

Sentence Structure

Example 1

[as published]

Once the audience had recovered, Simons took a seat in the auditorium as Alsop took the musicians through performances of Simons' exuberant orchestrations of Frank Zappa's "Be-Bop Tango" and his own A Ti Te Toca, featuring two pianos and a team of percussionists ripping through movements incorporating everything from mariachi music and salsa to a spirited mambo.

[edited]

Once the audience recovered, Simons took a seat in the auditorium. Alsop then led the musicians through Simons' exuberant orchestrations of Frank Zappa's "Be-Bop Tango" and his own A Ti Te Toca. Two pianos and a team of percussionists ripped through Simons' original, which incorporated everything from mariachi music and salsa to a spirited mambo.

A sentence should have only one point. There are three things happening in this sentence: Simons sits down after performing; the musicians play one of his arrangements and an original; and the original included a wide range of influences. It's hard for a reader to grasp all three points when they're delivered in one sentence. The reader absorbs more if you limit each sentence to only one thought.

Example 2

[as published]

Just a few blocks west of the University, the Willamette River flows through the town. Get the best view from Salem's Riverfront Park where paved trails curve along the riverbank. A.C. Gilbert's Discovery Village, a renowned children's museum, is located at the north end of the 23-acre park. The carousel and Eco-Earth, two grand examples of the artistic ingenuity of Salem residents, occupy the central and southern areas.

[edited]

Just a few blocks west of the University, the Willamette River flows through the town. Get the best view from Salem's Riverfront Park where paved trails curve along the riverbank. At the north end of the 23-acre park, you'll also find A.C. Gilbert's Discovery Village, a renowned children's museum. The central and southern areas house the carousel and Eco-Earth, two grand examples of the artistic ingenuity of Salem residents.

Structure sentences to orient and cue the reader. Notice how bumpy this feels? The sentences about the Discovery Village and the carousel and Eco-Earth seem to come out of nowhere.

When the sentences are re-structured to give the location first, the graf reads more smoothly. The reader is oriented: "We're in the park on the riverbank...now we're at the north end of the park...now we're in the central and southern parts."

Example 3

To Salvador Dali, it was a “sublime fragrance compounded of heliotrope and lamb.” A 19th century novelist called it a “rough odor which has something of the relish of wild duck cooked with olives...and a faint whiff of overripe peaches.” The poet Catullus wrote of the “fierce goat” beneath a man’s arms.

It was a “sublime fragrance compounded of heliotrope and lamb” to Salvador Dali. It had a “rough odor which has something of the relish of wild duck cooked with olives...and a faint whiff of overripe peaches” to a 19th century novelist. The odor was like a “fierce goat” beneath a man’s arms, said the poet Catullus.

Structure sentences to emphasize what you mean to emphasize. The most important place of emphasis is the end of a sentence.

The writer structured these sentences to stress the description of the odor.

We re-structured these sentences to emphasize the source of the description.