CHAPTER 4

The Fine Art of Sentencing

WHO DID WHAT? — AND HOW?
CHAPTER 4

Many of us enjoy a good mystery. Someone has done something dastardly (or at least interesting), and the detectives must figure out who did it and how. Why, when, and where usually emerge as well. But the basic beginning is the perpetrator and the deed.

Putting information together in a sentence works the same way. We begin by asking who and how, then select words to express it and punctuation to enhance it. We assemble the rest of the relevant information and place it in clear logical positions to build and develop our ideas.

Sentence structure is based on communicating meaning, and punctuation is based on sentence structure. It’s that simple. Grammar is a little more rule bound, but understanding structure is important to handling grammar as well.

This chapter will help you in exploring the mystery of sentencing. Since the style, stance and conventions of academic writing may not be those you are most familiar with, a brief discussion of appropriate style will lead off the chapter. Some processes and hints for putting together the sentence (aligning the who, what and how) will follow. Since punctuation is based on the alignment of sentence elements, common uses and misuses of commas, semicolons, colons, and dashes will be discussed in the context of the sentence. (Other punctuation challenges will be treated in following chapters.) Once the basics are in order, it’s time to trim off the excesses that sometimes make social science writing difficult for a reader to process. So this chapter ends with a quick guide for getting rid of wordiness and making your sentences efficient and clear.

Representing Yourself

Many of us find great consolation in Henry David Thoreau’s (1854/1980) oft-quoted statement that if a man is out of step with his fellows, perhaps “it is because he hears a different drummer” (p. 216). There are endeavors in which listening to a different drummer is just fine (and a lot of fun), but academic paper, thesis, and dissertation writing isn’t one of them. Certain expectations have to be met—among them, basic academic style.
DON'T PRESENT A FORMAL CASE IN YOUR CASUAL CLOTHES

Style in writing is like style in clothing. It will vary according to situation, purpose, and audience. To violate what is appropriate may feel exhilarating, but it is risky. You can be comfortable, casual, and "yourself" when you're jogging or picnicking, but when you're presenting yourself as a scholar, you're expected to adopt a scholar's style.

PRESENT YOURSELF AS COMPETENT PROFESSIONAL

Yes, this book is written in a blue denim tone and style. It was intended for an audience of students (graduate and undergraduate) who have been feeling intimidated by the three-piece-business-suit style of the regular publication manual. Its purpose is to downshift style to make conventions easier to understand. If the author wore sophisticated verbal attire, you'd close it immediately.

But your academic paper, thesis or dissertation is intended for academic professionals, whose ranks you are attempting to join. You need to come across as a professional addressing professionals. You don't have to use the verbal equivalent of a three-piece business suit or tipsy high heels, but you do need a coat and tie (if you're male) or an appropriately tailored skirted outfit (if you're not). Be conservative—most of your committee is probably over 30.

- Use a tone that is objective, not personal; avoid words that reflect subjective feelings and emotions. Words like feel and think are not appropriate, even when discussing what others have written (Szuchman, 2002).
- Avoid slang or other popular conversational usage—even words like awesome or terrific mark you as being too informal or frivolous.
- Avoid contractions or shortened word forms. Use only those abbreviations that are accepted in the professional literature of the field (used in top-tier professional journals).
- Use conservative grammar. For example, avoid leaving out relative pronouns such as "the hypothesis that the researcher hoped to prove." You can get by with ignoring the who/whom distinction in a personal essay, but don't try it on the dissertation.
• Use professional terminology when needed and appropriate, but don't use "big words" just to be using them. Avoid buzz words, particularly those with very imprecise meanings.

• Use clear, direct sentences. Vary sentence length. As with paragraphs, too many short sentences in sequence can be choppy, but too many long ones in sequence can be asphyxiating. Sentences do not have to be messy in order to convey complex meanings.

Making Your Case and Nailing It with a Sentence

Conversational sentences are sloppily put together. We speak as we compose (or someone will interrupt us and attempt to finish the sentence—and usually get it wrong). We don't have time to clarify ideas and put important elements in strategic positions. And the listener (who is focusing more on his or her own response than on what we are saying) doesn't have the time or the concentration to be sensitive to our elements and positions anyway.

But writing is different. We do have time to put things together carefully and purposefully, and the reader can (or should) be sensitive to the way things are expressed. Since we do not have the instant feedback or the face-to-face clarification opportunities that we have in conversation, deliberate writing and careful reading become very important, particularly when we are dealing with important or complex information.

In order to construct a clear and purposeful English sentence, you need to know what you're constructing. Both sentence economy and punctuation are based on sentence structure. Once the structure is in place, you are ready to cut out excess words that interfere with your meaning and then punctuate accurately. This section will deal with the structuring part.

LOOK FIRST AT WHAT THE SENTENCE SHOULD DO

Think of the sentence as a verbal investigation. As you structure it, you need to decide what is important and place important materials in strategic locations. You need to present your thinking to the jury of your readers in as clear and efficient a manner as possible.
The core of a sentence, like the core of the case, consists of a perpetrator and an occurrence. You probably learned to call these things a subject and a predicate

- The subject is what the sentence is about.
- The predicate makes a complete statement about the subject.

Whether you're dealing with criminal investigations or academic ones, the basic elements are the same.

Learn what the core elements are so you can line them up accurately.

In order to structure and punctuate correctly, you need to recognize three kinds of subject/predicate structures

**Subject/simple predicate.** The subject completes an action.

**Subject/verb/object.** For the predicate to be complete, many verbs require an object, or recipient of action.

**Subject/verb/complement.** The predicate conveys description rather than action. A "linking verb" (either to be, something similar such as to become or to seem, or a sense verb such as to sound) links the subject with a complement (which completes the description).

| Important evidence disappeared. | Object receives action—answers question "What?"
| A new variable emerged. | Complement directly describes. |
| The investigator learned the suspect's name. | Complement describes by renaming. |
| The study confirmed the hypothesis. | |
| The investigation seemed hopeless. | |
| The study results were unanticipated. | |
| Analysis was an unexpected challenge. | |
FOR CLARITY, EFFICIENCY, AND READER ACCESSIBILITY, PUT THE MOST IMPORTANT SENTENCE INFORMATION IN THE CORE

It is an unfortunate fact that the chief investigator's work was slow and inefficient, resulting in the inability of the district attorney to obtain a conviction for the defendant, who was guilty.

Unfortunately, the district attorney could not convict the guilty defendant because of the slow, inefficient work of the chief investigator.

EVEN WHEN CORES ARE LONG OR COMPLEX, THE STRATEGY REMAINS THE SAME

Sometimes a basic element (subject, verb, object, complement) will consist of a phrase (two or more words) or a clause (an entire statement).

Sometimes one of the elements will consist of multiples (more than one subject, more than one action etc.).

But the elements still have the same function.
Phrase functions as the subject.

Three subjects are involved.

Entire statement functions as subject.

Complete statement functions as object—answers question "What?"

Quotation functions as complement—"renames" (or at least restates) the subject.

Hard, unrelenting work on the part of the detectives enabled them to capture the suspect.

The detectives, the forensic team, and the prosecuting attorneys worked hard to bring the criminal to justice.

That no significant relationship emerged was a surprise to the research team.

The evidence suggests that such interventions are highly useful.

The researchers' opinion was "only in extreme circumstances should the procedure be used."

Even though the basic elements in these sentences are more complex, they are still in the sentence core. The sentences are thus direct and efficient.
BE SURE THAT THE CORE ELEMENTS ACTUALLY HAVE A LOGICAL SUBJECT-PREDICATE RELATIONSHIP

When a writer is tired or in hurry, it's easy to express general relationships in the first wording that comes to mind, even though the choice may not be entirely accurate. Avoid subject-predicate mismatches such as the following:

| The study says, or concludes, or explains | A study is not alive; it doesn't talk, write, or draw conclusions from its evidence (see Szuchman, 2002). | After conducting the study, the researchers find, conclude, propose, explain, suggest, or recommend. |
| Study results conclude | Results consist of data that can demonstrate, but concluding and applying are human actions. | The results of the study show, confirm, support or fail to support, demonstrate, illustrate, or provide evidence. |
| The article (or book) talks about | Articles and books don't talk. Really strict constructionists also discourage "the article says" (see Szuchman, 2002). | The article describes, explains, recounts. (An explanation or a description is published in a book or article.) |

Punctuating to Promote Clarity

There are two main points that you need to remember in order to use punctuation correctly. All the individual punctuation rules go back to these guidelines:

1. Do not use punctuation that would interrupt the sentence core: comma, colon, or anything else.

2. Use a pair of punctuation marks (commas or dashes) to set off elements that interrupt the core but do not change it. By doing so you make it easier for the reader to discern and relate
Comma separates subject and verb.

Comma separates verb and object.

Comma separates verb and complement.

Wrong

A new variable, emerged.

The study confirmed, the hypothesis.

The study results were, unanticipated.

Right

A new variable, which had not been anticipated, emerged.

The study confirmed, as researchers has predicted, the second hypothesis.

The study results were, according to the research team, unanticipated.
The same principles are true no matter how long or complex the sentence elements get.

**Wrong**

That no significant relationship emerged, was a surprise to the research team.

The evidence suggests, that such interventions are highly useful.

The researchers' opinion was: "only in extreme circumstances should the procedure be used."

**Right**

That no significant relationship emerged, despite triangulation of data, was a surprise to the research team.

The evidence suggests that, contrary to popular opinion, such interventions are highly useful.

The researchers' opinion was that, despite the findings supporting the intervention, "only in extreme circumstances should the procedure be used."

{108}
Applying Specific Punctuation Rules

Keeping in mind that the purpose of punctuation is to clarify and emphasize the sentence core, you can remember the various punctuation marks and their uses by extending the analogy of signs and signals from Step 3.

This is just a memory device—but memory devices are sometimes easier to apply than intellectual rules. Don't try to take everything too literally—just use the analogy as a system for recall and basic application.

THE COMMA IS A BLINKING YELLOW LIGHT

As a blinking yellow light, a comma indicates a minor intersection of ideas. It tells you that you don't have to come to a complete mental stop; you just have to exercise caution to void running things together.

You might have had a high school textbook with 30 comma rules. No wonder you decided to just put a comma where you felt like breathing. There are two common fallacies you need to get rid of.

- You don't need to learn 30 comma rules. If you can remember four uses and two misuses, most of the others are really only applications of them.
- The only time commas have anything to do with breathing is when something is going to be sung. Unless you are planning for someone to sing your academic paper or dissertation, then base your comma usage on sentence structure, not on projections of when a hypothetical reader needs to breathe.

Use 1: Use a comma to set off an introductory element. This usage relates to the principle of setting off elements that distract from the sentence core. The comma after an introductory element tells the reader that you are finished with the introduction, and the core is coming up.
Use 2: Use comma(s) to set off nonrestrictive elements. This rule simply puts terminology on a principle already established and emphasized.

- **Nonrestrictive** means that something does not restrict or change. A nonrestrictive element, though it may convey important information, doesn't actually change the core elements.

- **Restrictive** means that something does restrict or change.

Information that interrupts in the middle or tags on at the end and does not change or restrict the core elements is set off by comma(s). Information that actually changes elements in the core is considered to be bound into the core and therefore is not set off.
Nonrestrictive:
Subjects were recruited as a stratified sample, a procedure widely accepted for this sort of research.

Restrictive:
Subjects were randomly selected from a list of students with mild to moderate learning disabilities.

Nonrestrictive:
The subjects selected for the study, despite their learning disabilities, were asked to respond to a series of questions.

Restrictive:
The subjects whose disabilities affected their eye-hand coordination were allowed to dictate their answers to the examiner.

Statement gives validity but doesn’t restrict or change.

Only those with mild to moderate disabilities were on the list—statement restricts, or changes.

Since all of the subjects had learning disabilities (see prior sentence), the phrase does not change either the subject or the procedure.

This description restricts the subject to only those whose disability affected coordination. Thus it changes the subject and is not set off with commas.

Use 3: Use commas between items in a simple series of three or more. Ah, a rule that’s fairly easy. A simple series is one that does not contain commas within the series items.

The children, parents, teachers, and paraprofessionals were all interviewed individually.

The informed consent letter explained the purpose of the study, described the procedures, and affirmed the privacy of the participants.
Misuse 1: Do not use a comma when it would separate core elements (subject and verb, verb and object, or verb and complement). Add to this preposition and object.

Comma separates verb and complement. The following phrase restates "purpose."

Wrong

The purpose of the experiment was, to test the validity of a relatively new assessment procedure.

Children who had been previously diagnosed with learning disabilities completed, two manual tasks and a questionnaire.

Questions regarding student concentration were asked of, teachers, examination proctors, and graduate research assistants.

Comma separates verb and object. The items specified tell what was completed.

Comma separates preposition and series that functions as object.

Misuse 2: Do not use a comma between items in a series of two. The pair of items functions as a unit, so they should not be split. In effect, splitting them creates a false intersection.

Wrong

The students with mild mental retardation, and their parents or guardians answered open-ended questions concerning their reactions to the inclusion experience.

The researcher administered the revised questionnaire, and conducted semi-structured interviews with 30 randomly selected participants.

Acceptable

The researcher administered the revised questionnaire, and she conducted semi-structured interviews with 30 randomly selected participants.

The series consists of two subjects; splitting them would actually split the sentence core.

The subject is performing two actions; splitting them would split the sentence core.

If you are nervous about having this much bulk without a comma, repeat the subject to create an independent statement (see coming section).
A COMMA PLUS A COORDINATING CONJUNCTION CHANGES THE BLINKING YELLOW LIGHT TO A BLINKING RED LIGHT

When traffic becomes heavier and a complete stop is necessary before proceeding into the intersection, the blinking yellow light may be changed to blink red. This signals a brief complete stop. A comma combined with a coordinating conjunction (and, but, for, or, nor, yet, or so) is like changing the blinking yellow light to blinking red. It signals a brief but complete mental stop.

The comma plus coordinating conjunction is used to join independent statements (clauses) into one sentence. The stop needs to be complete because a whole new core is coming up.

- A comma alone is not enough to join independent statements. The error of using the comma alone between independent statements is called a comma splice. It is considered a serious error.

- A coordinating conjunction alone is not enough to join independent statements. An and, but or other coordinating junction (for, or, nor, yet, so) without a comma signals a continuation of the last statement, not a new one.

In both examples the two statements could be punctuated as separate sentences. However, the author has chosen to combine them with a comma plus a coordinating conjunction.

The treatment group received the sequence of lessons in weekly sessions over a 14-week period, and the control group spent the same time periods with the standard mathematics curriculum.

The treatment group did not improve to the degree that had been anticipated, but they did show some progress in their reasoning and problem-solving skills.

A SEMICOLON IS A STOP SIGN

A semicolon is the stop sign of punctuation: It signals a brief but complete stop. Its most common use is between independent statements when there is no coordinating conjunction. Yes, the semicolon is equivalent to the comma plus coordinating conjunction, just as a stop sign is equivalent to a blinking red light in what it signals the driver to do.
Use 1: Use a semicolon between independent statements (clauses) when there is no coordinating conjunction.

Children in the treatment group were shown television programs portraying pro-social situations and behavior; those in the control group watched standard commercial children's programming.

Children who had watched the pro-social programming responded to a series of stories portraying social conflict situations; their comments demonstrated a predisposition to settle problems peaceably.

The children who had watched the commercial programming did not respond with as strong a pro-social disposition as those in the treatment group; however their responses did show a general disposition to avoid conflict or aggression.

Statements could stand alone but have been combined to emphasize the contrast. The abrupt break provided by the semicolon emphasizes the relationship more than the more casual-sounding "comma-and" sort of connective.

When a connective like however, therefore, nevertheless, moreover, in fact, etc. is used between independent statements, the semicolon must be used. Only the seven short coordinating conjunctions discussed earlier can connect two independent statements with a comma.
Use 2: Use semicolons to separate items in a complex series. A complex series is one that contains items that have commas within them. A stop signal is needed to keep these items from running together.

Confusing, too many commas—units do not come through as distinct.

Semicolons create more complete stops to set off the units more clearly.

Even series markers and transitions can be confusing. Use semicolons in any complex series.

Wrong
Participants in the study included 6 teachers, all with at least 5 years of teaching experience, 65 students, all reading at least 2 years below grade level, and 2 graduate students, both working on degrees at the master’s level.

Right
Participants in the study included 6 teachers, all with at least 5 years of teaching experience; 65 students, all reading at least 2 years below grade level; and 2 graduate students, both working on degrees at the master’s level.

Interviews were structured as follows: first, basic questions to establish demographics; second, highly specific questions designed for precise response; third, open-ended questions to obtain more personal responses.

Misuse 1: Use semicolons only between equivalent items. Never use a semicolon between dependent and independent elements.

Wrong
Because of the homogeneity of the sample and the somewhat atypical circumstances in the classrooms; this study cannot be generalized to a wide variety of populations and contexts.

Right
Because of the homogeneity of the sample and the somewhat atypical circumstances in the classrooms, this study cannot be generalized to a wide variety of populations and contexts.

Or
The sample lacked variety, and the classroom circumstances were atypical; thus this study cannot be generalized to a wide variety of populations and contexts.
THE COLON IS A GREEN LIGHT

The colon is punctuation's green light. It signals an important intersection, but it tells you to keep going rather than stop. Although the basic sentence core is completed, there is something ahead that you need in order to understand it accurately.

Use: Use a colon to connect explanatory information to a completed sentence core.

Two conditions are necessary in order for a colon to be correct.
- It must be preceded by a complete statement (sentence core).
- It must be followed by a sentence element that explains, expands, exemplifies, or specifies the preceding statement. You should be able to mentally insert one of the following:
  
  namely

  specifically

  as follows

Complete statement is followed by independent statement specifying what is meant by slowly. First word of following sentence is capitalized because it is an independent sentence.

Independent statement is followed by a phrase specifying what that project is. The phrase following the colon is not capitalized—it's not independent.

Complete statement is followed by an example.

Complete statement is followed by a series which specifies what that sequence is.

Complete statement is followed by a quotation demonstrating the optimism.

We recommend that this procedure be implemented slowly: Teachers will probably want to introduce no more than two new activities per week.

After completing the series of lessons, teachers faced the greatest challenge of the project: implementing appropriate assessment procedures.

As they work in a multicultural classroom, teachers need to be sensitive to subtle value differences: For example, competitive games and activities can be offensive to some Hispanic or Native American students.

The basic lesson sequence is based on a direct instruction paradigm: (a) anticipatory set, (b) introduction of skill or concept, (c) demonstration or modeling, (d) guided practice, (e) individual practice.

In explaining the potential benefits of a literature-based conflict resolution program, Marshall (2002) was optimistic: "This approach can engage children in ways no other methodology can" (p. 47).
A DASH IS A CONSTRUCTION FLARE

A dash can be compared to a construction flare. A dash or pair of dashes warns the reader that something is broken up or diverted. Dashes can call special attention or give a casual tone to what you say (but not in your dissertation, of course).

Use 1: Use a dash to indicate an abrupt shift in meaning or tone.

The subjects showed a surprising disposition toward denial—but this will be considered further in Chapter 3.

But as Mark Twain said, “Man is the only animal that blushes—or needs to.”

Use 2: Use a dash or pair of dashes to set off a nonrestrictive element that needs special emphasis or clarity.

Before using the intervention, the therapist must assess the client’s religious background—an assessment that we emphatically advise.

The procedures—measurement instrument, interview, and reaction survey—were designed to assess a variety of individual characteristics.

Thought is obviously broken off because elaboration would be distracting at this point.

You probably wouldn’t use this much in a dissertation, but it’s great in personal writing.

The caution is nonrestrictive—it doesn’t change sentence core elements—but it needs to be emphasized.

The series reviewing procedure components doesn’t change meaning. If it were set off with ordinary commas, it would make the sentence muddy with too many short phrases and commas.
Use 3: You may use a dash in place of a colon if the elements are short or the tone is informal.

Children with ADHD have three conspicuous characteristics—hyperactivity, impulsivity, distractibility.

A colon would be fine here, but a dash could be used because both statement and expansion are brief and to the point.

Use 4: Use a dash in dialogue or other forms of transcribed oral communication to indicate interruption—of oneself or of someone else.

When asked about his reaction to the therapy session, Matthew hesitated: "I was confused—at first, that is—but when he—well kind of as he went along—I could almost understand what he was—um—trying to do."

"Were you really worried, Matthew," the therapist asked.

"Well kind of, you see—"

"Well he had every right to be!" the angry sister shouted.

In his confusion, Matthew keeps interrupting his own flow of thought and language. This could be relevant to his problem.

His sister cuts Matthew off before he can get into his thought—perhaps a key to their relationship.

Misuse: The main misuse of dashes is overuse. The dash can be a very important mark of punctuation if you do not compromise its potential for emphasis by overusing it.

Trimming Down

With the lack of both self-discipline and time in today's fast-paced society, a high percentage of Americans are overweight. For the same reason, a high percentage of American sentences are overweight as well, particularly on advanced academic levels.

With a little self-discipline and just a little time, we can do something about these embarrassing obese sentences.
STEPS FOR TRIMMING FAT

First, determine who did what and how, aligning the most important information with the sentence core. More words are required to edge around the core than to use it correctly. As in solving a mystery, the key is in figuring who really acted and how.

Obese
It was the opinion of the researchers that the state of depression experienced by the young women could be attributed to their inability to receive adequate encouragement from their parents.

- Who is acting here? The parents actually seem to be the ones at fault, even though they are buried at the end of the sentence.
- What are they doing? Failing to encourage their daughters.
- What resulted? Depression, according to the researchers.

More Trim
The parents were failing to give their daughters adequate encouragement, resulting in the young women's depression, according to researchers.

- Occasionally you need to emphasize outcome rather than agent; thus you could make depression the subject of the sentence.
- You could put the researchers in an introductory rather than a concluding element if you want to draw more attention to them.

Alternative
According to the researchers, the young women's depression was caused by inadequate parental attention.
Second, get rid of redundancy. We all tend to bloat our sections and even our paragraphs by saying things more than once to be sure that they are said. But, surprisingly enough, we tend to do this to our sentences as well. We just don’t realize that we do it.

Once you get your basic structure in place, you don’t need extra layers and flourishes. Generally they just confuse things. In writing, simple and palatable is better.

**Obese**

It was evident that the symptoms that they showed included that they were discouraged in their outlook, self-centered in their behavior, and unmotivated in their undertakings, resulting in signs of classic depression which they experienced.

- If it weren’t evident, the researchers wouldn’t be reporting it.
- Discouragement is an aspect of outlook, self-obsession is a form of behavior, and lack of motivation requires something to be unmotivated about. So these are redundancies (like “small is size” and “red in color”)
- Symptoms are things that are shown.
- The fact that they are experiencing symptoms doesn’t need to be expressed twice.

**Reduced**

It was evident that the symptoms that they showed included that they were discouraged in their outlook, self-obsessed in their behavior, and unmotivated in their undertakings, resulting in signs of classic depression which they experienced.

Their symptoms of classic depression included discouragement, self-obsession, and lack of motivation.
Third, avoid twisting words out of their natural usage so that you need extra words to get them to function. Also avoid stretching words into phrases. Identify what is really functional and how it needs to function. Twisting or elaborating things to be fancy generally (usually) just confuses them.

**Obese**
The implementation of the strategic procedure was operationalized through the instrumentality of collaborative groupings of cooperative nature representing unification of diverse entities.

- Begin by letting the air out of some of these overblown words and phrases.
- Let verbs be verbs and nouns be nouns etc.

**Reduced**
The implementation of verb—implemented the strategic procedure strategy was operationalized noun—operation through the instrumentality of by or though collaborative groupings groups of cooperative nature cooperative (or collaborative) representing unification of diverse entities. noun—unity, adjective—unified

The strategy was implemented by unified collaborative groups.

---

**COMMON SOURS OF SENTENCE CALORIES**

Avoid piling on sugary fluff in the form of unnecessary adjectives and adverbs. Many of us damage our positions by overstating them with extra adjectives and adverbs. A simple, clear statement will have more impact on a critical reader than an inflated one.

- Concerning adjectives, Mark Twain advised, “When in doubt strike it out” (as qtd. by Trimble, 2000, p. 77).
- As far as adverbs are concerned, writing guru John Trimble (2000) remarked, “Minimize your adverbs . . . especially trite intensifiers like very, extremely, really, and terribly, which show a 90% failure rate” (p. 77).
Obese
It is extremely important to recognize the very significant and costly weaknesses of the study, which really show terribly inconsistent procedures on the part of the research team.

Reduced
Scholars must recognize inconsistency in the procedures, which weakens the study.

Avoid fattening phrases that provide less nutrition than their simpler alternatives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROBLEM</th>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>TYPICAL EXAMPLES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Words used as wrong part of speech</td>
<td>verb to noun</td>
<td>to implement/implementation to contain/containment of to assign/assignation of to characterize /characterization of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>noun to verb</td>
<td>operation/operationalize context/contextualize margin/marginalize strategy/strategize institution/institutionalize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>adjective to noun</td>
<td>minimum/ minimalization better/betterment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>adjective to adverb</td>
<td>thankful/ thankfully surprisingly/surprisingly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superfluous phrases</td>
<td>false core</td>
<td>It is a fact that It can be discerned that There has been an observation that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>redundant classification</td>
<td>small in size, red in color tedious in nature, despondent in mood, behaviorist in orientation, period of time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The most important aspects of writing your paper, thesis, or dissertation are understanding your information and dealing with it thoughtfully, accurately, and creatively. Your chair and your committee will guide you with these aspects. Your sentences are just your medium for conveying the content. But the medium can betray your efforts if you are not able to use it competently.

As with the organizational and paragraph strategies discussed in the previous chapter, the techniques, strategies, practices, and rules discussed here may seem like a lot to apply. Actually, they are. But they become more natural and later semi-automatic as you get used to them. Keep the manual and refer to it when you need to.

Crafting effective sentences doesn’t have to be a mysterious process. Just remember the basic steps, and you should be able to solve and present your cases effectively:

- Get in step.
- Make your case.
- Punctuate for clarity.
- Apply specific (punctuation) rules.
- Trim down.

Sometimes sentences are necessarily a little longer or more complex than we like because they contain series or quotations that seem to burden them. The following chapter helps you deal with these hurdles smoothly and coherently. ■