Communication Strategies:
Editing for Style and Flow

Parallelism

The sentence parts joined by conjunctions must use the same grammatical constructions. A noun should be matched with a noun and an adjective with an adjective.

First Version: “Being a good friend involves good listening skills, to be considerate, and that you know how to have fun.”

Edited Version: “Being a good friend involves knowing how to listen, be considerate, and have fun.”

Comma Splices

This type of run-on sentence occurs when only a comma joins two main clauses.

First Version: “I want to write my paper about business, it’s a topic I can talk about at length.”

Edited Version: “I would like to write my paper about business, because it is a topic I can talk about at length.”

Another version: I would like to write my paper about business; it is a topic I can talk about at length.

Recognizing Clauses

Independent Clauses are a group of words that have a verb and subject. These words could stand alone as a complete sentence.

Example: “The white index cards fell to the floor.”

Or, two independent clauses could make up a sentence.
Example: “The cards scattered on the floor, and I had to pick them all up.”

Misplaced Modifiers

These are words or phrases that are in the wrong place. All modifiers should be as close as possible to whatever they describe.

Example: “After her wreck, Joanna could comprehend what the ambulance driver was barely saying.”

In that sentence, the ambulance driver is barely speaking. This is surely not the meaning of the sentence. The sentence should be: “After her wreck, Joanna could barely comprehend what the ambulance driver was saying.”

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Dangling Modifiers

These have no word or phrase to describe; they just dangle in the sentence.

Example: “Long ears drooping on the floor, Julie wondered how the dog could walk.”

In that sentence, Julie has long ears drooping on the floor. This is surely not the meaning of the sentence. The sentence should be: “Julie wondered how the dog could walk with its long ears drooping on the floor.”

Squinting Modifiers

These are words or phrases that can logically modify something on either side of them, but the reader cannot be sure what the words modify.

Example: “The teacher said after the semester ended that he was eligible to retake the test.”

In that sentence, the reader is not sure what after the semester ended applies to. Depending on the intent of the writer, the sentence could be: “After the semester ended, the teacher said that he was eligible to retake the test.” The sentence could also be: “The teacher said that he was eligible to retake the test after the semester ended.”

Eliminating Repetition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Redundant Phrase</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advance planning</td>
<td>Planning must be done in advance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask the question</td>
<td>It is impossible to ask anything except a question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mix together</td>
<td>It is impossible to mix apart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash money</td>
<td>Is cash ever anything but money?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined together</td>
<td>Things that are combined must be together. Delete together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End result</td>
<td>Can you have a result that’s not in the end?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fewer in number</td>
<td>As opposed to fewer in what else?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Month of May</td>
<td>Everybody knows that May is a month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same identical</td>
<td>Something that’s identical must be the same. Delete one word or the other.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Writing Style: Defining Your Purpose

Narrative - telling a story
Expository – explaining or giving information
Descriptive – providing a written picture of someone, something, or someplace
Informative or Explanatory – giving data or some other type of information
Expressive – detailing your thoughts or emotions
Persuasive or argumentative – influencing others to come around to your way of thinking
Analytical – examining material presented to you