

Exercise 11. Revising Sentences Key



Student: _____ Date: _____

Strunk & White (in all editions [1918, 1959 to present] of *The Elements of Style*) advise students to “write with vigor”. For most authors, this phrase means to “revise with vigor” because writers put down thoughts in first forms that are messy, imprecise, and usually reflect the ideas of the author for the author.

Revising with vigor means to use action verbs, to keep words and phrases near the word they modify, to select a simple word instead of the “orotund polysyllables [or] clumsily coy phrases”¹, and to keep the reader’s viewpoint in mind.

1. Problem: Misplaced pronoun. Incomplete information.

Alcohol strengthens your bones, says a new study from Oregon State University. It fights heart disease. A glass a day in midlife is linked to a lower rate of heart disease and cognitive decline in old age. OSU Today, Nov. 28, 2012.

Possible recast (science journalism): Oregon State University researchers reported that one alcoholic beverage per day in midlife may strengthen bones, lower heart disease, and prevent cognitive decline in old age.

Possible recast (scientific writing): Nutrition researcher Smith (year) reports one glass of red wine significantly ($P < 0.05$) reduces the rate of heart disease, bone density, and cognitive decline among 500 subjects, aged 50–65 years.

2. Problem: Muddled, deliberately ambiguous sentence.

Insufficient data are at present available to completely negate the possibility that removal of the above-mentioned substances from the system is not a factor of importance.

Possible recast: After this research, we do not know (or data do not show) if removing these substances from the system is important.

3. Problem: Verb incorrect for meaning and number (should be singular as written) Subject missing.

Computation of the data have been conducted by means of varied statistical packages.

Possible recast: We analyzed the data using a variety of statistical software: list specific software. (Active voice)

Possible recast: Data were analyzed for statistical significance by Name who used (list software). (Passive voice)

4. Problem: Missing subject. Missing punctuation; misplaced modifiers.

Improved monitoring will be crucial for better understanding acidification trends, its contributing factors and the biological responses of marine organisms. “We lack real time high resolution data because conditions are so variable which is key,” says panel member George Waldbusser, a marine chemist at Oregon State University in Corvallis.

Gewin, Virginia. 2012. “US state declares war on acid waters”, *Nature*, Nov. 27, 2012;

<http://www.nature.com/news/us-state-declares-war-on-acid-waters-1.11908>; accessed 11/28/1012.

Possible recast: To understand why oceans become more acidic, we need better data on trends, contributing factors, and biological responses of marine organisms. “We lack real-time, high-resolution data because conditions are so variable, which is key,” says marine chemist George Waldbusser at Oregon State University in Corvallis. (Note that the punctuation makes a difference to readers for understanding the quotation in this sentence, and that the author must punctuate speech quoted.)

5. Problem: Inaccurate terms. Missing subject.

Chart Cartographic Generalization (CCG) has been applied in the whole process of chart complication, and it is the nuclear problem of chart complication.

Possible recast: We applied chart cartographic generalization (CGC) to compile the map, but this method proved inaccurate.

Possible recast: Using the method of chart cartographic generalization (CGC), we introduced errors of scale into the process of compiling our map.

¹ F. Peter Woodford. 1999. *How to Teach Scientific Communication*. Reston, VA: Council of Biology Editors. p. 48.

