

Sentence Style: Clarity, Conciseness, and Emphasis

Sometimes a passage's basic ideas are there, but the wording is a little off. Maybe the passage contains too many short, choppy sentences or too many long ones. The passage might be choked with extra words that obscure the sentence's meaning. Perhaps a sentence's key ideas aren't being emphasized; they're buried in the middle of the sentence when they should be appearing at the beginning or the end, where readers' attention is usually drawn.

1. Remove unnecessary words.

You can improve the clarity of a sentence by removing unnecessary words, thus making the sentence more concise and focused.

- **Wordy:** I have heard from some people that if you drink a lot of water then you can actually make your skin look a lot healthier.
- **Improved (Less Wordy):** Drinking plenty of water can replenish one's skin.

2. Emphasize key information.

You can also improve the clarity of a sentence by placing key information at the beginning or end of the sentence rather than in the middle.

- **Key Ideas Hidden:** I have heard from some people that if you drink a lot of water then you can actually make your skin look a lot healthier and younger. (Some of the sentence's most important information is hidden in the middle. Move the phrase "drinking lots of water" to the beginning of the sentence.)
- **Improved (Key Ideas Emphasized):** Drinking plenty of water can improve one's skin tone.



3. Break up unwieldy sentences.

Finally, you can improve the readability of an entire passage by breaking up long or unwieldy sentences.

- **Unwieldy Sentence:** The benefits of drinking lots of water on a person's youthful or healthy look are not always obvious to others because the body is made mostly of water and any water that a person takes in as part of his or her diet is small in comparison to how much water the person's body already has in it.
- **Improved (Several Clearer Sentences):** Drinking water may not have any visible effect on a person's outward appearance. The body is comprised mostly of water--several dozen liters, in fact--so any water a person drinks will be small by comparison.

Or by combining several short, choppy sentences into one or two smooth-sounding sentences.

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- **Choppy Sentences: I drink six large glasses of water. I do this every day. I do not see any difference in my skin tone. The water I drink does not make me feel younger.**
- **Improved (Choppy Sentences Combined): Although I drink six large glasses of water every day, I have never seen any difference in my skin tone or felt younger.**