

BLAW 235- Writing Workshop

Revise the items as assigned by the instructor. We will review the answers together.

Part 1. Pronouns and Unclear References

Revise the following sentences to eliminate “It is/There are” constructions and ensure that nouns and pronouns agree.

1. If someone smokes, they are at risk for contracting lung cancer.
2. It is important for an employee to manage their time effectively.
3. Every driver must show their license when stopped for a traffic violation.
4. It is not uncommon for the manager to fly to Atlanta every week.
5. The jury reached their decision after deliberating only one hour.

6. There are a few ways to make your resume more professional.
7. There are background influences that can affect one's communication skills.
8. There were no job candidates who brought their résumé to the interview.
9. There is a contractor who fails to arrive on time and leaves their clients unhappy.

Part 2. Wordiness

Make these sentences more concise (shorter). How many words can you delete from the following items?

1. The team will follow the exact same agenda as the last meeting and will conclude at 3:30pm this afternoon.
2. The boss instructed Dan to note any and all strange and unusual transactions completed in the recent past.
3. In spite of the fact that the educational environment is a very significant facet to each and every one of our children, some groups do not support reasonable and fair tax assessments that are required for providing an educational experience at a high level of quality.
4. Notwithstanding the fact that all legal restrictions on the use of firearms are the subject of heated debate and argument, it is necessary that the general public not stop carrying on discussions pro and con in regard to them.
5. In this particular section, I intend to discuss my position about the possible need to dispense with the standard approach to plea bargaining. I believe this for two reasons. The first reason is that there is the possibility of letting hardened criminals avoid receiving their just punishment. The second reason is the following: Plea bargaining seems to encourage a growing lack of respect for the judicial system.

Part 3. Passive Verbs

Revise the sentences below to eliminate the passive verb constructions used in each.

1. The reports have been compiled.
2. Independence is gained by those on welfare when skills are learned that the marketplaces values.
3. In this article, it is argued that the Vietnam War was fought to extend influence in Southeast Asia and was not ended until it was made clear that the United States could not defeat North Vietnam unless atomic weapons were used.
4. Your figures were reanalyzed to determine their accuracy. Results will be announced when it is judged appropriate.
5. It is my belief that the social significance of smoothing receives its clearest explication through an analysis of peer interaction among adolescents. In particular, studies should be made of the manner in which interactive behavior is conditioned by social class.
6. The tax return was completed before the April 15 deadline.
7. An appointment was made for 12:00.

BLAW 235- Writing Workshop

Part 1. Pronouns and Unclear References

Revise the following sentences to eliminate “It is/There are” constructions and ensure that nouns and pronouns agree.

1. If someone smokes, they are at risk for contracting lung cancer.

If people smoke, they are at risk....

It is important for an employee to manage their time effectively.

Managing time effectively is important for employees.

Employees should manage time effectively.

2. Every driver must show their license when stopped for a traffic violation.

Drivers must show their licenses when stopped for traffic violations.

3. It is not uncommon for the manager to fly to Atlanta every week.

The manager often flies to Atlanta weekly.

4. The jury reached their decision after deliberating only one hour.

The jury reached its decision.....

5. There are a few ways to make your resume more professional.

A few ways exist to make your resume more professional.

Your resume will look more professional if you make a few changes.

6. Every employee must sign up for his vacation before the deadline.

Employees must sign up for their vacation before the deadline.

7. There are background influences that can affect one's communication skills.

Background influences can affect one's communication skills.

8. There were no job candidates who brought their résumé to the interview.

No job candidates brought their resume to the interview.

9. There is a contractor who fails to arrive on time and leaves their clients unhappy.

A contractor who fails to arrive on time leaves his/her clients unhappy.

Contractors who fail to arrive on time leave their clients unhappy.

Part 2. Wordiness

Make these sentences more concise (shorter). How many words can you delete from the following items?

1. The team will follow the exact same agenda as the last meeting and will conclude at 3:30pm this afternoon.

The team will follow the same agenda as last meeting and conclude at 3:30pm today.

2. The boss instructed Dan to note any and all strange and unusual transactions completed in the recent past.

The boss instructed Dan to note all recent unusual transactions.

3. In spite of the fact that the educational environment is a very significant facet to each and every one of our children, some groups do not support reasonable and fair tax assessments that are required for providing an educational experience at a high level of quality.

Despite the importance of the educational environment to our children, some groups do not support fair tax assessment that provides high quality educational experiences.

4. Notwithstanding the fact that all legal restrictions on the use of firearms are the subject of heated debate and argument, it is necessary that the general public not stop carrying on discussions pro and con in regard to them.

Legal restrictions on firearms cause heated debate, but the public must continue the discussions.

5. In this particular section, I intend to discuss my position about the possible need to dispense with the standard approach to plea bargaining. I believe this for two reasons. The first reason is that there is the possibility of letting hardened criminals avoid receiving their just punishment. The second reason is the following: Plea bargaining seems to encourage a growing lack of respect for the judicial system.

We should dispense with standard plea bargaining because it sometimes allows hardened criminals to avoid receiving just punishment. Also, plea bargaining encourages a lack of respect for the judicial system.

Part 3. Passive Verbs

Revise the sentences below to eliminate the passive verb constructions used in each.

1. The reports have been compiled.

The department compiled the reports.

2. Independence is gained by those on welfare when skills are learned that the marketplaces values.

People on welfare gain independence when they learn skills the marketplace values.

3. In this article, it is argued that the Vietnam War was fought to extend influence in Southeast Asia and was not ended until it was made clear that the United States could not defeat North Vietnam unless atomic weapons were used.

This author argues the U.S. fought the Vietnam War to extend influence in Southeast Asia. Its leaders ended the war when they saw it could not defeat North Vietnam without using atomic weapons.

4. Your figures were reanalyzed to determine their accuracy. Results will be announced when it is judged appropriate.

The department reanalyzed your figures and will announce the results when appropriate.

5. It is my belief that the social significance of smoothing receives its clearest explication through an analysis of peer interaction among adolescents. In particular, studies should be made of the manner in which interactive behavior is conditioned by social class.

I believe we can most clearly explain the social significance of smoothing by analyzing peer interaction among adolescents. Researchers should study the effects of social class on interactive behavior.

6. The tax return was completed before the April 15 deadline.

We completed the tax return before April 15th.

7. An appointment was made for 12:00.

I made an appointment for 12:00.

Passive Verbs

Passive & Active verb tenses refer to whether the subject of the verb acts or is acted upon. Is the subject clearly stated? Active voice verbs show direct action by the subject. Passive voice verbs cause the reader to ask “who or what did the action?” The actor is unclear.

Active voice: Our students write excellent memos.

Passive voice: Excellent memos are written by our students.

Subject—students verb-write

Ways to Eliminate Passive voice

1. Turn the passive Clause or sentence around
 - a. Find the phrase that identifies the doer of the action
 - b. Make the doer the subject of the active clause or sentence

2. Find a Different Verb
 - a. Look for another word in the sentence to use as a verbEx: The chemical process was always observed to decompose the substance into five elements.

Better: The chemical process decomposes the substance into five elements.

3. Rethink the Sentence
 - a. Clarify your meaning and intent of the sentenceOften passive construction may be eliminated

4. Make the subject a Concrete Noun
 - a. Avoid using too many personal pronouns
 - b. Define the subject of your sentence

....

“The following procedure is recommended for your use.” vs. The manufacturer recommended the following procedure.

Passive voice contributes to wordiness-

Verbs to avoid—be, do, give, has/have, concern

Wordiness

Business people want to make points in the fewest possible words. Brief messages are easier to read and understand. Examine every sentence you write; can you express the thought in fewer words?

Wordiness often results from trying to extend length of piece of writing instead of developing ideas.

Five Principles

1. Delete meaningless words-
 - a. Verbal tics like actually, really, generally
W--Productivity actually depends on certain factors that basically involve psychology more than any particular technology.
C--Productivity depends on psychology more than on technology.
2. Delete doubled words & phrases; Avoid saying the same thing twice
 - a. Thought to make you sound smarter but don't
Ex: Hopes and desires, first and foremost, any and all, and also
 - b. to emphasize and draw attention to
3. Delete what readers can infer
Common but hard to identify
ex: When meaning of word implies modifier--
"do not try to predict those future sales" vs. "do not try to predict sales"
Terrible tragedy, final outcome, future plans, my personal opinion
4. Replace a phrase with a word
 - a. No ideal rule to follow about when can do this
But often can and should be alert for changes
 - b. Common—We must explain the reason for the delay in the meeting
C--We must explain why the meeting is delayed
W--We are in a position to make you a firm offer.
C-- We can make you a firm offer.
 - c. Delete unnecessary introductory words—watch after "that" or "because"
which often indicates heart of sentence
W- I am sending you this announcement to let you all know that the office will be closed Monday.
C- The office will be closed Monday.
5. Write in the affirmative
 - a. Writing in negative uses more words, also affirmative improves tone
Do not write in the negative vs. Write in the affirmative
Ex: Not the same, different
Not many, few
6. Avoid Excessive Hedging (use assertive language)
 - a. Avoid words such as: Usually, often, sometimes, most, many, somewhat, may, could, appear, suggest, seems to be
 - b. State claims using: suggests, indicates, prove, show etc.

7. Avoid Clichés—

- a. expressions are overused, mean little

Ex: last but not least, first and foremost, below the belt, better than new, easier said than done

Reducing wordiness creates a more direct style that the reader is more likely to understand.

Pronouns

World expects writers to make subjects/verbs agree, and pronouns agree with referents—
Problem is sexist language.

1. Substitute plurals for singulars-
 - a. When lawyers say, vs. When a lawyer says....
2. What to do when use noun that is singular in grammar but plural in meaning-
 - a. These are group, committee, staff, company
 - b. If used as a group- then singular
 - i. The committee has not yet made its decision
 - c. If used in plural, make plural
 - i. The faculty members have the memo but not all of them have read it.
 - ii.
 - d.

Related Problem is **Expletives**—these are “There are” “It is”
Usually, can start sentence immediately after the “there are/it is”

Using these constructions is wordy, fattens sentences and takes up space-

W- There are three vice presidents who report directly to the president.

C- Three vice presidents report directly to the president.

W- It is the client who should make application for licensing.

C- The client should apply for licensing.