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Updated: 4 October 2016

Problem Areas and Their Solutions

Active/Passive Voice

Passive voice is a way of ordering your words within a sentence that makes the action weaker and thus the sentence becomes less strong and authoritative. Always aim to have a strong verb that directly connects to the actor in any particular sentence.

Passive voice: There is a great deal of grammar expertise possessed by our college community.
Active: Our college community possesses a great deal of grammar expertise.

Helpful tip: if you can put the words "by zombies" after the verb in the sentence and the sentence still makes sense, it is likely passive voice and should be reevaluated.
Ex: Dana was attacked (by zombies) = Passive voice
　　Zombies attacked Dana (by zombies) = Active

Prepositional Phrases

Prepositional phrases are often overused to show possession of an object, which can easily be replaced with an "**'s**". Also, using too many prepositional phrases (prepositions and object combinations) in one sentence can make it hard to decipher.

Bad: The color **of the** cat.
Good: The **cat's** color.
Bad: It is the policy **of the** company to never confirm nor deny **to the** public that the positions **of its**
　　employees are untenable given the lowness **of their** pay and the inadequacy **of their** work
　　environment.
Good: The Company will not admit that their employees cannot survive in bad working conditions with
　　such low pay.

Undefined Pronouns

Using pronouns while writing can be extremely useful in that you can avoid using someone's name repeatedly and avoid being redundant. However, when using pronouns we run the risk of leaving them undefined. Always make sure there is context for a pronoun:

Bad: Emma planned to take Christine to the beach today. However, <u>she</u> fell ill and the trip was cancelled.
Good: Emma planned to take Christine to the beach today. However, <u>Christine</u> caught the flu and
　　postponed the trip.

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Gerund

Gerunds are nouns that are made by adding "-ing" to a verb. For example, the gerund form of "talk" is "talking". Though they are sometimes necessary, using the gerund and other –ing forms of words introduce a lot of unnecessary words that can be easily replaced with a better verb or a differently structured sentence.

Bad: Every year, tens of thousands of students apply to the most selective colleges, with **gaining** admission to these schools **being** their goal.

Good: Every year, tens of thousands of students apply to the most selective colleges in order to gain admission to these schools.

(Example from: http://blog.prepscholar.com/wordiness-and-redundancy-in-sat-writing)

Redundancies

Try to avoid using the same words, or similar phrases, within proximity to other instances of similar words.

Bad: If you can manage to **schedule** one at a <u>convenient</u> time, please **schedule** an appointment with an experienced tutor and, at your <u>convenience</u>, try to fit it into your **schedule**.

Good: At your convenience, talk to an experienced tutor and try to schedule an appointment that fits into your schedule.

Unnecessary Wordiness

Using multiple words or long phrases when something shorter will do is a common source of excessive wordiness when writing. Often our thoughts are not as concise as they could be when we first think of them and this translates into convoluted and confusing sentences that, without editing, are hard to understand in our first drafts.

Bad: Standard archaeological theory maintains that discrete layers of soil can be dated sequentially when no evidence of disturbance or mixing is present.

Good: Archaeologists date soil layers chronologically when there is no evidence of disturbance.

Replaceable phrases

Some phrases are commonly used in conversation, but tend to make writing cluttered and difficult to understand because these phrases introduce unnecessary words to a sentence. Some examples of extraneous words are: nowadays; any way, shape, or form; in the case of; type of; have a tendency to; as a matter of fact; for the most part; by means of; due to the fact that. Some of these words should be avoided, while others can be replaced with a more concise alternative. On the next page there is a helpful list of examples and their alternatives.

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From: http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/CCS_wordyphrases.html

Instead of:	Use:
- the reason for - for the reason that - due to the fact that - considering the fact that - on the grounds that - this is why	**because, since, why**
- it is crucial that - it is necessary that - there is a need/necessity for - it is important that - it is incumbent upon - cannot be avoided	**must, should**
- prior to - in anticipation of - subsequent to - following on - at the same time as - simultaneously with	**before, after, as**
- is able to - has the opportunity to - is in a position to - has the capacity for - has the ability to	**can**
- on the occasion of - in a situation in which - under circumstances in which	**when**
- despite the fact that - regardless of the fact that - notwithstanding the fact that	**although, even, though**

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