

Description

Academic writing conveys clear and accurate information, and to this end, places a high premium on well-constructed, carefully thought-out content. Alas! Many a time, these hallowed features lead academic sentences to becoming lengthy and convoluted, making the text hard to read. In this article, let's look at some tips that will help you maintain an appropriate length of your sentence so that you can communicate your message or idea more effectively to the reader. It gets difficult for readers to go through chains of words and ideas in a lengthy sentence. Consequently, it is harder to process all the information and keep in mind what the original message or overall objective was and where all this information is leading to!



Long and convoluted sentences affect comprehension and readability. Period. Without careful crafting, they can be really hard to understand. Then again, too short sentences make for choppy writing without flow and cannot hold complex thoughts.

Is there a way to optimize sentence length? Fortunately, yes.

Here are some tips:

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1. Appropriate Sentence Length

Most readability formulas use the number of words in a sentence to measure its difficulty. Try to keep the average sentence length of your document around 20–25 words. This is a good rule of thumb to convey your meaning in a balanced way and avoiding a marathon or choppy sentences. The number varies as per the field, audience, or the nature of writing. For example, the average sentence length in abstracts of the natural sciences is reported to be shorter than that found in social science and humanities abstracts.

Example-
Original sentence: *In actual fact, every single nurse in the hospital worked for treating the patients from 3 am in the morning to twelve midnight.* ***(23 words)***
Revised sentence: *In fact, every nurse in the hospital worked from 3 am to midnight.* ***(13 words)***

2. Use Sentence Counter Tools

Sentence counter tools can help you write with greater clarity. As you type, they track useful metrics like sentence length and word count, allowing you to spot lengthy sentences that may challenge readers. This kind of feedback assists you in crafting sentences that are crisp and reader-friendly. T o ensure your writing is concise and engaging, check your sentence length here.

3. Vary Your Sentence Length

Do not follow a strict length for each and every sentence. Your writing should have a mix of short, medium, and long sentences. The above tip suggests an average for a long sentence. Incorporating variety in academic writing avoids monotony, creates emphasis where needed, and helps the reader understand connections between different points.

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If you find that your sentence is as long as a paragraph or around 40–50 words, break it down to smaller sentences. Similarly, if your text has many back-to-back short sentences, join them.

Example-

Original sentence: *Following instructions with a sentence too long can be confusing because it is easy to lose track of what was said at the beginning, since they do not give the reader enough time to process what they are reading and by the end of the sentence you might have forgotten where it started!* ***(53 words)***

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Revised sentence: *Following instructions with long sentences can be confusing.* ***(8 words)*** *It leads to lose track of what was said at the beginning.* ***(12 words)*** *It does not give the reader enough time to process what they are reading.* ***(14 words)*** *Consequently, by the end of the sentence you might have forgotten where it started!* ***(14 words)***

4. Focus on Your Message

Do not cram two or three main ideas into one long sentence. Know your main points and present them with pauses by breaking them down into smaller sentences. Losing focus of your message will lead to long drawn-out sentences and disjointed writing. When conveying a series of facts, do not unnecessarily connect all facts in one sentence but split them into smaller sentences. Avoid basic information and focus on delivering the final message to the reader.

Example-
Original sentence: *The protein level was 10 mg in Group A, while it was 7 mg in Group B, the difference being statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).* ***(25 words)***

Revised sentence: *There was a significant difference of protein levels between groups A and B.* ***(13 words)***

5. Fixing Short Sentences

Combining sentences into a longer one is a simple way of fixing short and choppy sentences. Use coordinating conjunctions (or, and, nor, but, or, yet, so) to avoid strings of short, vaguely related sentences. Subordinating conjunctions (after, since, whereas, because, etc.) are also used to connect sentences as well as ideas effectively.

Example-
Original sentence: *The patient has iron-deficiency. His WBC count is also low.*

Revised sentence: *The patient is iron deficient and has low WBC count as well.*

6. Fixing Long Sentences

Following the reverse of the above tip, remove excessive coordinating conjunctions and instead use a full stop to start a fresh sentence. Avoid starting a sentence with qualifiers such as “although,” “because,” or “since.” Avoid comma-plagued sentences and adding information in one long sentence using commas.

Example-
Original sentence: *Although it was mandatory, the study participant were deprived of the right to sign their consent forms.*

Revised sentence: *The study participants were not allowed to sign the mandatory consent forms.*

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7. Use Concise Expressions

Writing concisely and avoiding redundancy play a huge role in securing your text from marathon sentences. You could avoid beginning sentences with there/it is, reduce wordy phrases and nonessential prepositional phrases, and use the active voice.

Example-
Original sentence: *A diagnosis of the cancer was made on the basis of the biopsy findings of the tumor.* ***(17 words)***

Revised sentence: *Cancer was diagnosed on the basis of the findings.* ***(9 words)***

How have you managed to maintain the length of your sentences without losing it meaning? Let us know how these tips helped you draft your manuscript efficiently in the comments section below!

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Category

1. Language & Grammar
2. Reporting Research

Date Created
2016/06/30
Author
editor

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