

FICTIONAL

J202

Culver

Assignment: Identifying Writing Problems

Week 2

TA KEY

Our Goal: Learn to identify and repair common problems in media writing

Your Task: Review each of the following pieces of poor media writing, identify the problem and rewrite the passage to fix the trouble.

Specifics:

- split into your assigned small groups
- review each of the passages below and identify problems with the writing
- rewrite the passage to fix the problems
- reconvene as a large group to discuss the issues and come to consensus on improved writing for each passage

Wordiness

1. Noise pollution on campus affects all students.
2. Three-quarters of respondents to a campus survey said global warming is an important issue facing the college community.
3. Awareness is the only way to combat a culture that hides toxic waste pollution, so we plan to fight the university administration's choice to block distribution of our literature on Bascom Hill.

Redundancy

1. We recognize our recycling campaign must be innovative.
2. We expect the campaign to have an impressive effect.
3. Advocacy groups have tried to use publicity to convince people to recycle their trash to help save the planet.

Passive Voice

1. Most experts cite three key threats to clean water: industrial pollution, tailpipe exhaust and agricultural runoff.
2. She said environmental groups all over the country can help push for cleaner air.
3. Helen Lemke, a small business owner, lost profits when environmental protesters blocked the door to her shop.

Unnecessary Words

1. Thompson said drilling in the Arctic Wildlife Refuge is the only option.
2. The legislator proposed a new bill to improve access to state-sponsored fisheries.
3. Floor debate on the controversial issue grew heated. Rep. Molly Mars called her colleague's views on emissions standards misguided. She said requirements should be capped as they stand now.

Stilted Writing

1. The worker was stabbed in his left side. (refer to the tip in Working with Words text for note on why crime stories often require passive voice – if we knew who stabbed the victim, would could make it active)
2. Police said an inattentive tanker driver caused the crash and resulting spill of gasoline on the highway.
3. Activism plays an important role in American culture.

Clichés

1. Not long ago, we took pollution in lakes and rivers for granted. Corporations served ever-increasing heaps of waste, and cities willingly handed over their precious natural resources to gobble tax revenue.
2. Most environmental lawsuit defendants have both money and power.
3. Redford withdrew his proposal quickly when it became clear his colleagues opposed a new drilling ban.

Jargon

1. Most eco-terrorism arsonists set blazes late at night in the back of buildings.
2. Police believe the arsonist used a gasoline can with a long fuse inserted through the nozzle. He lit the fuse and ran from the building before it erupted in flames.
3. Although some arsonists are youths pulling pranks, most are in the business of arson. Often white males between the ages of 18 and 36, contract arsonists are usually hired by building owners to commit insurance fraud. Arsonists in the arena of "eco-terrorism" are trying to push environmental issues to the forefront.

Inconsistent Tense

1. Researcher Karen Kermit said exposing children to lead paint clearly has impact, but studies have failed to define exactly what that impact is. "We have indications of many effects but few clear patterns," she said.
2. The 1950s marked the beginning of the environmental movement, as consumer interests began to give way to health and fiscal concerns. The rise of fuel-efficient cars in the '70s solidified the interest in making choices that protect clean air and water.

3. Drilling in the arctic doesn't exist in a vacuum. It is surrounded by careful monitoring, clear safeguards and urgent need.

Unclear

1. Watching consumers struggle with excessive product packaging shows a key reason we face so much waste.
2. We have seen a decrease in incidents with protesters since we introduced new security measures at the SUV assembly plant.
3. Linda called the office manager and asked for Mary's mother after Mary said she was hurt.

Weak Verb

1. Witnesses said before the shooting, the suspect walked down the street, clutching a sign.
2. Police considered issuing an emergency bulletin when they thought the scientist had taken a vial of toxic chemicals from the lab before the shootings. They later learned the vial was in a different room.
3. District Attorney Rod Randall said he will charge suspect Bill Pappas with first-degree arson later today.