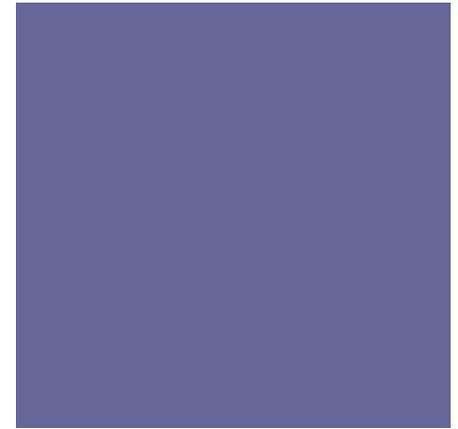




Sentence Composition and Writing Style



**The secrets to getting an
A on your essay**

**Planners' Writing Exchange
Elli Cosky
Fall 2011**

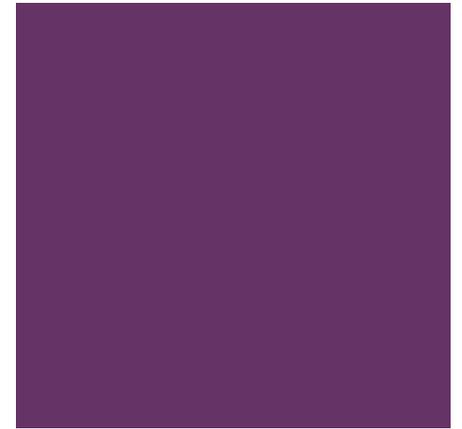
Today's Outline



Sentence Construction

Writing Directly

10 Grammar Elements Every Planner Should Know



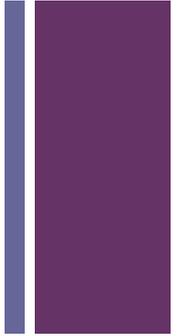
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Sentence Construction



Sentence Construction

Do not use periods for commas

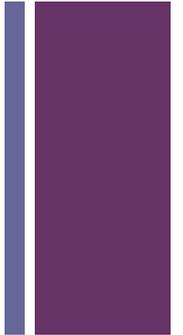


- Example 1: I met her at school two years ago. Coming out of my dorm. **Change to...**

I met her at school two years ago, coming out of my dorm.

- Example 2: He was an interesting man. And lived in Hong Kong and Tehran within the last two years. **Change to...**

He was an interesting man, and he lived in Hong Kong and Tehran within the last two years.



Sentence Construction

In the real world there is no page limit

■ **Be succinct as possible**

- Merriam-Webster defines succinct as “marked by compact precise expression without wasted words”

Examples:

1. A period of unfavorable weather set in **Change to...**

It rained every day for a week

2. He showed satisfaction as he took possession of his well-earned reward **Change to...**

He grinned as he pocketed the cash



Sentence Construction

Use a dash only when a more common form of punctuation seems inadequate

- **“A dash is a mark of separation that is stronger than a comma, less formal than a colon, and more relaxed than parentheses”**

Examples:

1. His first thought on getting out of bed – if he had any thought at all – was to get back in again.
2. The rear axle began to make noise – a grinding, chattering, teeth-gritting rasp.
3. Violence – the kind you see on television – is not honestly violent – there in lies its harm.



Sentence Construction

The number of the subject determines the number of the verb

- **Words that intervene between subject and verb do not affect the number of the verb.**

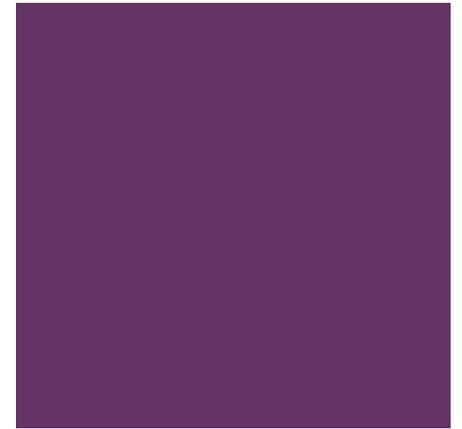
Examples:

1. The bittersweet flavor of youth – its trials, its joys, its adventures, its challenges – are not soon forgotten. **Change to...**

The bittersweet flavor of youth – its trials, its joys, its adventures, its challenges – **is** not soon forgotten.

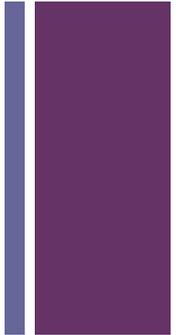
2. He is one of those people who is never ready on time.

He is one of those people who **are** never ready on time.



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Don't Be Passive



Avoid the Passive Voice

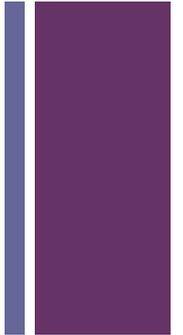
- Put key actions into verbs rather than nouns
- Examples of changing a noun into a verb:
 - “During the early years of the Civil War, the South’s attempt at enlisting Great Britain on its side was met with failure.”

What’s wrong with this sentence?

- “During the early years of the Civil War, the South’s **attempt** at **enlisting** Great Britain on its side was met with **failure**.”

Let’s fix it:

- “During the early years of the Civil War, the South **attempted** to **enlist** Great Britain on its side, but it **failed**.”



Avoid the Passive Voice

Example 2: "Using population data, it was found that the region grew much faster than the US over a ten year period."

What's wrong with this sentence?

- "Using population data, it was found that the region grew much faster than the US over a ten year period."

Let's Fix it:

- "The region's population growth dramatically outpaced the nation's over a ten year period."



Avoid the Passive Voice

Example 3: "A four-part analysis will be conducted in this paper"

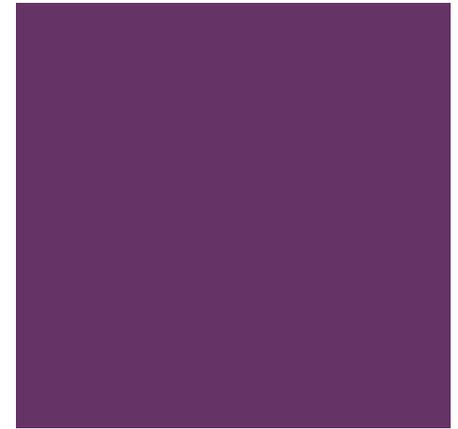
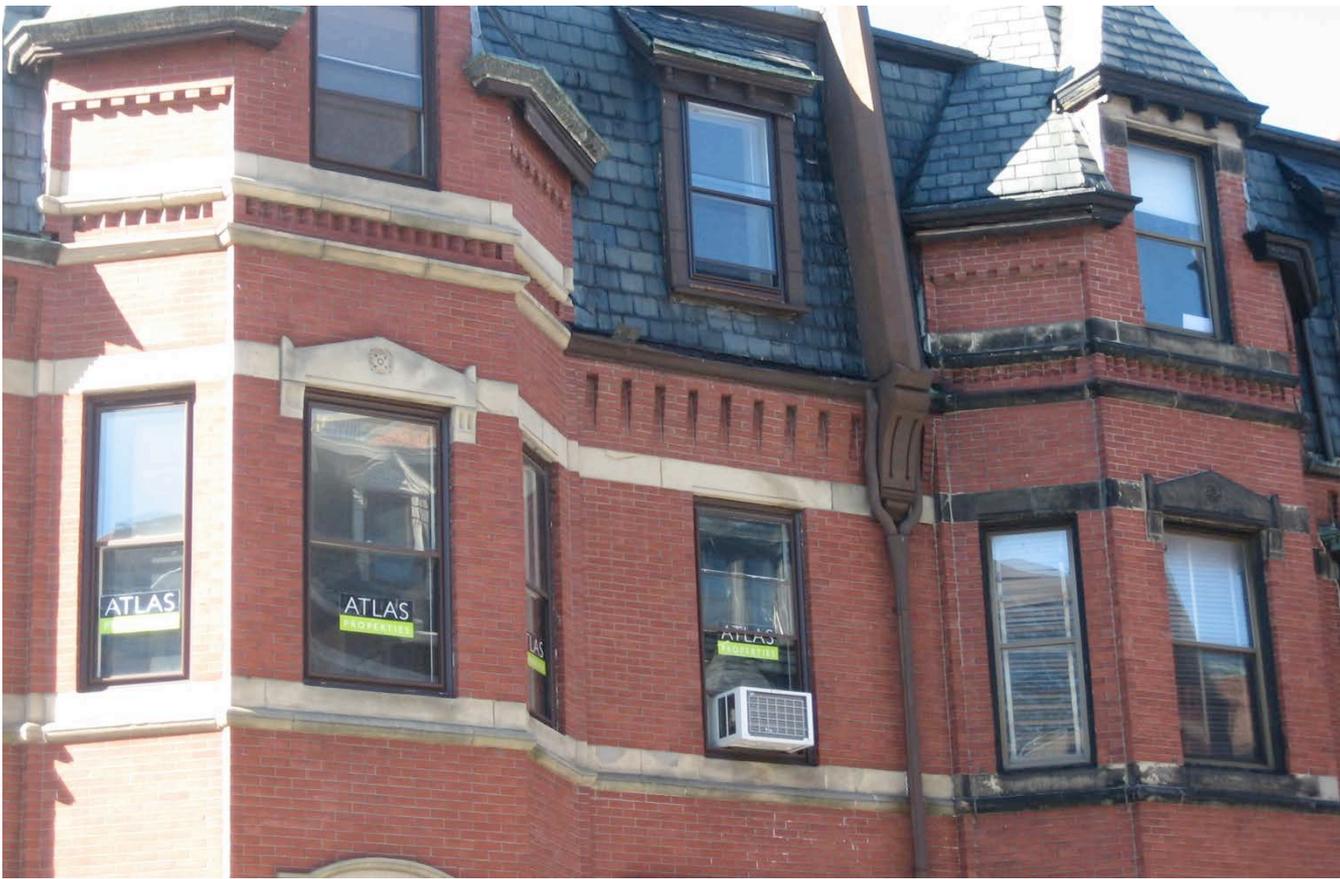
What's wrong with this sentence?

■ "A four-part analysis will be **conducted** in this paper"

Let's Fix it:

■ This paper **will present** a four-part analysis" OR

■ "In this paper, I will **conduct** a four-part analysis."



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10 Grammar Elements Every Planner Should Know



Every Planner Should Know...



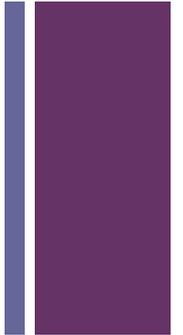
1. Use an acronym in a sentence the first time

- For example, “The American Planning Association (APA) provides planners with resources to help plan livable communities. In addition to policy reports, APA also hosts a yearly national conference.”

2. Write out Numbers Less than 11

- Numerals should be used for rates, percentages and other data indicators. Thus, we write “Six percent of the population died of boredom.” Or, “26 percent of the group had blue eyes.”

+ Every Planner Should Know...



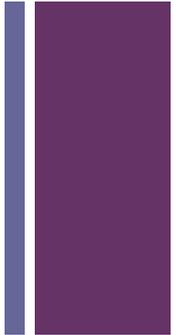
3. Avoid the Use of Qualifiers

- The words *rather, very, little, quite, pretty* are filler words.
 - For example: “we should all try and do a little better, we should all be very watchful of this rule, for it is a rather important one, and we are pretty certain we have violated it before”.

4. Use figures of speech sparingly

- Examples of figures of speech are: ‘falling in love’, ‘racking our brains’, ‘hitting a sales target’, ‘he ran like the wind’

+ Every Planner Should Know...



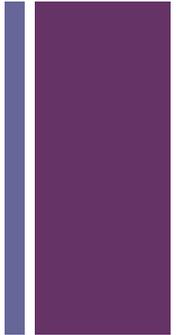
5. xxxxx

- The words *rather, very, little, quite, pretty* are filler words and eat up precious space.
 - For example: we should all try and do a little better, we should all be very watchful of this rule, for it is a rather important one, and we are pretty certain we have violated it before.

6. xxxxx

- Examples of figures of speech are: 'falling in love', 'racking our brains', 'hitting a sales target', 'he ran like the wind'.

+ Every Planner Should Know...



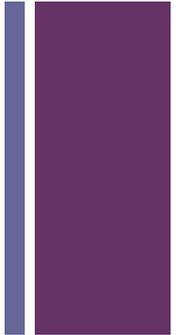
7. xxxxx

- The words *rather, very, little, quite, pretty* are filler words and eat up precious space.
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8. xxxxx

- Examples of figures of speech are: 'falling in love', 'racking our brains', 'hitting a sales target', 'he ran like the wind'

+ Every Planner Should Know...



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