.

Good writers are able to do the following:

- **coordinate or subordinate ideas appropriately**
 - coordinating and subordinating ideas demonstrates the links in your thinking and helps your reader follow your line of argument
- **reduce wordiness**
 - eliminating unnecessary words communicates your ideas directly and concisely
- **use active and passive voice to reflect the important subject matter**
 - keeping the emphasis on the main topic as the subject of your sentence maintains unity, tone, and coherence in your writing

Coordinating and Subordinating Ideas:

- **Coordinate ideas that are equally important and related** in your sentences and paragraphs
- Coordinating can be done in two ways:
 1. Linking sentences (using semicolons and/or conjunctions)
 - ☒ The family huddled around the campfire. A storm was brewing in the distance. They would have to retire to the tent.
 - ✓ A storm brewed in the distance, and the family huddled around the campfire; they would soon have to retire to the tent.
 2. Using grammatically parallel form (for ideas or elements that appear together in either a sentence or paragraph)
 - ☒ Krystal likes biking, shopping, and to sleep.
 - ✓ Krystal likes biking, shopping, and sleeping.
 - ✓ Krystal likes to bike, to shop, and to sleep.

- **Subordinate ideas to show that a logical relationship exists between them** by creating dependent clauses:
 - ☒ The student went to the library yesterday. She was unable to find any sources on her topic. She will talk to her professor about an extension for her assignment.
 - ✓ Because the student was unable to find any sources when she went to the library yesterday, she will talk to her professor about an extension for her assignment.

Reducing Wordiness:

- Aim for your writing to be **direct and concise**:
 - **Eliminate unnecessary words** that are repetitive or redundant
 - **Watch for qualifiers** in your writing that make your writing appear less confident
 - Make sure that you **use words that are understandable**. Not only can using too many big words make your writing difficult to understand, misusing them undermines your argument because you appear less knowledgeable.
- ☒ It seems to me that the answer to the question before us is that we should often be considerate of the ideological beliefs of those whose learned opinions are significantly disparate from ours.
- ✓ We should strive to be considerate of the ideologies that others have learned even though those beliefs differ from our own.

Using Active and Passive Voice:

- When deciding whether to use the active or passive voice, **think about where you want to place the focus**. Consider the following examples:
 - The lack of rain seriously affected the water levels of the lakes in Alberta.
 - In this sentence, the emphasis is on the lack of rain as the main focus for the sentence. Using the active voice here makes sense if you are discussing the consequences of a lack of rain.
 - The water levels of the lakes in Alberta were seriously affected by the lack of rain.
 - This sentence contains all the same information, but is constructed using the passive voice. The water levels were affected; they were not doing the affecting. This use of the passive voice makes sense if you are discussing lake water levels as the main focus of the paragraph or paper and not the lack of rain.