

characteristics of effective writing

from The College Board

Characteristics of effective writing	Examples of ineffective writing	Corrected sentences
Consistency		
Sequence of tenses	After he broke his arm, he is home for two weeks.	After he broke his arm, he was home for two weeks.
Shift of pronoun	If you're tense, one should try to relax.	If you're tense, you should try to relax.
Parallelism	The master carpenter showed us how to countersink the nails, how to varnish the wood, and getting a smooth surface was also demonstrated.	The master carpenter showed us how to countersink the nails, varnish the wood, and get a smooth surface.
Noun-number agreement	Ann and Sarah want to be a pilot.	Ann and Sarah want to be pilots.
Subject-verb agreement	There is eight people on shore.	There are eight people on shore.
Logical expression of ideas		
Coordination and subordination	Nancy has a rash, and she is probably allergic to something.	Nancy has a rash; she is probably allergic to something.
Logical comparison	Harry grew more vegetables than his neighbor's garden.	Harry grew more vegetables than his neighbor.
Modification and word order	Barking loudly, the tree had the dog's leash wrapped around it.	Barking loudly, the dog had wrapped his leash around the tree.
Clarity and precision		
Ambiguous and vague pronouns	In the newspaper they say that few people voted.	The newspaper reported that few people voted.
Usage	He circumvented the globe on his trip.	He circumnavigated the globe on his trip.
Wordiness	There are many problems in the contemporary world in which we live.	There are many problems in our world today.
Missing subject	If your car is parked here while not eating in the restaurant, it will be towed away.	If you park here and do not eat in the restaurant, your car will be towed away.
Weak passive verbs	When you bake a cake, the oven should be preheated.	When you bake a cake, you should preheat the oven.

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Examples of ineffective writing

Corrected sentences

Appropriate use of conventions

Adjective and adverb confusion

His friends agree that he drives reckless.

His friends agree that he drives recklessly.

Pronoun case

He sat between you and I at the stadium.

He sat between you and me at the stadium.

Idiom

Natalie had a different opinion toward her.

Natalie had a different opinion of her.

Comparison of modifiers

Of the sixteen executives, Meg makes more money.

Of the sixteen executives, Meg makes the most money.

Sentence fragment

Whether or not the answer seems correct.

The answer seems to be correct.

Comma splice or fused sentence

Shawna enjoys crossword puzzles, she works on one every day.

Shawna enjoys crossword puzzles, and she works on one every day.

Source: *The Official SAT Study Guide: For the New SAT*, The College Board.



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