

MAST 467/667: Introduction to Arctic Oceanography (Fall 2014)

Nov.-13, 2014

Workshop/Homework-9: Strunk & White (1959): Elements of Style

Introduction. Writing is the practice of thinking. Writing formalizes scientific thought for both expert and public audiences. Writing is a necessary but not sufficient condition for good academic work. This workshop briefly touches on aspects that help students to become better writers via the practice of writing as reading, editing, and re-writing. This is hard work that takes years of practice for native and foreign students alike. This activity-driven workshop introduces composition rules

Goal. Reflect about time-honored rules of composition.

Assignments.

I. Read each version of the first paragraph of a research proposal. Which one reads better? Why?

| Version-A | | Version-B |
|--|--|---|
| Climate change is having a profound impact on the Arctic Ocean, a unique environment that has been relatively predictable for decades is changing drastically in the past few years. In addition to the significant decrease in ice volume, the oceanography is in flux. It is expected that the combined changes in the ice cover and oceanography will in turn have an impact on the character of low frequency sound propagation. | | Climate change profoundly impacts the Arctic Ocean. As sea ice volume decreases, it exposes more ocean to wind forcing, loosens the ice pack, and increases sea ice retreat. Much of the Arctic Ocean has become a marginal ice zone that is now more dynamic and variable than it was. The change in ice cover and oceanography increases access to natural resources, shipping, tourism, and strategic posturing of rival powers. |

II. Please rewrite the sentence or phrase on the left following Strunk & White's rules. Pass your version to another student who will edit your version. Compare the final version with that proposed by Strunk & White.

1. Use the active voice.

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| There were a great number of dead leaves lying on the ground. | |
| It was not long before he was very sorry that he had said what he had done | |

2. Put statements in a positive form.

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| He did not think that studying Latin was a sensible way to use one's time. | |
| "The Taming of the Shrew" is rather weak in spots. Shakespeare does not portray Katherine as a very admiring character, nor does Bianca remain long in memory as an important character in Shakespeare's work. | |

3. Use definite, specific, concrete language.

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| A period of unfavorable weather set in. | |
| He showed satisfaction as he took possession of his well-earned reward. | |

4. Omit needless words.

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| There is no doubt but that ... | |
| The reason why is that ... | |
| Owing to the fact that ... | |
| I was unaware of the fact that | |
| This is a subject that ... | |

III. The second paragraph of the research proposal (see I. above) has two draft versions that are both equally poorly written. Rewrite the entire paragraph.

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| <p>A joint oceanographic and acoustic proposal is submitted for the Arctic shelf-basin region to conduct simultaneous experiment and study the broadband propagation of acoustic signals in sloping waveguide with rough boundaries and anisotropic water column properties. Both short-term (weeks long) and long-term (year long) are considered in the plan. This proposal is coordinated with several colleagues in both the oceanography and acoustic science communities in particular with efforts from the Applied Research Laboratory at the University of Texas (ARL-UT).</p> | <p>The observed Arctic changes will also impact low frequency sound propagation that motivate this and a complementary (Applied Research Laboratory at the University of Texas, ARL-UT) oceanographic and acoustic proposal. The requested instrumentation will enable Arctic research on shelf-basin exchange on how enhanced upwelling near a sloping shelf with a loose ice cover impacts the broadband propagation of acoustic signals in a sloping waveguide with rough boundaries (ice) and anisotropic water column properties.</p> |
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