



## SENTENCE FOCUS

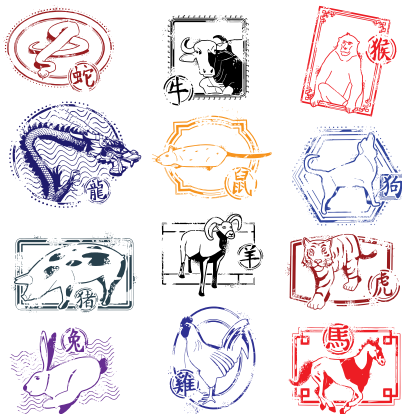
Be sure that all your sentences are focused on the main idea of your paragraph, essay, or document. In addition, check that the sentence style you use helps each idea flow from sentence to sentence.

### 33a Use transitions

You can use transitions to connect from one sentence to the next, creating a flow of ideas that all support the main idea. Transitions can also help clarify meanings by highlighting relationships between words, phrases, or sentences. Writing without transitions often sounds disjointed and rambling, but be sure that the transitions you use fit the relationship you are trying to describe.

→ The Chinese zodiac has twelve signs; **similarly**, so does Western astrology.

→ **As previously mentioned**, I am frustrated that my Chinese zodiac sign is the boar.



## Transitions

Addition → moreover, furthermore, besides, likewise, also, too, finally, second, third, last, additionally

Cause → since, because

Comparison → similarly, likewise

Concession → although, though, despite

Condition → unless, provided that, if

Contrast → but, yet, however, nevertheless, in contrast, on the contrary, nonetheless, whereas, even though, although, otherwise, on the other hand

Exception → except

Exemplification → for example, for instance

Intensification → indeed, in fact

Place → where, here, near, beyond

Purpose → (in order) to, to this end

Repetition → in other words, as I have said, as previously mentioned, as stated above

Result → therefore, thus, consequently, as a result, hence

Summary → in conclusion, in short, all in all, overall, finally

Time → when, after, before, until, as long as, meanwhile, while, immediately, soon, afterward, then, henceforth

### 33b

## Emphasize key ideas

### 1. Use sentence order for emphasis

When you use a sentence that includes a list or series, be sure to use an order that is consistent. Listing items from most important to least important, or vice versa, will help you emphasize key ideas.

Poor order → Before completing the sign project, we will need to check with these levels of government: city, national, regional, and county.

OK → Before completing the sign project, we will need to check with these levels of government: city, county, regional, and national.

## 2. Use end-focus for emphasis

In English, it is normal to arrange sentences so that the most important information comes at the end of the sentence. This type of end-focus allows you to organize general knowledge—information that is obvious or already known to the reader—at the beginning of a sentence and lead up to the most important or emphasized information at the end.

End-focus → Before the sign project can be completed, we will need to get approval from the governor's office.

## 3. Use front-focus for emphasis

You can also place a sentence element in an abnormal position—usually at the front of the sentence—to make the element more emphatic. This type of front-focus is used effectively if you know the regular patterns of English sentences (see [Chapter 35](#)).

Front-focus → Red paint they used rarely for the signs, so using it at the governor's mansion allowed the signs to stand out.

## 4. Reorder negative adverbials for emphasis

Placing a negative adverbial at the beginning of a sentence places an emphasis on that part of the sentence.

Fronting a negative adverbial → Never have I seen such a paint color on a government sign!

## 5. Use parenthetic expressions

Parenthetic expressions, which are enclosed by punctuation, place an emphasis on the previous sentence element.

Parenthetical expression → At the governor's mansion, **for example**, they used red paint.

Parenthetical expression → Red paint, **of course**, will grab pedestrian attention.



## EXERCISE 1

*Directions: Rewrite the following sentences, so the underlined part is placed in a different and more emphatic position.*

1. They are painting the governor's mansion on a state holiday.
2. The paint used on the mansion is similar to the paint used on the state prison.
3. Tourists were visiting while they painted the building.
4. I would call the paint color dull gray.
5. The paint project costs the state over two million dollars.

33c

Be clear

### 1. Avoid tangents

To keep your sentence on topic, avoid tangents or irrelevant information.

Lack of focus → I am frustrated that my Chinese zodiac sign is the boar, which by the way is also the sign for Arnold Schwarzenegger and Ronald Reagan, because I see myself more of a dragon.

OK → **I am frustrated that my Chinese zodiac sign is the boar because I see myself more as a dragon.**





## 33d

## Show confidence

When you write, show that you know the topic well by using authority in your phrasing. Stay away from what some teachers and editors call *weasel words*, such as *I think*, *I believe*, *I know*, *I think I know*. See **11a** for more information on how not to “weasel.”

Non-authoritative sentence → I think that I know why the Chinese zodiac has twelve signs and four elements.

OK → **The Chinese zodiac has twelve signs, based on the months, and four elements, based on the seasons.**

## EXERCISE 2

*Directions: Each of the following sentences has a clarity problem; rewrite them so their meanings are clear.*

1. A letter requesting that the governor stop the painting of the mansion and choose another paint color was sent.
2. Although the governor only saw three letters, he knew there was a problem.
3. The color of the atrium, the color of the foyer, and the driveway concrete color did not match.
4. The angry governor and secretary both called the painters' office.
5. The governor wanted the painters, groundskeepers, and the painting supervisors to all be on the same page.