

Clarity and Concision Part IV: Exercises

Paula Rawlins, Assistant Director, UGA Writing Center

Christina Lee, GradsWrite Studio Graduate Writing Consultant

University of Georgia Writing Center

WRITINGCENTER@UGA.EDU



Writing Center

Franklin College of Arts and Sciences

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Several of the exercises included in this PowerPoint come from the sources listed to the right.

See these resources for more help with the issues discussed in this series, along with other writing topics!

- ▶ Caplan, Nigel A. *Grammar Choices for Graduate and Professional Writers*. Second ed. University of Michigan, 2019.
- ▶ Lunsford, Andrea A. *The St. Martin's Handbook*. Seventh ed. Bedford, 2011.

Let's Practice!





Look for redundant language and examples of passive voice in the following paragraph. How would you revise?

Exercise 1: Revise the following paragraph to eliminate unnecessary words.

As dogs became tamed and domesticated by humans over many thousands of years, the canine species underwent an evolution into hundreds of breeds designed to perform particular, specific tasks, such as pulling sleds and guarding sheep. Over time, there was a decreased need for many breeds. For example, as humans evolved from hunter-gatherers into farmers, it was no longer necessary for them to own hunting dogs. |

One Solution...

Exercise 1: Revise the following paragraph to eliminate unnecessary words.

As humans domesticated dogs over thousands of years, the canine species evolved into hundreds of breeds designed to perform specific tasks, such as pulling sleds and guarding sheep. Eventually, the need for many breeds decreased. For example, as humans evolved from hunter-gatherers into farmers, they no longer needed hunting dogs.



This exercise provides examples of sentences that might prove best written in the passive voice.

Exercise 2: Improve these sentences by rewriting them in the passive voice. Why is the passive voice sometimes more effective?

1. People often ignore online ads.
2. Many experts believe that the internet has dramatically changed society.

Suggested Solutions

Exercise 2: Improve these sentences by rewriting them in the passive voice. Why is the passive voice sometimes more effective?

1. People often ignore online ads. Online ads are often ignored.

2. Many experts believe that the internet has dramatically changed society. Society has dramatically

changed because of the internet. OR The internet has dramatically changed society.

Keep in mind that no matter which version of this second sentence you chose, it would need to be followed by cited evidence to support your claim, so doing away with “many experts” should not cause a problem.

Rewriting for the active voice

Exercise 3: Rewrite the following sentences so that they use active voice.

1. Healthy eating is thought to lead to a longer life.
2. Eating fish is linked to higher IQs, according to a recent study.

Suggested Solutions

Exercise 3: Correct the errors in the form and use of the passive and active voice in these sentences.

1. Healthy eating is thought to lead to a longer life. Healthy eating leads to a longer life.

2. Eating fish is linked to a higher IQ, according to a recent study. A recent study links eating fish to a higher IQ.

Fill-in-the-blank parallelism

Exercise 4: Complete the following sentences with your own ideas, paying attention to parallel form.

1. The authors attempted to identify, study, and _____ the phenomenon.
2. Good teachers correct errors efficiently, consistently, and _____.
3. The authors concluded that neither _____
nor _____ was/were effective.



Fixing errors in parallelism

Exercise 5: Find and correct errors in parallel structure in the following sentences.

1. People who have a sense of purpose in their life tend to make healthier lifestyle choices and reporting feeling better about their health.
2. Participants' sense of purpose was positively associated with their reports of physical activity, good nutrition, and they sleep well.
3. Future research should disentangle whether the specific health behaviors are directly responsible for better health or they are simply indicators for other health behaviors.

Possible Solutions

Exercise 5: Find and correct errors in parallel structure in the following sentences.

1. People who have a sense of purpose in their life tend to make healthier lifestyle choices and **reporting** report feeling better about their health.

2. Participants' sense of purpose was positively associated with their reports of physical activity, good nutrition, and **they sleep well.** adequate sleep.

3. Future research should disentangle whether the specific health behaviors are directly responsible for better health or **they are** simply indicators for other health behaviors. |

An example of possible solutions

Exercise 4: Complete the following sentences with your own ideas, paying attention to parallel form.

1. The authors attempted to identify, study, and explain the phenomenon.

2. Good teachers correct errors efficiently, consistently, and kindly.

3. The authors concluded that neither listening to music

talking to counselors was/~~were~~ effective.

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