7.6 Writing clear sentences

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____ **Total: 17 marks**

KEY WORDS concise • wordiness • active voice • passive voice • parallel structure • revise

Objective

Build the skills to write **clear sentences** : concise, active and parallel, so readers follow your ideas without effort.

You must be able to:

- cut wordiness and empty phrases
- choose the active voice when the doer matters
- use parallel structure for lists and comparisons

1 Key knowledge and worked examples

■ Three habits of clear writing

habit	unclear	clear
concise	"Due to the fact that it was raining, the game was cancelled."	"Because it rained, the game was canceled."
active voice	"Mistakes were made by the council."	"The council made mistakes."
parallel structure	"She likes reading, to swim and hikes."	"She likes reading, swimming and hiking."

■ Empty phrases to cut

"in my opinion I think", "the fact that", "it is important to note that", "in today's society", "very unique".

■ When the passive is right

Use the passive when the doer is unknown or unimportant: "The museum was built in 1902." Writers also use it to hide who is responsible, which careful readers notice.

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■ Worked example

Task: revise "It is important to note that the fact is that the library is used by many students in today's society."

Answer: "Many students use the library." The revision cuts three empty phrases and turns the passive into the active, so the sentence is a third of the length and clearer.

2 Practice

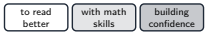
2.1 Revise this sentence to remove wordiness: "In my personal opinion, I think that homework is something that is not very useful." [2]



2.2 Rewrite in the active voice and explain what changes: "The decision to close the park was made without asking residents." [3]



2.3 Fix the parallel structure and explain why it matters: "The program helps students to read better, with math skills, and building confidence." [3]



3 Exam-style questions

3.1 Read the draft paragraph (a composite draft written for practice).

> "(1) In today's society, it is important to note that there are a lot of cars. (2) Pollution is caused by them. (3) Cities could build bike lanes, add buses, and they should also be making streets that are safer for walking. (4) Due to the fact that this would help the air, it should be done."

(a) Identify one empty phrase in sentence (1). [1]

(1) In today's society, it is important to note that there are a lot of cars. (2) Pollution is caused by them. (3) Cities could build bike lanes, add buses, and they should also be making streets that are safer for walking. (4) Due to the fact that this would help the air, it should be done.

composite draft

(b) Rewrite sentence (2) in the active voice. [1]

(c) Identify the problem in sentence (3). [1]

3.2 Use the draft paragraph in Question 3.1.

Rewrite the paragraph as a clear, persuasive argument paragraph. Make it concise, use the active voice, use parallel structure, and add one specific piece of evidence and a sentence of commentary. [6]

- ☐ concise
- ☐ active voice
- ☐ parallel list
- ☐ evidence
- ☐ commentary

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Solutions

Marking: **M1** a correct method, **A1** the correct answer, **B1** an independent mark.

Each answer shows the steps, then the **result**.

2.1

a concise revision, for example: “Homework is not very useful.” or “I think homework is of little use.”; the revision keeps the meaning and removes the repeated or empty words

2.2

an active version that names a doer, for example: “The council closed the park without asking residents.”; the active version names who made the decision; so responsibility becomes clear, which the passive had hidden

2.3

a parallel revision, for example: “The program helps students read better, improve their math and build confidence.”; each item now uses the same grammatical form (verb + object); so the list is easier to read and the items seem equally important

3.1

(a) “In today’s society” or “it is important to note that”

(b) “They cause pollution.” or “Cars cause pollution.”

(c) the list is not parallel: “build,” “add” and “they should also be making” do not match

3.2

thesis: a clear, concise claim as the first sentence

evidence: a specific piece of evidence (realistic or invented and reasonable); uses active voice throughout where the doer matters

commentary: uses parallel structure in the list of solutions; a sentence of commentary that explains how the evidence supports the claim

sophistication: removes all empty phrases and reads smoothly, with a strong final sentence

model: “Cars fill our streets and our lungs. In our city, traffic produces about half of the air pollution that the health department measures. The council can cut it in three ways: build bike lanes, add buses and make streets safe for walking. Each option gives people a real choice to leave the car at home, and every car left at home means cleaner air for the children who walk to school along these roads.”

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