

The Paramedic Method

Developed by Richard Lanham

The Problem

- What does this sentence say? What does it mean?

The encouragement of total reliance on the federally sponsored student loan program for medical students from low-income families to pay their way through school is causing many young doctors to leave medical school deeply in debt.

The “Official Style”

The “Official Style” is the wordy style preferred by bureaucrats. It uses . . .

- 1) Lots of prepositions and prepositional phrases
- 2) “To be” verbs
- 3) Nominalizations
- 4) The passive voice
- 5) A long ‘wind-up’ or introductory phrase

Don't be a bureaucrat!

The Official Style is difficult to read and understand. It uses more words than are necessary. It disguises the **action** in a sentence—who is doing what to whom.

You don't want to write like a bureaucrat! This presentation offers you a method to write like a REAL PERSON with a voice and NOT like a bureaucrat.

Steps in the Paramedic Method

1. Underline or highlight the prepositional phrases.
2. Identify the “is” and “to be” verb forms.
3. Ask: “Who’s kicking who?” (Who’s doing what to whom?)
4. Put this action into a single, active verb and place the doer as the subject.
5. Keep the action near the beginning of the sentence if possible.
6. Start fast—no slow wind-ups. Eliminate unnecessary words and phrases.

Step 1

- Underline or highlight the prepositional phrases:

* A preposition is a word or group of words used before a noun, pronoun, or noun phrase to show direction, time, place, location, spatial relationships, or to introduce an object. Some examples of prepositions are words like "in," "at," "on," "of," and "to."

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Step 2

- Identify the “to be” verb forms.

* “To be” verbs are conjugations of “to be”: *am, is, are, was, etc.*

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- Young doctors are leaving medical school in debt?

More About Verbs

- Strung-out verb phrases such as "give consideration to" and "make acknowledgment of" slow down your writing and add excess words. To get rid of them, read your draft and focus on the action. Ask, "What's happening?" When you find out, try to express that action in a single lively verb.

Why write....

put the emphasis on

have an understanding of

make a comparison

is reflective of

give permission to

in opposition to

When you could write....

emphasize

understand

compare

reflects

allow

oppose

Step 5

- Keep the action near the beginning of the sentence if possible.

So, let's put the idea of young doctors leaving medical school in debt at the FRONT of the sentence rather than at the end.

Step 6

- Start fast. Eliminate unnecessary words and phrases.

Original

The encouragement of total reliance on the federally sponsored student loan program for medical students from low-income families to pay their way through school is causing many young doctors to leave medical school deeply in debt.

Revision

Many young doctors from low-income families leave medical school deeply in debt because they relied on student loans to pay their way through school.

(Reduced from 37 words to 25. Lard factor 32%)

Practice Sentences

1. Early childhood thought disorders misdiagnosis often occurs as a result of unfamiliarity with recent research literature describing such conditions.

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Revision

Physicians unfamiliar with newer research often misdiagnose thought disorders in young children.

(Reduced from 19 words to 12. Lard factor 37%)

Practice Sentences

2. In so far as manifestations of infestation by a small faunal species were evident in the residential facilities provided for the agricultural laborers, an unwillingness to occupy, utilize, or in any manner inhabit the facilities was therefore demonstrated by the aforementioned laborers.

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Revision

Because rats infested the house, the farm workers refused to live there.

(Reduced from 42 words to 12. Lard factor 71%)