Seminar 5

ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC RESEARCH

Adrian Wallwork

English
for Writing Research
Papers

Second Edition

⧉ Springer

Paragraphs
Word Order

ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC RESEARCH

Adrian Wallwork

English
for Academic
Correspondence

Second Edition

⧉ Springer

Diplomacy

What do these statistics really mean?

They regard Life Sciences in Italy.

And we are also the **first country in the world** in scientific research output in terms of **publications per researcher**. As for the COVID topic specifically, **Italians rank fourth in the world** for the number of scientific publications.

ENEL report, June 2021

Joining Breakout Rooms...

Breakout Room 1

It may take a few moments.

Feedback on your abstracts

...

Dear prof,

The abstract I sent you has actually already been published, so ...

Being published means **NOTHING**

FLOP

How many research papers are published per year?

Being published means **NOTHING**

FLOP

How many research papers are published per year?

2,500,000

Being READ and **CITED** is what counts

Thomson Reuter's Web of Science holds **58 million** items.

Half of them have **NEVER** been cited, or only cited ONCE.

Only 14,499 papers have more than 1,000 citations.

Key

At their first reading, how many people can understand a sentence of:

1) 8 words   a) **90%** b) 100%

2) 27 words a) 27% b) **4%**

3) 32 words a) 25% c) **2%**

True or false?

You will lose more readers in the first 50 words than in the following 250 words.

Keep **I**t **S**hort & **S**imple

How to structure a paragraph

We are going to analyse the first paragraph from a NASA document entitled:

'How to write reports'
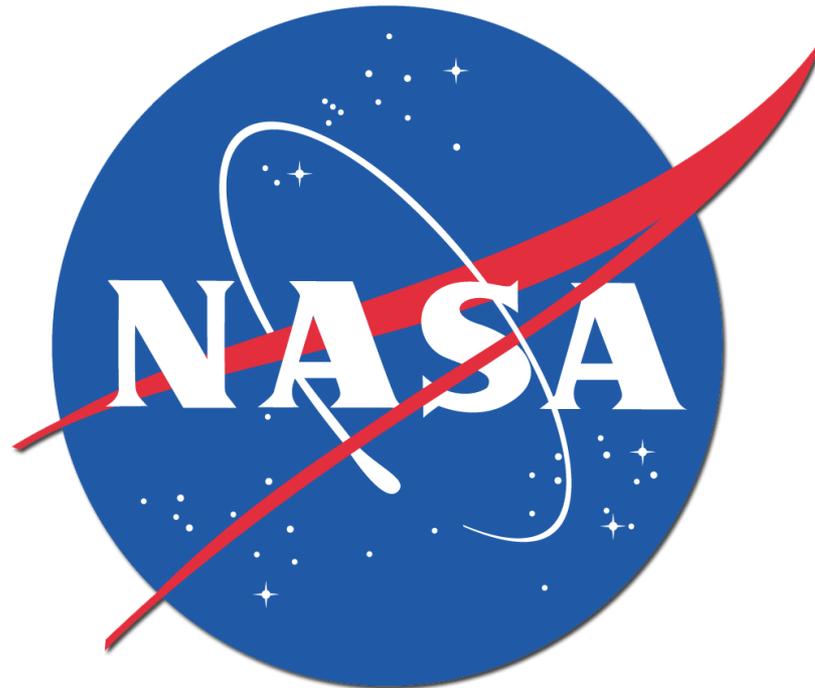
First sentence: introduces overall topic

Different writers have different methods of organizing their reports, and some seem to have no discernible method at all.

Most of the better writers, however, appear to be in remarkably close agreement as to the general approach to organization. This approach consists of stating the problem, describing the method of attack, developing the results, discussing the results, and summarizing the conclusions. You may feel that this type of organization is obvious, logical, and natural. Nevertheless, it is not universally accepted. For example, many writers present results and conclusions near the beginning, and describe the derivation of these results in subsequent sections.

Sentences are linked together - an idea from one sentence is recalled in the next sentence

Different writers have different methods of organizing their reports, and some seem to have no discernible method at all. Most of the **better writers**, however, appear to be in remarkably close agreement as to the **general approach to organization**. This **approach** consists of stating the problem, describing the method of attack, developing the results, discussing the results, and summarizing the conclusions. You may feel that this type of **organization** is obvious, logical, and natural.

Max. of <u>two</u> ideas per sentence

You may feel that this type of organization is obvious, logical, and natural. (one idea)

Nevertheless, it is not universally accepted. (one idea)

For example, many writers present results and conclusions near the beginning, and describe the derivation of these results in subsequent sections. (two ideas)

Repeating key words is OK

Different **writers** have different methods of organizing their reports, and some seem to have no discernible method at all. Most of the better **writers**, however, appear to be in remarkably close agreement as to the general approach to organization. .. Nevertheless, it is not universally accepted. For example, many **writers** present results and conclusions near the beginning, and describe the derivation of these results in subsequent sections.

Don't use different words to mean the same key concept:

NO! writer, author, researcher

NO! test, experiment, trial

NO! gold, metal, precious item

NO! Rome, the city on the seven hills, the capital of Italy

Just choose ONE word, and always use that word.
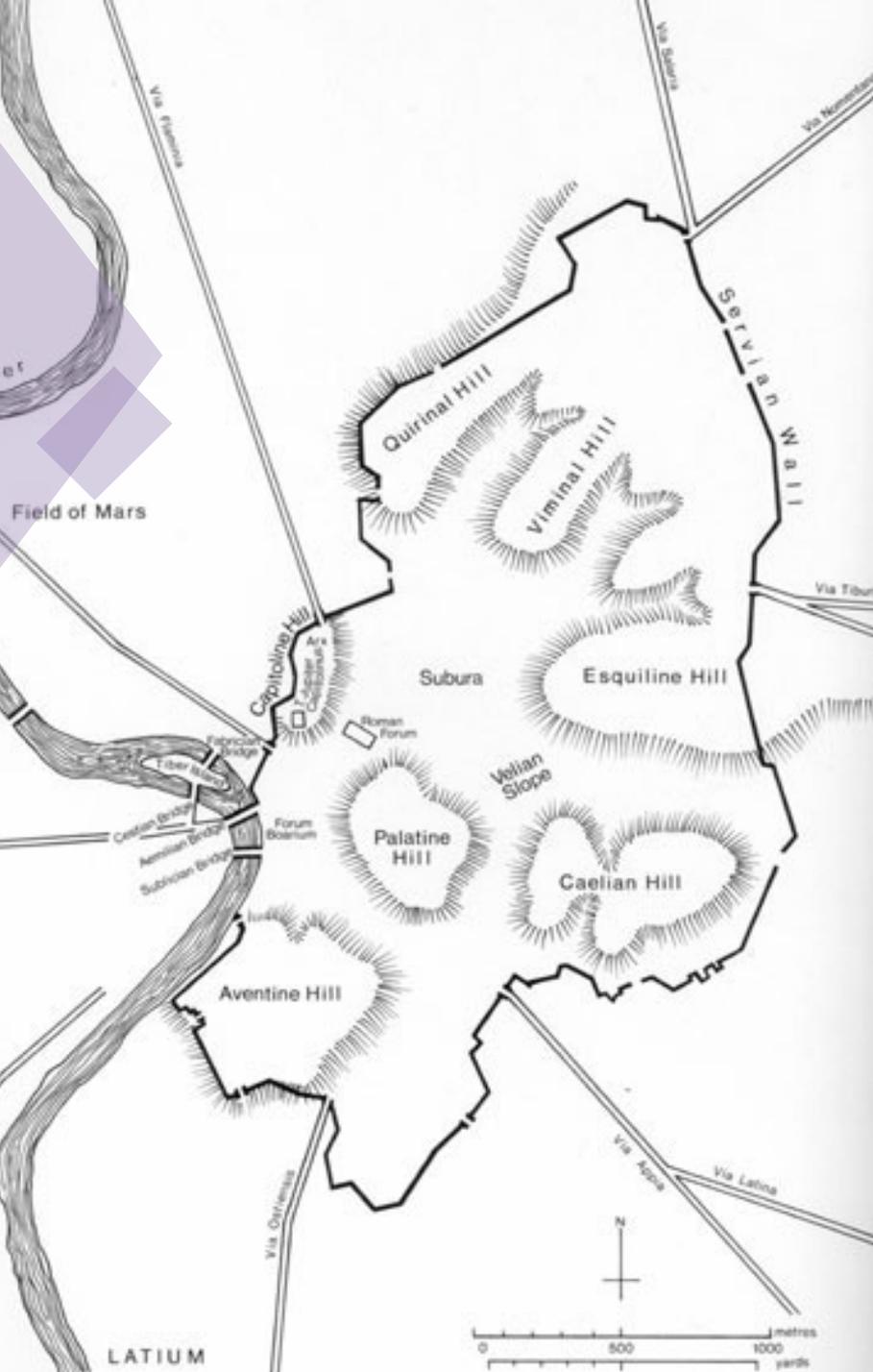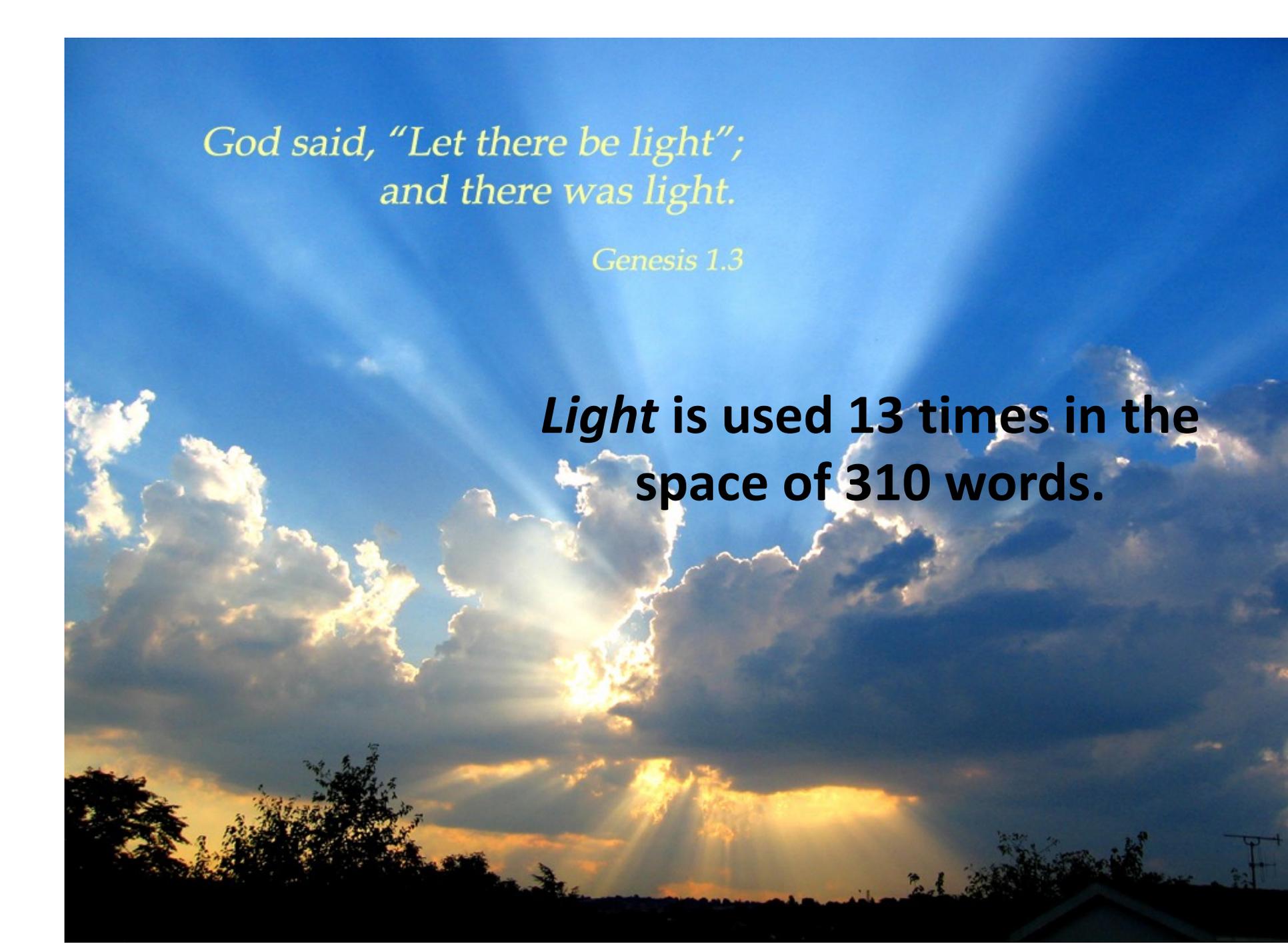
God said, "Let there be light";
and there was light.

Genesis 1.3

Light is used 13 times in the space of 310 words.

A science professor would say:

Let there be light and there was solar illumination.

Vary the length of sentences

You may feel that this type of organization is obvious, logical, and natural. **Nevertheless, it is not universally accepted**. (6 words)

For example, many writers present results and conclusions near the beginning, and describe the derivation of these results in subsequent sections. (21 words)

Statistics on NASA paragraph

Total number of words = 101

Total number of sentences = 6

Average no. words per sentence= 16.8

Longest sentence = 22 words

Shortest sentence = 6 words

Number of full stops (.) = 6

Number of commas (,) = 10

Number of semi colons (;) = 0

How intelligent do you need to be to put a man on the moon?
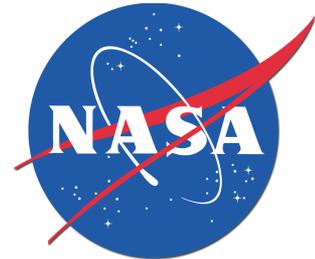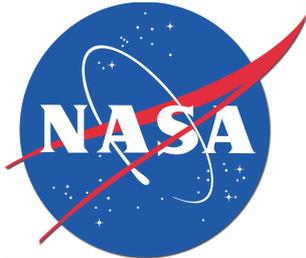
NASA

The scientists and engineers who work at NASA are among the most intelligent people in the world.

They <u>can</u> understand long complex sentences.

But they decide to use short simple sentences and paragraphs in the documents that they write for each other.

You should do the same.

Intelligence test

If you could fold this piece of paper 64 times how high would it be at the end? As high as the

a) room you are in? b) Leaning Tower of Pisa

c) distance from here to the moon d) even higher?

A sheet of paper is about 0.1 mm thick. The number of layers doubles at each folding. Therefore you end up with 2^64 = 1.8*10^19 layers, which make a thickness of 1.8*10^12 km, that is **about 10000 times the distance between the Earth and the Sun**.
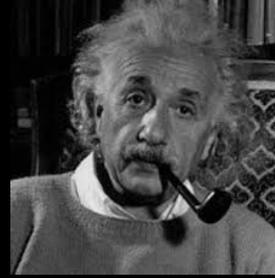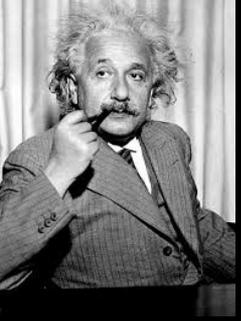
Einstein loved science
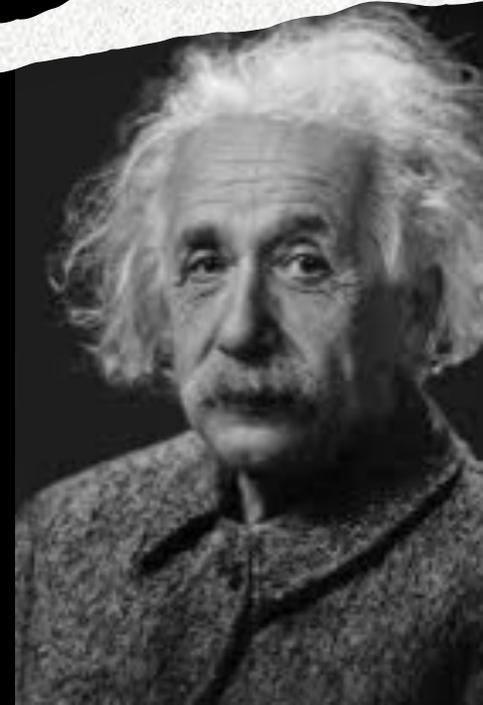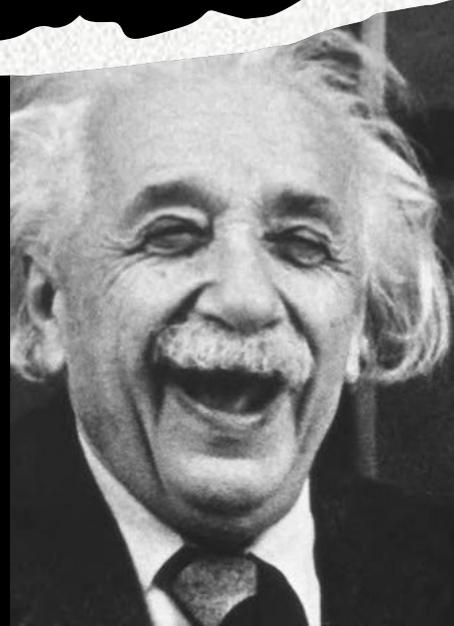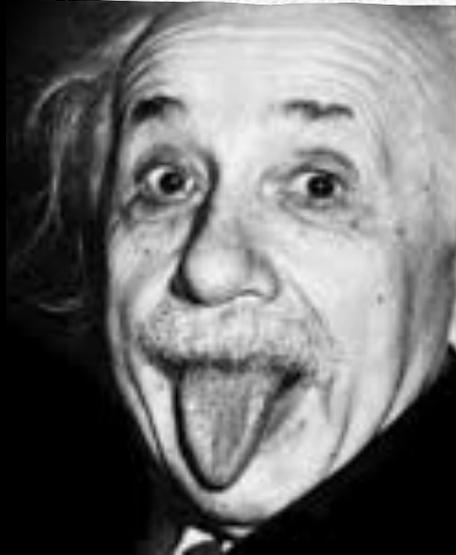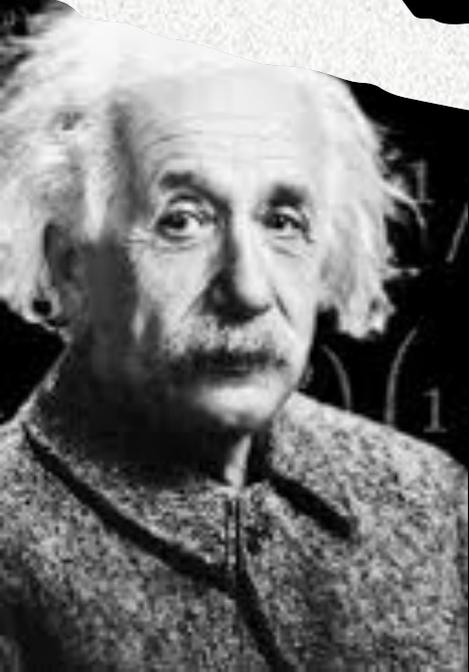
word order

1 subject   Einstein

2 verb   loved

3 object   science

word order

1 subject   Science

2 verb   fascinated

3 object   Einstein

Choosing the best grammatical subject. Which sentence is best?

1 Particularly interesting for **researchers** in this field is the new feature for the calculation of X.

2 The **new feature** for the calculation of X is particularly interesting for researchers in this field

3 **X** can now be calculated with a new feature which is particularly interesting for researchers in this field

4 This **field** of research now has a new feature for the calculation of X.

The new feature for calculating X is particularly interesting for researchers in this field.

But it may depend on what you want your readers to focus on.

You need to make decisions when you are writing. Don't just randomly put words together.

Why is putting the **subject** at beginning of sentence important?

We have mentioned a number of different factors that can improve one's writing of scientific papers, however there is one factor that is even more important than the others (ie conciseness, sentence length, blah blah and blah blah, using verbs instead of nouns) and this factor is rarely taken into consideration by writers although it is absolutely fundamental; that factor is, of course, **putting the subject at the beginning of the sentence**.

(67 words)

Putting the subject at the beginning of the sentence is fundamental in improving one's writing of scientific papers. However, unlike the other factors (ie conciseness, sentence length, using verbs instead of nouns) it is rarely taken into consideration by writers.

(40 words)

Why is putting the subject at beginning of sentence important?

Reader doesn't have to read complete sentence to discover what it is about.

Forces you to use shorter sentences and be more direct.

Reduces the number of words needed.

Reduces the number of mistakes.

NB You are not writing a thriller!

Put the **main verb** near the beginning of the sentence

Various European languages including Italian, and Portuguese, along with Hindi, Russian and Chinese (which has only recently been added to this list), **can be learned** *using this method.*

Various languages **can be learned** using this method. These include European languages such as Italian and Portuguese, along with Hindi, Russian and Chinese. Chinese has only recently been added to this list.

If you use an ACTIVE form, then the verb will be near the <u>beginning</u> of the sentence instead of the <u>end</u>. This makes the sentence easier to read.

Some future developments and blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah **are described.**

The document **describes …** / **We describe** some future developments and ...

Direct object before <u>indirect object</u>

We sent our manuscript to the journal.

1 Subject We

2 Verb sent

3 Direct object manuscript

4 Indirect object journal

Direct object before <u>indirect object</u>

We sent <u>to the publisher of the journal whose address we found on the internet</u> **our manuscript**.

We sent **our manuscript** to the publisher of the journal whose address we found on the internet.

1 Subject We

2 Verb sent

3 Direct object manuscript

4 Indirect object journal

If the **direct object** is very long: split sentence + repeat the **direct object**

NO!!!!   We sent **our manuscript, which had taken six years to research and six months to write (before being accepted after three reviews and two rejections),** to the journal.

YES!!!!! We sent **our manuscript** to the journal. **The manuscript** had originally taken …

An important email

Show each other your emails. Comment on them and try to improve them.

Then paste one or more of the emails into the chat.

I have carefully analysed your presentation and I believe that there are some serious shortcomings.
1) You need to do x
2) You need to do y
3) Please do z
4) Also, I think you should do a and b

What is the key negative word here?

I really like the presentation ☺ but I think that we may need to make some corrections in order to fit with the conference constraints. We could start by writing an introductory part and ..

What's the difference from the previous email?

I really like the presentation ☺.

I think that we may need to make some corrections in order to fit with the conference constraints. We could start by writing an introductory part and ..

Rules of diplomacy

Your aim is to achieve a goal (e.g. to produce a good presentation). Your aim is not to humiliate the other person.

You don't know the circumstances of the other person.

Maybe they didn't have time to reduce the text or the number of slides.

Maybe they were imagining that <u>you</u> were going to write the concluding slide.

Compliment →

Criticism →

Compliment →

The sandwich technique

Think about solutions not criticisms.
What helps them will also help you.

Positive (but honest) beginning

Thanks for your presentation - I really liked some of the images you used, a
background template you have used is great.

Introduce criticisms gently

I <u>just</u> have a couple of things to clarify …

Have you thought about doing x, y, z?

Take joint responsibility / suggest <u>solutions</u>

One thing <u>we</u> could do is … / The best solution might be ..

It might be a good idea if <u>we</u> … / Perhaps we could …

I have always found it useful to ... If you like, I can try and do the Introduction.

Positive Ending – again, must be sincere

Thanks for all the time you have spent on this - I really appreciate it.

With a few changes here and there, I think we can make a great presentation.

MORAL OF THE STORY

Combine the sandwich technique with a list of possible solutions.

Don't just present a series of criticisms.

When being critical do NOT be too concise – you will need many more words.

Consider using the telephone (with video on)

By helping the other person, you are also helping yourself – you both want the same outcome: a great presentation.

Intelligence test
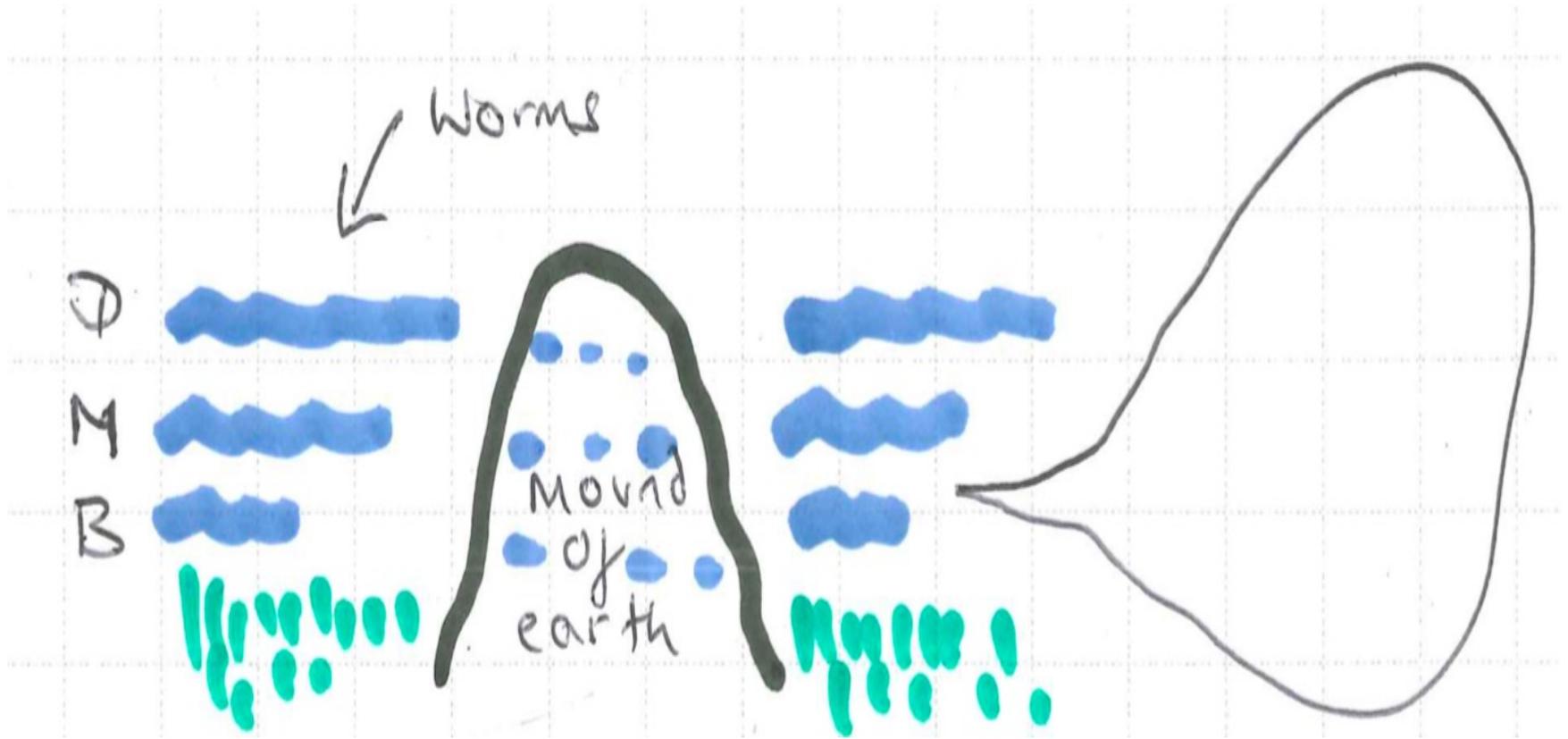
D = daddy, M = mummy, B = baby

Word order: Part 2

Why is this not an intelligent roadsign?

What is/are the key words? Where are they located? Is this a good position for the reader?

Finding a candidate with all the right qualifications, with a high level of communications skills, a good knowledge of at least two languages and a friendly personality is not an easy task.

What is/are the key words? Where are they located? Is this a good position for the reader?

Finding a candidate with all the right qualifications, with a high level of communications skills, a good knowledge of at least two languages and a friendly personality is **not an easy task**.

= It is **not easy** to find …

If sense is negative, use a negative form and use it near the beginning of the sentence.

Penso che lei **non** venga alla lezione.
I **don't** think she is coming to the lesson.
Ho **poco** tempo.
I **don't** have much time.
Ho **meno** amici di te.
I **don't** have as many friends as you.
Va al cinema **raramente**.
She **rarely** goes to the cinema.

NO ENTRY

Always think about the best order to present information to the reader
Give the bad news first.

Don't delay subject with an impersonal expression beginning with
it is advisable, probable, likely, mandatory etc that

It is advisable that a foreign language should be learned at a young age.

A foreign language should be learned at a young age.

Other ways to avoid sentences that begin: *It is*

It is interesting to note that …
Note that … **(remove redundancy)**

It is probable that X will happen.
X will *probably* happen. **(use *adverbs*)**

It is obligatory to do this.
This *must* be done. **(use *modal verbs*)**

Why avoid *It is …* ?

1 Reduces number of words by up to 50%

It is advisable that a foreign language should be ..

It is interesting to note that …   /// Interestingly, …

2 Puts key concept (i.e. X) at beginning of sentence

It is probable that **X** will happen.

X will probably happen.

It is obligatory to do **X**.

X must be done.

Reader not forced to read words and phrases that give little or no information.

Which is better?

1. You are doing this course in your own time but at the expense of your department **in order to learn** English.

2. In **order to learn English** you are doing this course. The course takes place in your own time but at the expense of your department.

When you explain a new game to someone, do you tell them the rules then the objective, or vice versa?

Reader's expectations: 1) aim 2) how

Aim = why you are doing something

How = the means with which you do it

Don't insert parenthetical information between subject and verb (i.e. don't use *frasi incisi*)

English, although currently the international language of business, **may** one day be replaced by Spanish or Chinese.

The above construction separates the subject (*English*) from the verb (*may*).

The constructions below keep the subject and verb together.

Although **English is** currently the international language of business, it may one day be replaced by Spanish or Chinese.

English may one day be replaced by Spanish or Chinese, *even though* it is currently the international language of business.

English is currently the international language of business. *However*, it may one day be replaced by Spanish or Chinese.

Word order: Summary

Subject + verb + object + indirect object

Subject at beginning of sentence

Verb near as possible to beginning of sentence

Don't separate subject from verb

Don't insert parenthetical information

Negative ideas at beginning of sentence

Adverbs between auxiliary and main verb

Past participles after the noun

Why is word order important?

People want key information first. On CVs people put their most recent achievements first. They don't put what primary school they went to.

TRUE

If you put most important element at the beginning of sentence. This will force you to think what the most important element is.

TRUE

By putting subject and main verb at the beginning you will be forced to write more concisely and probably with shorter sentences.

TRUE

People want to know WHY they are doing something before they are told HOW to do it.

TRUE