



THE PARAMEDIC METHOD

Perhaps you've been told that your writing is wordy or that your heavy phrasing confuses your reader. Most writers face this problem of overwriting. However, clear sentences are integral to clarity and facilitating your reader's understanding. To ensure greater readability, try using the Paramedic Method described here.

The Paramedic Method is an easy, do-it-yourself approach for eliminating unnecessary phrasing and repetitions. Developed by UCLA Professor Richard Lanham (*Revising Prose*), this approach provides an effective way to reduce overwriting.

Editing your writing using the Paramedic Method will improve clarity and directness of style. The Paramedic Method helps improve directness by eliminating unnecessary words. The Paramedic Method also helps you activate your sentences by eliminating passive voice and redundancies.

The Paramedic Method:

Follow these steps to improve the readability of your sentences.

1. Underline the prepositions (e.g., of, in, about, for, onto, into):
Prepositions are connecting words linking nouns to other nouns or verbs; as a result, they add extra weight to your sentences.
2. Highlight/Bold the "to be" verb forms (is, are, was, were, etc.):
Variations of "to be" can result in the passive voice and also force greater reliance on adjectives or adverbs. Use verbs intentionally to impact the clarity of your writing
3. Ask, "where's the action?" and change the action into a strong verb
4. Identify the real subject of the sentence



5. Eliminate any unnecessary slow wind-ups or introductory phrases: introductory phrases delay the emphasis of the subject.
6. Eliminate any redundancies.

Let's try it:

First, most would agree that the sentence below is wordy.

The author's intention of the article is to argue for the elimination of the passivity of the learner in college through using recent studies that show the value of collaborative learning in the classroom environment.

1. Underline the prepositions (of, in, about, for, onto, into):

The author's intention of the article is to argue for the elimination of the passivity of the learner in college through using recent studies that show the value of collaborative learning in the classroom environment.

2. Highlight the "is" verb forms:

The author's intention of the article is to argue for the elimination of the passivity of the learner in college through using recent studies that show the value of collaborative learning in the classroom environment.

3. Ask, "where's the action?" and revise as single verbs: *Intends* instead of *Intention, Argue, Use, Show*

4. Identify the subject of the sentence: the author

5. Eliminate any unnecessary slow wind-ups or introductory phrases: *The author intends to argue* can be quickly rephrased to *the author argues*

6. Eliminate any redundancies: *author's intention of the article is to argue; elimination of passivity; that show; and to promote.*



Final Revision:

The author cites recent research and argues for collaboration as a way to eliminate passivity and stimulate classroom active learning.

(Original Word Count = 35, Final Word Count = 20)

Here's another example:

The new interpretations on canine aggressive behavior researched by Cesar Milano are actually conceived by using a method that originally was used by Skinner and the early scholars in behaviorism.

Using the Paramedic Method, note the heavy prepositions, identify the subject, the use of "to be," any redundancies, and unnecessary features to dewrite & revise:

Cesar Millan uses Behaviorism in researching canine aggression.

(Original word count: 30. New word count: 10).

References:

Lanham, Richard. *Revising Prose*, 5th Ed. New York: Pearson, 2002.

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