

CHAPTER 9

WRITING PROCESS

In a research study, the writing process can be completed in at least three steps:

1. Shaping the overall ideas in general (first/rough draft)
2. Putting the ideas into appropriate words and phrases to convey the intended meaning; this step may be repeated several times (revised form)
3. Making sure that all the explanations are given precisely and clearly, and the format follows the regulations of a standard format of writing (editing the final form)

Writing the First/Rough Draft

After the data are gathered and the required analysis is done, the researcher starts putting the collected information on paper. As a first step, the notes on the cards are composed into unified piece of prose to be presented to the reader in an effective manner. The notes on the cards may not be written with an audience in mind. From this point on, the researcher tries to inform the readers of his/her ideas, and indicates how these ideas are put together to support the thesis statement. This task may not be so easy to undertake. Therefore, the writing is refined in the second step. In some cases, however, the researcher has to revise it several times to arrive at the desired format.

While writing the first draft, the researcher is concerned more with the overall format of the research. At this stage, minor errors related to spelling, punctuation, or grammar can be ignored.

In order to save time and energy, one should write the first draft:

- on only one side of the paper
- skipping a line between lines
- with wide margins on each side of the paper

While writing the first draft, there is no need to stop to look for the exact word or phrase to be used in the context. Such a procedure would delay the process of getting the ideas together. Once the attention is focused on details, it is difficult to monitor the overall format of the study. The purpose of the rough draft is to put the ideas together so that the whole thesis could be recognized, and the paper be readable, convincing, and adequately documented.

Although the refining task is left to a later stage in writing, it is important to insert footnotes and references. It would be better if the bibliographical references are placed in the body of the text within parentheses rather than at the bottom of the page as footnotes. Thus, during the revision, there will not be a risk of losing these footnotes. Instead of having the footnotes at the bottom of the page, some authorities prefer them to be grouped at the end of each chapter. In such a design, these footnotes are called "end notes." In this case, the footnotes need to be numbered consecutively throughout the paper. The important issue in writing footnotes is to provide the page numbers as well as the date of the text so that readers can refer to the original source if they want to.

In some cases, some of the information on the note cards may seem irrelevant, and in explaining and supporting the thesis, more examples are needed. In other cases, certain segments need to be shifted to other parts of the thesis, or the charts prepared do not need to be included in the text but in an appendix. The process of modification and improvement of this kind is important but it is advised to leave the application of this type of process until after the completion of the first draft. A reminder note would be helpful for the researcher to recall what needs to be done.

When the first draft is finished, it is advised to get a photocopy of the writing and store it where it will be safe from any possible disasters such as fire and flood.

Do 's and Don'ts, Regarding the Writing of the First Draft

Hubbuck (1985, p. 88) calls these guidelines "words of wisdom." These are suggestions to facilitate the writing process and make the work more effective (Mulkerne & Kahn 1989, pp. 45-50).

1. Do not postpone writing your thesis until the last minute. You cannot do a good job if you write in a rush. Try to allow yourself plenty of time to write. It is much better to make a schedule indicating the time planned to be used for each step of the study (see Vol. 1, Ch. 6).
2. You can begin writing the review of literature and the methodology sections while analyzing the data.
3. Write the first draft consulting both your notes and your outline. Use the outline as a guide and your notes to recall information.
4. On each sheet of paper, use wide margins, and double or triple spacing to allow room for correction.
5. In writing your draft, avoid just copying your notes. In each section of the text, start with a summary statement mentioning the issues to be discussed and then give the details.
6. Use graphs and charts to report results or to summarize data.
7. Do not use raw data in your research. When you feel the need to introduce raw data, put them in an appendix. In the text, while giving information, you can refer the reader to the appendix.
8. Be scientific, do not include opinion; support the facts documenting your sources.
9. During your first draft, do not be concerned with the structure.
10. Prepare yourself to write several drafts before you arrive at the final form.
11. Put headings on the divisions of your text.
12. Use one idea in each sentence. Veldman (1971, p. 27) emphasizes the same point by citing Bernstein's (1968) suggestion that the primary feature of a readable writing is that each sentence should introduce not more than one idea.
13. Define the acronyms within parentheses the first time they appear in the text, and then you may continue using this acronym throughout the text.
e.g.: ELT (English Language Teaching) Journals
14. Do not use unnecessary technical terms or long sentences, especially those which do not contribute any meaning to the text. Try to divide long sentences into short ones or at least use some semi-colons.
15. Use exemplification and repetition to help the reader follow the chain of ideas or procedures.

16. Use commas when appropriate to make the text more comprehensible, especially for non-natives who may not know when to pause (in speaking or reading).
17. Have a competent friend or colleague read your first draft to test how comprehensible the text is.

Revising the First Draft

After having completed the first draft, the researcher should not be satisfied with the outcome. In contrast, he/she should go over it again to see how much revision is needed to maintain unity, coherence, clarity, and emphasis. In order to achieve unity in the text, one main topic needs to be explored in depth in such a way that each paragraph adds a new perspective to the topic and expands that single topic. Thus, while revising the paper, the researcher has to check if the paragraphs are developed with the aim of supporting the main theme. Any irrelevant sentence or paragraph needs to be discarded at this stage. Sometimes the sentence might be constructed in such a way that the supporting detail is expressed in the subordinate clause rather than the main clause. Sentences of this type need to be adjusted in order to bring the main point into focus.

If the controlling ideas and the research evidence are interrelated and expressed in a smooth way, the text is considered coherent. In order to maintain coherence, quotations and paraphrases need to be the logical extensions of writing. It is transition that marks the logical progression from one idea to the other. Therefore, special attention should be paid to ensure that there is a smooth transition between the major parts of the argument. The new idea to be introduced needs to be incorporated with the previous one by means of a transition word before going into details (see Chapter 5).

The simpler the structure of the text is, the more that clarity is provided. Excessive rhetorical expressions, extremely vague, abstract, and general words destroy the clarity of the text. Research writing demands the application of concrete, specific words, and construction of well-balanced sentences.

Another important aspect that needs to be considered in writing is the proper use of tense. Lester gives the following suggestion (1984, p. 115):

In giving an account of an event or concept of the past, the past tense is used (Example a) but the statement made by some other person is given in the present tense (Example b). In using the historical present tense, historical happenings are reported in the past tense (Example c).

- (a) Jane Nelson was arrested, and her children were placed under the care of agencies.
- (b) Young points out that Jan Nelson's entire life has been a misery.
- (c) John F. Kennedy, who was assassinated in 1963, serves as a trumpet of challenge to all Americans.

Revision needs to be done for consistency as well (Piotrowski 1989:58). If the style is formal, it has to continue formally, or if the MLA format is used, the text should follow that format throughout the paper. For instance, under MLA style of documentation, the citation list at the end of a research study is given under the title of *Works Cited*; under the APA style, however, it is entitled *References*. To give another example, in narrating the related literature, according to the MLA style, we use past tense; whereas, in the APA style the past tense is not approved. Accordingly, there should not be a shift in format in the middle of the paper, nor should there be the utilization of both formats.

Following are some exemplified suggestions for revising prose.: (Source: <http://www.rpi.edu/dept/lc/writecenter/web/text/revise.html>)

1. Write in the active voice:

Faulty: In each picture the responses are shown.

Better: Each picture shows the responses.

2. Use personal pronouns (I, we, our) when they are appropriate and especially when they clarify your text:

Faulty: It has been found experimentally that genetically altered strawberries are frost-resistant.

Better: In this experiment, we found experimentally that genetically altered strawberries are frost-resistant.

3. Write sentences that have people doing things:

Faulty: It was decided that company policy be changed to allow employee selection of personal leave days.

Better: The personnel committee decided to change company policy and allowed employees to select their own personal leave days.

4. Avoid nominalizing (transforming verbs and adjectives into nouns):

Faulty: We conducted an investigation of the accident.

Better: We investigated the accident.

5. Avoid stringing nouns together and creating what scientist Peter Medawar describes as "one huge noun-like monster in constant danger of falling apart." The following examples are from Commerce Business Daily: "fluidized bed waste heat recovery system demonstration" and "roof rock bolt bond integrity tester development." the examples below are from Joseph Williams:

Faulty: Early childhood thought disorders misdiagnosis often occurs as a result of unfamiliarity with recent research literature describing such conditions.

Better: Physicians unfamiliar with the literature on recent research often misdiagnose disordered thought in young children.

6. Maintain parallelism:

Faulty: The new regulations could cause problems for both the winners and for those who lose.

Better: The new regulations could cause problems for both winners and losers.

7. Emphasize important words by placing them where they receive natural stress, either at the beginning or, for even greater emphasis, at the end of a sentence.

Faulty: Rather than being a judge who pronounces the verdict, the teacher becomes an editor who guides students' writing with this method.

Better: With this method, the teacher becomes an editor who guides students' writing, rather than a judge who pronounces the verdict.

8. Place subordinate ideas in subordinate constructions:

Faulty: The value is 50 watts and is best determined by actual test.

Better: The value, which is best determined by actual test, is 50 watts.

9. Substitute descriptive verbs for vague verbs:

Faulty: He went to the island.

Better: He sailed to the island.

10. Substitute lean words for ponderous expressions:

Faulty: Align the tubes in such a manner that they all heat at the same time.

Better: Align the tubes so that they all heat at the same time.

11. Substitute familiar for unfamiliar words:

Faulty: Everyone should be cognizant of the danger of explosion.

Better: Everyone should be aware of the danger of explosion.

12. Avoid overused expressions common to the business world:

Faulty: Utilization of crystal clear goals and objectives will optimize our capacity to prioritize our concerns so that we will impact upon the major thrust of our company's future plans and prospects.

Better: If we clarify our goals and objectives, we will be able to concentrate on what is most important for our company's future.

13. Cut unnecessary words:

Faulty: After a time interval of one to two minutes, the tone usually stops.

Better: After one to two minutes, the tone usually stops.

14. Be precise:

Faulty: The cost must not be prohibitive.

Better: The cost should not exceed \$100 per thousand gallons.

15. Avoid confusing pronouns:

Faulty: As the temperature falls, a compressive stress is exerted by the bezel on the glass because of its greater temperature coefficient.

Better: As the temperature falls, the bezel, because of its greater temperature coefficient, exerts a compressive stress on the glass.

16. Keep sentence elements in their proper order:

Faulty: The sample to be analyzed first must be put into solution.

Better: The sample to be analyzed must be first put into solution.

17. Avoid dangling modifiers:

Faulty: Walking up the hill, my umbrella was blown away by the wind.

Better: While I was walking up the hill, the wind blew away my umbrella.

18. Reduce strings of prepositional phrases:

Faulty: The October 31 deadline for submission of proposals in response to an invitation from the National Science Foundation also applies to unsolicited proposals.

Better: The deadline for both solicited and unsolicited proposals to the National Science Foundation is October 31.

Editing the Final Draft

The first draft is the outcome of the process of thinking on paper; therefore, what is produced will not be in an organized pattern. Consequently, revision of the first draft will be towards the clarification of the central idea or ideas, and unification of the text by removing or improving any points that do not correlate with and/or contribute to the total effect.

Furthermore, the order of development within the ideas needs to be maintained. No matter how well the research is conducted, if the ideas are not properly introduced, it will not achieve any success.

After the completion of the revision stage, the thesis or the dissertation can be submitted to the advisor for comments. The advisor's comments may be of great use to the researcher to work on the final draft. "The writer must realize, however, that the advisor is supposed to direct the thesis; he should not be expected to organize it, edit it, or to write it" (Albaugh 1957, p. 22).

After having received comments from the advisor, the researcher starts to revise the individual parts of the thesis taking the following into consideration:

- logical divisions within chapters
- no overlapping within chapters
- logical sequencing of ideas within or between chapters

At this stage, the researcher can go over the thesis to revise and modify the weaknesses in the formulation or choice of sentences and words within the text. The common weaknesses that seem to occur in research papers are cited by Albaugh (1957, p. 23) as:

- Faulty pronoun references
- Faulty parallelism
- Incomplete or hazy comparisons
- Unnecessary use of the passive
- Shift in point of view, involving tense, mood, subject, voice, person, or number
- The misuse of *so*, chiefly as a conjunction or as an intensifier
- The use of *and* as a subordinating conjunction
- The use of *while* where *although* is appropriate; and the use of *since* or *as* when the writer means *because*
- The use of *this* with no antecedent
- The omission of articles or prepositions needed for clarity
- Tautology, sometimes a matter of saying the same thing twice, and sometimes resulting from the use of jargon
- Questionable usage, involving the use of contractions, abbreviations, and colloquialism

Lester (1984) suggests the utilization of the following techniques that are effective in closing paragraphs:

- Restate the thesis and reach beyond it.
- Close it with an effective quotation.
- Return the focus of the reader to a literal study, the author of which has great authority on the topic.
- Offer a directive or a solution, thus indicating the application of the study.
- Compare past to present
- Refer to the test results and state how close they were to the expectations.

Proofreading

After the final draft is written, the next step would be proofreading. In other words, the text has to be examined carefully to make sure that there is a smooth transition between the sentences and the paragraphs. During this stage, special attention has to be paid to ensure correct spelling, punctuation, and proper application of tenses and pronoun references.

Here are some general suggestions as to what to do before and while proof-reading:
(Source: gopher://wiscinfo.wisc.edu:70/00.acad/.writing-lab/handouts/.grammar/.proofread)

Before proofreading

1. Be sure you've revised the larger aspects of your text. Don't make corrections at the sentence and word level if you still need to work on the focus, organization, and development of the whole paper, of sections, or of paragraphs.

2. Set your text aside for a while (15 minutes, a day, a week) between writing and proofing. Some distance from the text will help you see mistakes more easily.
3. Eliminate words before looking for mistakes.
4. Know what to look for. From the comments of your professors, make a list of mistakes you need to watch for.

While proofreading

1. Work from a printout, not from the computer screen [except the available functions].
2. Read out loud. This is especially helpful for spotting run-on sentences, but you'll also hear other problems that you may not see when reading silently.
3. Use a blank sheet of paper to cover up the lines below the one you're reading. This technique keeps you from skipping ahead of possible mistakes.
4. Use the search function of the computer to find mistakes you're likely to make.
5. If you tend to make many mistakes, check separately for each kind of error, moving from the most to the least important, and following whatever technique works best for you to identify that kind of mistake. For instance, read through once (backwards, sentence by sentence) to check for fragments; read through again (forward) to be sure subjects and verbs agree, and again (perhaps using a computer search for "this," "it," and "they,") to trace pronouns to antecedents.
6. End with a spelling check, using a computer spelling checker or reading backwards word by word. But remember that a spelling checker won't catch mistakes with homonyms (e.g., "they're," "their," "there") or certain typos (like "he" for "the").

Glidden focuses on some items that need to be looked for at word, sentence, and paragraph levels. These rules and guidelines suggested by Glidden (1964, pp. 140-157) are very useful in refining one's paper:

Editing at Word Level

Figures and Numerals

1. Ascertain the style used by your employer or the publication you are writing for.
2. Be consistent with whatever style you choose.
3. Spell out the number that starts a sentence except possibly when it is a year (1982, not nineteen hundred and sixty-two).
4. Spell out numbers under ten. (In non-technical writing, numbers under 100 are usually spelled out.)

Exceptions:

- in connected groups (14 schools, 3 hospitals, and 2 libraries)
- numbers that are partly fractional (1 1/3)
- numbers that contain decimals (1.75)
- numbered objects (Figure 3, Page 2)
- street numbers (7 South Main St.)
- dates and time of day (September 1; 2:10 A.M.)

5. Spell out round numbers (about two thousand men; estimated at five hundred).
6. Write out fractions standing alone without any nominals (one-half as many).
7. Omit the comma [period in the case of a Turkish text] in four-digit figures (1416; 2143), except in nontechnical writing.
8. Insert commas [periods in the case of a Turkish text] in numbers with five or more digits (92,467; 1,567,275).
9. Place a zero in front of decimal point values less than 1 (0.014)
10. When it is necessary to write two numbers consecutively without punctuation, spell out one of them (twenty 45-caliber rifles, 120 eight-hour shifts).

Modifiers

1. The modifier should be placed as close as possible to the term it modifies.
2. Adjectives precede the nouns they modify.
3. Phrases and clauses which function as adjectives follow the nouns they modify.
4. Adverbs that function as modifiers have no fixed position.
5. A string of adjectives should be avoided.
6. Using a hyphen, or linking the compound elements of a modifier together as a single word, helps to clarify the meaning (eight-hour day, red-time simulator).

Conjunctions

Subordinating conjunctions cause problems because these are not used according to their functions. These conjunctions, however, fall into categories based on their use:

Place - *where, wherever*

Cause - *because, since, now that*

Condition - *in the event that, provided that, unless, if*

Purpose - *in order that, so that, that, why*

Time - *as long as, after, since, until, when, while*

Concession - *in spite of, no matter how, even though, taking for granted*

Pronouns

- A pronoun must be related to a noun.
- A pronoun must agree with its antecedent in gender, number, and case.

Transitions

Transitions are words or phrases used at the beginning of each paragraph or sentence to link one thought to the next. Since transitions maintain coherence, their adequate and appropriate use affects the reader to follow with ease the discussion presented in a piece of writing. Aside from maintaining coherence, transitions help the writer to shift from one idea to the other without distracting the reader's attention.

Transitional devices (see also Appendix D) are effective for signaling

- continuation of items or events in a specific order,
- comparison or contrast between two or more items,
- relation of time within the events,
- introduction of a new point of view,
- indication of a purpose,
- the relation between cause or effect.

The above categorization can be exemplified as follows:

Continuation - *also, again, and, next, first, second, finally*

Comparison and contrast - *similarly, in the same manner, however, notwithstanding, on the other hand, nevertheless, by contrast, for example*

Relation to time - *in the meantime, thereupon, immediately, following, during (the course of)*

Establishing point of view - *considering the data, when we examine equation 2*

Showing purpose - *with the element of cost in mind, for the purpose of, to this end*

Relating to cause or effect - *therefore, consequently, to summarize*

Brooks (1989), who takes a different approach in his categorization, discusses transitions under seven categories and gives the following examples for each:

1. **TIME:** *next, now, meanwhile, finally, sometimes, then, often, at last, until, once, today (yesterday etc.), at present, Monday (days of the week), winter (seasons), at six (hours), at six on Monday (combination of these).*
2. **PLACE:** *nearby, down the ..., inside the ..., next to, outside the ..., in the middle of, up above, ten miles away from, ten millimeters inside, in the corner of.*
3. **RESULT:** *then, as a result, therefore, hence, consequently, otherwise, thus, so.*
4. **MOOD CHANGERS:** *not onlybut also, instead, and, so, actually, despite, although, too, indeed, still, because, if...then, on the one hand, besides, but, however, as (just as), while.*
5. **REPETITION:** In this case, the key phrase or the word in the previous paragraph is repeated in the following paragraph to indicate the relation within paragraphs.
6. **EMPHATICS:** Emphatics, which are usually adjectives or pronouns, emphasize the previous thought. The common emphatics are *this, that, there, those, it, to say the least, such.*
7. **GERUNDS AND PARTICIPLES:** The relation of the main event can be indicated in the following paragraph by the use of gerunds and participles.
8. **QUOTES:** Quoting a statement in the previous paragraph is another technique in indicating the relation. (p. 31)

Editing at Sentence Level

Length

In constructing a sentence, the following factors need to be taken into consideration:

- If the thought to be expressed is complex, it is better to keep the length of the sentence short.

- If the length of the sentence increases, the reader's concentration may drop.
- If the sentences are all constructed at the same length, it creates monotony.
- If the same type of sentence structure is used throughout the writing, it becomes boring.

Glidden (1964, p. 153) suggests that if the sentence length is longer than thirty words, reasons should be investigated by examining the sentence content. Sometimes, there may be too many conjunctions in a sentence which could easily be separated into shorter ones. If the sentence contains repetitions and redundancy, it needs to be shortened. If the sentence is properly constructed, and conveys the meaning accurately, then the length does not bother the reader.

Structure

Most common errors originate from the lack of knowledge regarding subject and verb agreement. Glidden (1964) gives the following explanation to prevent these errors :

1. Two or more subjects joined by *and* (compound subject) take a plural verb (Example a). The exception to this rule occurs when both subjects refer to the same person or thing (Example b).

(a) The test and the questionnaire **are** devised by the researcher.

(b) Mr. Jones, who is a dentist and the chairperson of the Dental Society, **is** giving a lecture tonight.

2. When two or more subjects are joined by *or* or *nor*, the number of the verb is determined by the nearest subject (Examples a and b).

(a) Neither the apparatus nor the power sources **were** found to be in good working order.

(b) Neither the power sources nor the apparatus **was** found to be in good working order.

3. A singular subject followed by a phrase beginning with *in addition to*, *together with*, or *as well as* takes a singular verb in formal writing.

Professor Jones, as well as the other people interviewed, **was** of the opinion that no action should be taken.

4. The indefinite pronouns *anybody*, *each*, *everybody*, *nobody*, *somebody*, *someone*, *anyone*, *everybody*, and *everyone* take a singular verb:

Everyone interviewed **was** of the opinion that no action should be taken.

5. *Either* and *neither* are treated as singular pronouns in formal writing:

Neither of the interviewers **pretends** to be an expert.

6. *Any* and *none* are treated as either singular or plural depending upon the writer's intention (Examples a and b).
- (a) Ten people applied for the job. **None** of them **were** suitable.
 (b) I did not like any of them. **None** of them **seems** to suit me.
7. *Data*, the singular of which is seldom used (datum), usually takes a plural verb. Data can be considered a collective noun when referring to assembled information.

The data was collected over a period of years.

8. The verb agrees with the subject of the sentence rather than with the nearest noun.

Incorrect: The solution to some problems require calculus.

Correct: The solution to some problems requires calculus. (pp. 155-156)

Aside from the ones cited by Glidden, there are other issues that need to be taken into consideration in maintaining subject-verb agreement. The following information may help to avoid problems with the use of collective nouns in subject position, and expletive structures:

1. If the items expressed in the collective noun are considered as one group, the verb is singular (Example a). If the items are considered as individuals of a group, each acting on his own, the verb is plural (Example b).
- (a) The jury **has** found him guilty.
 (b) The jury came into the room. It seems **they have** made **their** decisions.
2. The idiom *number of*, when used with the indefinite article, means *a great many* (a). When it is used with the definite article, it refers to the amount (b).
- (a) A number of students **have failed** in that class.
 (b) The number of students that have failed in that class **exceeds** 20.
3. The verb agrees with the first noun following the expletive *there*.
- (a) There is a vase on the table.
 (b) There are flowers in the vase.

Editing at Paragraph Level

A paragraph should have unity, coherence, clarity, and emphasis. Unity is achieved by providing sentences that support the main thesis. For coherence, sentences should be linked together with transitional devices. One other technique that might be used to indicate the link is to refer to the preceding sentence or the paragraph by using core items of the preceding context as part of the following.

Editing at Text Level

After editing the research paper at different syntactic levels, the researcher has to edit for readability. As Chapman and Waller (1994) put it, "the best measure of readability is always the response of a real reader" (p. 260). Thus, they consider the following elements that help the editor to determine the readability: simplicity, brevity, directness, emphasis, and coherence. If the information is given in a simple and brief manner emphasizing the important points directly keeping the coherence of the paragraphs and the text, it becomes much more comprehensible.

In order to maintain **simplicity**, writers try to avoid using very difficult words. This is because they want to address a larger group of readers.

It has been investigated that "average sentence length of writing intended for adult readers is about 20 words per sentence" (Chapman & Waller 1994, p. 262). With this fact in mind, the writers do not tend to construct longer sentences and thus maintain **brevity** in their text.

If the sentences are structured in the normal order with the adjectives placed properly, the readability level of the text increases. This type of **directness** helps the readers focus on the meaning rather than on the form.

The point to be emphasized needs to be kept in mind in transferring the information into written form. The tendency is that new information or information to be emphasized is placed in the main clause. The **emphasis** can also be maintained by varying the word order within the sentence at phrase or word level. What is considered important is placed at the beginning of the sentence.

In order to maintain **coherence**, writers make sure that the sentences and paragraphs in the text are clearly connected so that one sentence can naturally lead to the other or one paragraph could lead to the other one. Therefore, there should be a syntactic or semantic signal in each sentence or paragraph to help the reader associate the information in the previous statement or the paragraph. If information is given without indicating the relation with one another, there is no way for the reader to understand the message because what has been mentioned in one sentence can not easily be associated with the information given in the previous or the following sentences.

Trouble Makers

1. In the use of *the former* and *the latter*, effort should be made to see that the antecedents are clearly stated.
2. In making a statement *never*, *always*, or *perfect* should not be used. Instead, the situation should be expressed by the use of percentages. For example, instead of "X has never been detected in Y," it is better to say, "the occurrence of X in Y is 0%."
3. The word *use* is frequently employed in writing. Therefore, the repetition of this word should be avoided, and other synonyms should be utilized in other cases.
4. The word *very* is used to intensify the degree of the modifier, but it does not give an idea about the degree in relation to other items. Therefore, instead of saying "very strong," using terms such as "stronger than" or "as strong as" could provide a better and more concrete comparison.

5. In describing the existence of objects or people in relation to a story, it is better to avoid the word *there*. To exemplify, "There are twenty students involved in the experimental group," is better expressed in the following manner: "Twenty students are in the experimental group."

Following are some examples of twelve common errors encountered in writing a text. First, examples for each error is given, then the revised forms are provided:

(Source: gopher://wiscinfo.wisc.edu:70/00/.acad/.writing-lab/.handouts/.grammar)

1. SENTENCE FRAGMENTS

Make sure each word group you have punctuated as a sentence contains a grammatically complete and independent thought that can stand alone as an acceptable sentence.

Incorrect: Tests of the Shroud of Turin have produced some curious findings. For example, the pollen of forty-eight plants native to Europe and the Middle East.

Revised: *Tests of the Shroud of Turin have produced some curious findings. For example, the cloth contains the pollen of forty-eight plants native to Europe and the Middle East.*

Incorrect: Scientists report no human deaths due to excessive caffeine consumption. Although caffeine does cause convulsions and death in certain animals.

Revised: Scientists report no human deaths due to excessive caffeine consumption although caffeine does cause convulsions and death in certain animals.

2. SENTENCE SPRAWL

Too many equally weighed phrases and clauses produce tiresome sentences.

Incorrect: The hearing was planned for Monday, December 2, but not all of the witnesses could be available, so it was rescheduled for the following Friday, and then all the witnesses could attend.

[There are no grammatical errors here, but the sprawling sentence does not communicate clearly and concisely.]

Revised: The hearing, which had been planned for Monday, December 2, was rescheduled for the following Friday so that all witnesses would be able to attend.

3. MISPLACED AND DANGLING MODIFIERS

Place modifiers near the words they describe; be sure the modified words actually appear in the sentence.

Incorrect: When writing a proposal, an original task is set for research.

Revised: When writing a proposal, a scholar sets an original task for research.

Incorrect: Many tourists visit Arlington National Cemetery, where veterans and military are buried everyday from 9:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m.

Revised: Everyday from 9:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m., many tourists visit Arlington National Cemetery, where veterans and military personnel are buried.

4. FAULTY PARALLELISM

Be sure you use grammatically equal sentence elements to express two or more matching ideas or items in a series.

Incorrect: The candidate's goals include winning the election, a health program, and education.

Revised: The candidate's goals include winning the election, enacting a national health program, and improving the educational system.

Incorrect: Some critics are not so much opposed to capital punishment as postponing it for so long.

Revised: Some critics are not so much opposed to capital punishment as they are to postponing it for so long.

5. UNCLEAR PRONOUN REFERENCE

All pronouns must clearly refer to definite referents [nouns]. Use "it," "they," "this," "that," "these" "those," and "which" carefully to prevent confusion.

Incorrect: Einstein was a brilliant mathematician. This is how he was able to explain the universe.

Revised: Einstein, who was a brilliant mathematician, used his ability with numbers to explain the universe.

Incorrect: Because Senator Martin is less interested in the environment than in economic development, he sometimes neglects it.

Revised: Because of his interest in economic development, Senator Martin sometimes neglects the environment.

6. INCORRECT PRONOUN CASE

Determine whether the pronoun is being used as a subject, object, or possessive in the sentence, and select the pronoun form to match.

Incorrect: Castro's communist principles inevitably led to an ideological conflict between he and President Kennedy.

Revised: Castro's communist principles inevitably led to an ideological conflict between him and President Kennedy.

Incorrect: Because strict constructionists recommend fidelity to the Constitution as written, no one objects more than them to judicial reinterpretation.

Revised: Because strict constructionists recommend fidelity to the Constitution as written, no one objects more than they [object] to judicial reinterpretation.

7. OMITTED COMMAS

Use commas to signal nonrestrictive or nonessential material, to prevent confusion, and to indicate relationships among ideas and sentence parts.

Incorrect: When it comes to eating people differ in their tastes.

Revised: *When it comes to eating, people differ in their tastes.*

Incorrect: The Huns who were Mongolian invaded Gaul in 451.

Revised: The Huns, who were Mongolians, invaded Gaul in 451. ["Who were Mongolian" adds information but does not change the core meaning of the sentence because Huns were a Mongolian people; it is therefore nonrestrictive or nonessential.]

8. SUPERFLUOUS COMMAS

Unnecessary commas make sentences difficult to read.

Incorrect: Field trips are required, in several courses, such as, botany and geology.

Revised: Field trips are required in several courses, such as botany and geology.

Incorrect: The term, "scientific illiteracy," has become almost a cliché in educational circles.

Revised: The term "scientific illiteracy" has become almost a cliché in educational circles.

9. COMMA SPLICES

Do not link two independent clauses with a comma (unless you also use a coordinating conjunction: "and," "or," "but," "for," "nor," "so," "yet").

Use a period or a semicolon instead, or rewrite the sentence.

Incorrect: In 1952 Japan's gross national product was one third that of France; by the late 1970s it was larger than the GNPs of France and Britain combined.

Revised: In 1952 Japan's gross national product was one third that of France. By the late 1970s it was larger than the GNPs of France and Britain combined.

Incorrect: Diseased coronary arteries are often surgically bypassed however half of all bypass grafts fail within ten years.

Revised: Diseased coronary arteries are often surgically bypassed; however, half of all bypass grafts fail within ten years.

10. APOSTROPHE ERRORS

Apostrophes indicated possessives and contractions but not plurals. Caution: "its," "your," "their," and "whose" are possessives (but no apostrophes). "it's," "you're," "they've" and "who's" are contractions.

Incorrect: In the current conflict its uncertain who's borders their contesting. [This type of errors are common with native speakers of English.]

Revised: In the current conflict it is [it's] uncertain whose borders they are [they're] contesting.

Incorrect: The Aztecs ritual's of renewal increased in frequency over the course of time.

Revised: The Aztec's rituals of renewal increased in frequency over the course of time.

11. WORDS EASILY CONFUSED

"Effect" is most often a noun (the effect), and "affect" is almost always a verb. Other pairs commonly confused: "lead"/"led" and "accept"/"except". Check a glossary of usage to find the right choice.

Incorrect: The recession had a negative affect on sales.

Revised: The recession had a negative effect on sales. (or) The recession affected sales negatively.

Incorrect: *The* laboratory instructor choose not to offer detailed advice.

Revised: The laboratory instructor chose not to offer detailed advice.

12. MISSPELLINGS

Spelling errors are usually perceived as a reflection of the writer's careless attitude toward the whole project. ... In addition to comprehensive dictionaries, you may want to use electronic spell checks ...

A Checklist for Editing the Final Draft

In order to edit one's writing, Piotrowski (1989), offers the following checklist. It is advised to take five quick glances through the draft, focusing on one area at a time, rather than looking for everything in one lengthy glance. For a detailed checklist on what to focus to ensure the completion of a research study see Appendix E.

A CHECKLIST FOR EDITING

CONTENT

- Keeping the intended reader in mind, is the information complete? Is it accurate?
- Should any information be added, deleted, modified?
- Are the points adequately, but not excessively, developed?

ORGANIZATION AND LAYOUT

- Will the reader know immediately what you are writing about?
- Would the information be more effective if it were reorganized?
- Is there a logical order in the way the ideas are presented?
- Is the layout appealing? Does it highlight important points?

PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE

- Does each paragraph make one major point?
- Is each major point explicitly stated?
- Can long paragraphs be divided or short ones combined?

STYLE AND TONE

- Is the language specific, natural, and appropriate to the reader?
- Can unnecessary words and phrases be deleted?
- Are sentences varied in structure and in length?
- Is it direct, clear, easy to read?
- Does it flow smoothly?

- Will the tone help you achieve your purpose?

MECHANICS

- Is the grammar correct?
- Is the punctuation correct?
- Are all words spelled correctly?

More assistance can be obtained on improving the writing style from other sources (Andrews & Blicke 1978; Brooks, 1989; Coyle, 1965; Long, Convey, & Chwalek, 1985; Gibaldi & Achtert, 1985; Mayes 1969; Menasche, 1984; Van Hagan, 1969; Walker, 1984; Williams, 1985; Winkler & McCuen, 1985; Zinsser 1988; Chapman & Waller, 1994).

EXERCISES

- A. Revise the following statements for simplicity. Be sure not to change the meaning of the sentence.
1. Due to the fact that your office experienced a delay in mail service, it is the decision of this committee to extend your allocation of time for the completion of your report one full month from the originally assigned completion date.
 2. He sent me a check in the amount of twenty dollars.
 3. All employees are urged to extinguish the illumination in all rooms and facilities not in use so that the maximum benefit of our energy-saving potential may be realized by this company.
 4. Judging on the basis of available evidence, I d say he is guilty.
 5. On the occasion of her eighteen birthday, he celebrated for a week.
 6. I am not able to do it at this time.
 7. I would like to meet you sometime next week and speak with respect to the proposal you made.
 8. Tom is of the opinion that we are not in a position to make contact with any amateur player for the purpose of recruiting him for our professional team without coming into violation of the latest NBA directive.
 9. He is an expert in the area of civil rights.
 10. My English teacher offered instruction to more than 150 students last semester.
 11. Each impact would have thrown up world-embracing dust cloud, blotting out the sun and lowering temperatures to the point where many plants and animals could not survive.
 12. A study of tens of thousands of parents and children, involving the investigation of several thousand genes which control the manufacture of proteins in the body, was carried out.
- B. Revise the following text for brevity.
1. My pulling tie off and flinging it haphazardly onto the sofa, stretching and sighing with the ease of homecoming, listening to the familiar silences of the place, I felt-as usual-the welcoming peace unlock the gritting tensions of my outside world.
 2. Though we long for the easy answer, the simple solution, the quick rationalization, only the harsh truth shall set us free.
 3. Dreams are necessary, but they can be frustrating unless you have the means to attain them.
 4. Wandering in the stockroom, searching futilely for pairs of shoes that I would swear were not there and finally meekly asking my coworkers to help me find them, I wasted countless hours during my first week on the job.
 5. Although I used to believe that love is all that I needed to make my marriage work, I now realize that my marriage failed not from a lack of love but rather from a lack of communication, honesty, and trust.

6. The newly evolved role of fathers and the concept of shared parenting have led some corporations to develop paternity-leave policies, but fewer than one percent of eligible men make use of them.
 7. As for the examination candidate, as examinations stand at the moment, he can be made to realize that although his expectation is of general uninterest, in the examination he will still be able to use the strategies of self-access associated with the process of handling ambiguity and finding personal interest which he has been taught and has developed.
- C. Revise the following text for directness by eliminating unnecessary words and phrases.
1. One of the major problems that is faced at this point in time is that there is world hunger.
 2. It frequently happens that a child can be scolded a numerous amount of times for doing something wrong, and he or she will persist in performing the forbidden act.
 3. It is Roundel's approach that exposes the injustices with which the black American is confronted.
 4. A situation of quality, deep-powder snow symbolizes a goal that is not easily attainable by skiers and that they can achieve only in rare cases.
 5. Sweeping and mopping half a restaurant after running around waitressing for five or six hours is enough to give occasion for an exhaustive collapse.
 6. The first and the second groups were not asked different questions.
 7. This article strongly recommends not putting any drugs and disinfectants on the low shelves of the medicine cabinet.
 8. A promotion in rank and an increase in salary was his reward.
- D. Indicate what is emphasized in each of the following statements.
1. Those in class will go to the Assembly Area under instruction given by teacher.
 2. Language teaching material in general something give students a highly grammatical idea of how questions are asked and answered.
- E. Rewrite the following text to provide coherence within the sentences as well as within the paragraphs.
1. A successful manufacturer offers items for sale.
He wants to make sure that an item has no flaws and that it works as it should. Otherwise he doesn't offer an item for sale.
 2. The reputation of his products depends to a great extent on the satisfaction of his customers. The amount of merchandise he sells depends to a great extent on the satisfaction of his customers.

3. A customer receives a dress with a flow. He will hesitate before buying from the same manufacturer again.

Source: Corbin & Vander(1965) and Alexander (1995)

- F. Revise the following paragraph to eliminate the use of masculine pronouns to refer to both men and women.

After the birth of a human being, his early years are obscurely spent in the toils or pleasures of the childhood. As he grows up, the world receives him, when his manhood begins, and he enters into contact with his fellows. He is then studied for the first time, and it is imagined that the germ of the vices and the virtues of his maturer years is then formed. This if I am not mistaken, is a great error. We must begin higher up; we must watch the infant in his mother's arms; we must see the first images which the external world casts upon the dark mirror of his mind, the first occurrences which he witnesses; we must hear the first words which awaken the leaping powers of thought, and stand by his earliest efforts, -if we would understand the prejudices, the habits, and the passions which will rule his life. The entire man is, so to speak, to be seen in the cradle of the child.

- G. Read each of the following passages closely. List each connective word or phrase in the passage.

1. With few exceptions, modern authorities have accepted [Studies of reclining Male Nude] as a study by Michelangelo for the figure of Adam in the "Creation of Adam" section of the Sistine Chapel ceiling. But is it really one of Michelangelo's drawings? Bernard Berenson once doubted it. He thought it more likely a very accomplished contemporary work of Michelangelo's drawing now lost to us. Then, as sometimes happens with even the greatest connoisseurs, Berenson reversed himself. He elevated it from "School of Michelangelo" to a work by the master himself. Yet he continued to harbor doubts about it.
2. Standing in on our microscopic fragment of a grain of sand, we attempt to discover the nature and purpose of the universe which surrounds our home in space and time. Our first impression of the universe is something akin to terror. We find the universe terrifying because of its vast meaningless distances, terrifying because of its conceivably long vistas of time, which dwarf human history to the twinkling of an eye, terrifying because of our extreme loneliness and because of the material insignificance of our home in space-a millionth part of sand out of all the sea-sand in the world. But above all else, we find the universe terrifying because it appears to be indifferent to life like our own; emotion, ambition and achievement, art and religion, all seem foreign to its plan. Perhaps, indeed, we ought to say it appears to be actively hostile to life like our own.

- H. Edit each of the following sentences for subject verb agreement. If the sentence is correct as written, so indicate. If it is incorrect, revise the verb to make it correct.
1. Every student and instructor were called into the auditorium.
 2. Statistics baffle me.
 3. Running three miles in three days is my goal.
 4. The president, with his children and wife, was happy to pose for a family photo.
 5. None of my texts explain the material well.
 6. Walking ten blocks to classes are not my idea of a good parking place.
 7. The musicians along with the soloist depends on a forceful conductor.
 8. In today's world critical thinking skills are a definite requirement for effective leadership.
 9. Creating and drafting are two crucial stages of the writing process.
 10. Watching horror movies alone late at night when imagination plays its little deceptions are inadvisable, at least for nervous individuals.
- I. Examine each of the following sentences for errors in pronoun reference. Correct the errors you find and be prepared to explain your reasoning.
1. Marcia wrote to Mary Ann every day when she was in Europe.
 2. When Mark's first book came out, he autographed it for me.
 3. Although Margaret had evidence to prove it, Henry thought the fantastic story was a lie, which was true.
 4. The rivalry between the Tigers and the Bulldogs did not end until they had won seven games in a row.
 5. I didn't invite Helen to the cookout, which was a big mistake.
 6. Gladys told Marcia she was a disappointment as an actress.
 7. After the principal's announcement on the microphone, he went to lunch.
 8. Margaret and Clinton work jigsaw puzzles by the hour, which amazing to me.
 9. She said she'd have to date more people before she could be sure we were right for each other, stressing that marriage for her would be a lifetime commitment. I strongly objected to that.
 10. The policemen's arrival was delayed, so when they got to the scene of the crime, no witnesses were there.
- J. Revise the following sentences which contain faulty parallelism.
1. This piece is easy to play and which is beautiful to listen to.
 2. They had planned to meet at Marcy's, pack a lunch, and leave before sunup.
 3. Ben likes to ride motorcycles and playing baseball.
 4. What could Alice tell you about disappointment and grieving over lost chances?
 5. Students fall naturally into three types: the achievers, the over achievers, and those who under achieve.

- K. Check each of the following sentences to determine if it is a mixed or incomplete construction. If it is, rewrite it to eliminate the error.
1. Because one leg is shorter than the other makes back hurt.
 2. By talking too much gets George in trouble.
 3. When Lisa studies with her boyfriend causes her grades to fall.
 4. The supermarket near my market has better fruit.
 5. Esther enjoys an evening at home with a good book better than her sister.
 6. After jogging for six miles every day is the time I enjoy a tall glass of lemonade.
 7. By saving some money monthly is the best way to get enough for a down payment on your house.
 8. He was a very excitable person and not because he was really lying was the reason he failed the lie detector test.
 9. Even though you like as subject does not mean it represent a good career choice for you.
 10. He comes from a poor family is the reason he appreciates things the rest of us take for granted.
- L. Check each of the following for unnecessary shifts in person or tense. If you find any. Revise them to eliminate the error.
1. Many of the students on this campus lack table manners. You will see them shovel food into their mouths without pausing to breathe, reach across someone else's tray for the salt, talk with their mouths full of food, and burp at their neighbors.
 2. We waited for hours for the match to begin, and then Boris walks on the court and proceeds to beat Michael three straight sets.
 3. Many travelers wait too late to make their plans. You should not procrastinate if you want good reservations.
 4. As days wore on, Marcie starts complaining and makes herself a nuisance.
 5. Christina and I talked and tried to understand each other, and then she begins accusing me of neglecting her.