

REVISION OF LANGUAGE AND STYLE

First Aid for reducing complex sentence structures:

1. List all the different aspects mentioned in the complex sentence.
2. What is your main statement?
3. Which aspects are redundant?
4. Put the main statement at the beginning of the sentence.

Bring the other ideas and aspects in a logical order and add them if necessary with conjunctions.

Tips for paragraphs

Every paragraph contains one idea. To connect ideas, you need to connect the paragraphs through language. Paragraphs can have different lengths, depending on how much you have to say about one topic.

The first sentence of each paragraph should be your topic sentence – they contain your topic for this one paragraph. It shows the reader what this paragraph will talk about.

Occasionally the first sentence is a summary of the paragraph before, but the next sentence is your topic sentence.

Tips for a clear sentence structure

Every new and important aspect should be presented in a new sentence. General information can be grouped together to concentrate more on the relevant information.

Use more verbs instead of nouns. English is a dynamic language where verbs are more pronounced than nouns. Nevertheless, specialist vocabulary is important, but they are usually nouns. Try to find a good balance.

- Starting a sentence with a gerund signals action. The structure “verb + -ing + object” begins the sentence with an active process and makes it dynamic.
- It is important that that verb and noun agree in number with each other.

The boys **have** a pizza. The girl **has** a book.

- When you start a sentence using a certain grammatical structure, you must keep to that same structure throughout the sentence.

I love **eating** pizza, **reading** thrillers, and **riding** my bike.

- Be consistent in your tenses and do not change between present and past tense.

It is always important to have a clear cut sentence structure.

- **Avoid dangling (unrelated) participles:** The present participle is the -ing form of the verb (e.g., laughing) and the past participle usually ends in -ed (e.g., laughed). When you use participles, you must make it clear to which word it relates. While Jane was lying on the sofa reading a book, the back door opened silently.

- **Avoid sentence fragments:** Sentence fragments are incomplete sentences. They are often pieces of sentences that have been separated from the rest of the sentence by a full stop. Fragments do not make sense on their own. There are two main types of sentence fragments.

	The fragment has no subject or verb.	The fragment adds extra information to the main sentence and often starts with “which”.
✗	Running down the street	The student needed to rewrite her assignment. Which is why she was not at the party.
✓	The child was running down the street.	The student needed to rewrite her assignment, which is why she was not at the party.

Tips for a clear use of words

Repetitions:

Academic terms need to be repeated, but for non-academic terms you can find synonyms.

Fillers:

Please check: Will the meaning of the sentence change, if I delete this word or structure?
not – delete the word or structure!

Pronouns:

Be careful when using the pronouns *it*, *they* and *this*. They can cause confusion if it is not clear to which word they refer.

Abbreviations:

When using abbreviations, be sure to explain them when you use them the first time.

Language of aims and objectives:

This ...article	...essay	... aims to...	...explores...	...argues...
...book	...research	...paper	...analyses...	...examines...
...report	...study	...survey	...demonstratesshows... ...illustrates...

Tips for your “voice”

It is a widely discussed topic if scientific language should be objective and if so how much of this objective language is justified. Increasing numbers of academic disciplines now use the first person ‘I’ or ‘we’ to describe their research. If you are presenting your own research in a paper, it is obvious to use “I” or “we”. Nevertheless, the passive voice is used often as well to describe processes or other aspects.

Most published articles in the natural sciences today use a mix of both ‘we’ and the passive voice, which creates a mix of more dynamic parts (the active voice) and slower parts (the passive voice).

In order to avoid both, you can make your chapter the agent, “This chapter aims to show...”.

Sources following:

Macgilchrist, Felicitas (2014): Academic Writing. Paderborn: UTB. Te Aho A Māui, Eastern Institute of Technology. Library and Learning Services. Study Guides. http://www2.eit.ac.nz/library/lis_guides.html

Concept: Writing Centre of TU Dresden, 2016.

Further information on our support services, writing advice, workshops, writing marathon, etc. on our website: www.tu-dresden.de/deinstudienerfolg/szd