

SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE WRITING

1. Don't bury the subject. Find the actor, find the action, and put both actor and action near the beginning of each sentence.
2. Ask yourself whether a problem sentence would be clearer if you split it into two or more sentences.
3. Vary your sentence structure and length. If you write exclusively in short, punchy sentences, your prose will sound singsong. If you write exclusively in long sentences, your prose will be tiring and needlessly difficult for your readers. Aim for an elegant balance in each paragraph.

4. Build your sentences and paragraphs around specific, concrete details, rather than vague abstractions. (Notice the difference between "Here, we see he is exhibiting satisfaction as he, at long last, takes possession of his well-earned reward" and "He grinned as he pocketed the coin.")
5. Always introduce quotations by letting your readers know who is speaking and in what context.
6. Limit forms of the verb "to be." Push yourself to incorporate colorful, vivid verbs that clearly express an action.
7. Read your writing out loud. If you get tongue-tied when trying to read a particular sentence, or if you wince at the sound of your prose, you've found a place in your paper that needs to be revised.