

Characters

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Understanding the importance of characters

1a. The CIA feared the president would recommend to Congress that it reduce its budget.

1b. The CIA had fears that the president would send a recommendation to Congress that it make a reduction in its budget.

Understanding the importance of characters

1b. The CIA had fears that the president would send a recommendation to Congress that it make a reduction in its budget.

1c. The fear of the CIA was that a recommendation from the president to Congress would be for a reduction in its budget.

Understanding the importance of characters

1a. The CIA feared the president would recommend to Congress that it reduce its budget.

1b. The CIA had fears that the president would send a recommendation to Congress that it make a reduction in its budget.

Understanding the importance of characters

1c. The fear of the CIA was that a recommendation from the president to Congress would be for a **reduction** in its budget.

1d. There was **fear** that there would be a **recommendation** for a budget **reduction**.

Understanding the importance of characters

Here's the point:

Readers want actions in verbs, but they want characters as subjects even more.

In other words, make the subjects of your verbs the main characters in your story would be better.

Diagnosis and Revision: Characters

1. when your subjects are not characters
2. if they aren't, where you should look for characters
3. what you should do when you find them (or don't)

Governmental intervention in fast-changing technologies has led to the distortion of market evolution and interference in new product development.

Diagnosis and Revision: Characters

1. Underline the first seven or eight words:

Governmental intervention in fast-changing technologies has led
to the distortion of market evolution and interference in new
product development.

government is implied in governmental, but as their simple subjects.

Diagnosis and Revision: Characters

2. Find the main characters.

Possessive pronouns attached to nominalizations, objects of prepositions (particularly **by** and **of**), or only implied.

possessive pronouns: 所有格代名詞

nominalization: 名詞化

preposition: 介詞

Diagnosis and Revision: Characters

3. Skim the passage for actions involving those characters, particularly actions buried in nominalizations.

governmental **intervention** → *government* **intervenes**

distortion → [*government*] **distorts**

market **evolution** → *markets* **evolve**

interference → [*government*] **interferes**

development → [*market*] **develops**

Diagnosis and Revision: Characters

Use conjunctions such as **if**, **although**, **because**, **when**, **how**, and **why**:

✓ **When** a government **intervenes** in fast-changing technologies, it **distorts** how markets **evolve** and **interferes** with their ability to **develop** new products.

Diagnosis and Revision: Characters

As **actions can be in adjectives** (reliable→ rely), so can characters:

Medieval *theological* debates often addressed issues considered trivial by modern *philosophical* thought.

When you find a **character implied in an adjective**, revise in the same way:

✓ *Medieval theologians* often debated issues that *modern philosophers* consider trivial.

Diagnosis and Revision: Characters

Quick Tip:

The first step in diagnosing a style is to look at subjects. Once you find them, look for actions that are involved in.

When you are revising your writing:

Make those characters the subjects of verbs. Then string together those characteraction pairs into complete sentences.

Diagnosis and Revision: Characters

Quick Tip:

When you are reading:

Focusing on the characters, try to retell the story in the sentences, one action at a time. If that fails, list character-action pairs and rewrite the sentences yourself.

Reconstructing Absent Characters

Research strategies that look for more than one variable are of more use in understanding factors in psychiatric disorder than strategies based on the assumption that the presence of psychopathology is dependent on a single gene or on strategies in which only one biological variable is studied.

Reconstructing Absent Characters

We use *one* or *we*, or name a generic “doer”

If *one/we/researchers* are to understand what causes psychiatric disorder, *one/we/they* should use research strategies that look for more than one variable rather than assume that a single gene is responsible for a psychopathology or adopt a strategy in which *one/we/they* study only one biological variable.

Reconstructing Absent Characters

If you are not directly naming your reader, *you* is usually inappropriate.

To understand what makes patients vulnerable to psychiatric disorders, strategies that look for more than one variable SHOULD BE USED rather than strategies in which a gene IS ASSUMED a gene causes psychopathology or only one biological variable IS STUDIED.

Reconstructing Absent Characters

Quick Tip:

Say *you* as often as you can:

You have to pay tax on **your** intangible property, including **your** financial notes and municipal bonds. On this property, **you** pay a one-time tax of 2%.

If *you* seems not appropriate, change it to a character that is:

Taxpayers have to pay tax on their intangible property, including **their** financial notes and municipal bonds. **They** pay . . .

Abstractions as Characters

Most characters are flesh-and-blood, but sometimes there must be some abstractions.

familiar with:e.g. *studies*--the subject of a series of actions

not familiar with:e.g. *prospective/immediate intention*

make it clearer→flesh-and-blood characters are italicized, actions are boldfaced, verbs are capitalized

Abstractions as Characters

Here's the point:

write abstractions→make them the subjects of verbs that tell a story

↗ readers are familiar with→ok

↘ readers aren't familiar with→don't use lots of other abstract nominalizations around them→hidden characters are “people in general”
→use *researchers*, *social critics*, *one*, and *we*

Characters and Passive Verbs

passive differs from the active in two ways

1. The subject names the goal of the action.
2. The agent or source of the action is after the verb in a byphrase or dropped entirely.

subject

be verb

prepositional phrase

Passive: The money was lost [by me].

goal

action

character/agent

Characters and Passive Verbs

We call a sentence *passive* if it feels flat.

e.g. We can manage the problem if we control costs.

Problems management requires cost control.→passive

- *management* and *control* are nominalizations
- *problem management* is an abstraction
- lack flesh-and-blood characters

Characters and Passive Verbs

When you write in the *ACTIVE* voice, you typically put

- the agent or source of an action in the subject
- the goal or receiver of an action in a direct object

subject

verb

object

Active: I lost the money

character/agent

action

goal

Choosing Between Active and Passive

1. **Must your readers know who is responsible for the action?**

- The president was rumored to have considered resigning.
- Those who are found guilty can be fund.
- Valuable records should always be kept in a safe.

Choosing Between Active and Passive

2. Would the active or passive verb help your readers move more smoothly from one sentence to the next?

The weight given to industrial competitiveness as opposed to the value we attach to the liberal arts (new information) will determine (active verb) our decision (familiar information).

Our decision (familiar information) will be determined (passive verb) by the weight we give to industrial competitiveness as opposed to the value we attach to the liberal arts. (new information)

Choosing Between Active and Passive

3. Would the active or passive give readers a more consistent and appropriate point of view?

had essentially defeated/had breached/were bombing/had not devastated→active

had essentially been defeated/had been breached/was being bombed/had not been devastated→passive

Choosing Between Active and Passive

Time to use the passive:

- Don't know who is the subject of the action./Don't want readers to know or they don't care.
- Shift a long and complex bundle of information to the end of a sentence, it can also lets you begin with a chunk of information that is **shorter, familiar, and easier to understand**.
- Let your readers' focus on one or another character.

The “Objective” Passive vs. I/We

Scholarly writers don't use a first-person subject in order to create an objective point of view.

“Based on the writers’ verbal intelligence prior knowledge, and essay scores, **their essays were analyzed** for structure and evaluated for richness of concepts. **The subjects were** then **divided** into a high- or low-ability group. **Half of each group was** randomly **assigned** to a treatment group or to a placebo group.”

The “Objective” Passive vs. I/We

Academic and scientific writers use the active voice and the first-person **I** and **we** regularly.

- This paper is concerned with two problems. How can **we** best handle in a transformational grammar certain restrictions that...
- To illustrate, **we** may cite..., **we** shall show...

The “Objective” Passive vs. I/We

- **We** examine..., **We** compare..., **We** have used..., Each has been weighted..., **We** merely take..., They are subject..., **We** use..., Efron and Morris describe..., **We** observed..., **We** might find....

Passive, Characters, and Metadiscourse

- Some refer to research activities(**passive**): *examine, observe, measure, record, use.*

EX: The subjects were observed....

- Others refer to the writer's own writing and thinking(**active**): *cite, show, inquire.*

EX: We will show....

→They are examples called *Metadiscourse.*

Passive, Characters, and Metadiscourse

- We/I will explain, show, argue, claim, deny, suggest, contrast, add, expand, summarize.... → **your thinking and act**
- consider now, as you recall, look at the next example.... → **your readers' actions**
- first, second, to begin; therefore, however, consequently.... → **the logic and form of what you've written**

Passive, Characters, and Metadiscourse

Metadiscourse appears most often in **introductions**.

- *I claim that...., I will show...., We begin by....*

At the end, it appears when **summarize**.

- I have argued..., I have shown....

Passive, Characters, and Metadiscourse

Action that everyone can perform: measure, record, examine, observe, use.
(passive)

“To determine if monokines elicited an adrenal steroidogenic response, **I** ADDED preparations of....”

“To determine if monokines elicited an adrenal steroidogenic response, **preparations**... WERE ADDED.”

Passive, Characters, and Metadiscourse

When the **implied** subject differs from the **explicit** subject of the clause it introduce, the modifier dangles.

“[So that I could] determine if monokines elicited a response, preparations were added.”

Passive, Characters, and Metadiscourse

“I pronounced a triangular glass prism, to try therewith the celebrated phenomena of colors. And for that purpose, having darkened my laboratory, and made a small hole in my window shade, to let in a convenient quantity of the sun’s light, I placed my prism at the entrance, that the light might be thereby refracted to the opposite wall. It was at first a very pleasing diversion to veiw the vivid and intense colors produced thereby.”

Passive, Characters, and Metadiscourse

Quick Tip:

1. Inexperienced writers begin too many sentences with I think..., I believe..., and so on.
2. Discourage students from writing a narrative account of their thinking.
→ First I read..., Then I considered....

Passive, Characters, and Metadiscourse

Here's the point:

1. Avoiding the first person by using the passive everywhere, and deleting an *I* or *we* doesn't make a researcher's thinking more objective.
2. The first-person *I* and *we* are common in scholarly prose when used with verbs that name actions unique to the writer.

Noun+Noun+Noun

The long *compound noun* phrase does not directly involve characters and actions. However, it can distort the the meaning of its expression.

Early **childhood thought disorder misdiagnosis** often results from unfamiliarity with recent **research literature** describing such conditions. This paper is a review of seven recent studies in which are findings of particular relevance to **pre-adolescent hyperactivity diagnosis** and to **treatment modalities** involving **medication maintenance** level evaluation procedures.

Noun+Noun+Noun

Common phrases: stone wall, student center, space shuttle, shows.

Reverse in order and connect with prep.

1	2	3	4	5
early	childhood	thought	disorder	misdiagnosis
misdiagnose	disordered	thought	in early	childhood
5	4	3	2	1

Noun+Noun+Noun

A: “Physicians misdiagnose disordered thought in young children because they are unfamiliar with recent literature on the subject.”

B: “Physicians misdiagnose **thought disorders** in young children because they are unfamiliar with recent literature on the subject.”

Clarity and the Professional Voice

The apprentice banker must learn not only to think and look like a banker, but also to speak and write like one.

→ An exclusionary style would erode the trust a civil society depends on.

Clarity and the Professional Voice

“Apart from theoretical conceptualization there would appear to be no method of selecting among the indefinite number of varying kinds of factual observation which can be made about a concrete phenomenon or field so that the various descriptive statements about it articulate into a coherent whole, which constitutes an “adequate,” a “determinate” description, Adequacy in description is secured insofar as determinate and verifiable answers can be given to all the scientifically important questions involved. What questions are important is largely determined by the logical structure of the generalized conceptual scheme which, implicitly or explicitly, is employed.”

Clarity and the Professional Voice

“Without a theory, scientists have no way to select from everything they could say about a subject only that which they can fit into a coherent whole that would be an “adequate” or “determinate” description. Scientists describe something “adequately” only when they can verify answers to all the questions they think are important. They decide what questions are important based on their implicit or explicit theories.”

Clarity and the Professional Voice

“Whatever you describe, you need a theory to fit its parts into a whole. You need a theory to decide even what questions to ask and to verify their answers.”

→ *Concise, simple, easy to understand*

Clarity and the Professional Voice

Here's the point:

When you read or write a style that seems complex, you must determine whether it needs to be so complex to express complex ideas precisely.

“Write to others as you would have others write to you.”

Chapter Ends