

Polish

Polishing a piece can enhance the reader's comprehension of it. Though it is rarely helpful to focus on grammar alone, the toolbox of writing mechanics can help you hone other territories and tailor your piece to your audience or genre.

You might need to develop your piece's polish if...

- You struggle to read the piece aloud without stumbling.
- You have drafted and thoroughly revised your writing and are preparing to submit or publish the piece.
- You feel unfamiliar with the formatting and style conventions of the genre in which you are writing.

Guiding Questions:

- How do you want this sentence to read? What sentence structures could we use to help someone read it that way?
- When you read this aloud, where are the stumbling blocks or unclear spots?
- How can you use punctuation to guide your readers?
- What expectations do readers bring to this genre of writing, and how are you engaging them?



Overview

Understanding the genre in which you are writing, the grammatical conventions used by other writers, and the way other writers are engaging grammar can help you reflect on the mechanics of your piece.

Strategy 1: Model Texts



How to Use Model Texts

- Review the assignment or submission guidelines and identify what stylistic conventions you might see in this genre.
- Look at a model text from this genre. You may consider choosing a text you like or appreciate; seeking recommendations from an instructor, coach, or peer; or researching a model text online or in your local library.
- Once you have found this example, note key features about its format, mechanics, and language. What tone is the author conveying? What types of words is the author using? How has the author structured the piece? How is the author using punctuation, headings, or spacing? What other visuals is the author using?



Strategy 2: Sentence Workshop

Overview

Sometimes sentences are not clear because they are not focused. One strategy for focusing a sentence is to look for the subject and the verb to make sure they are clear (and not buried with lots of other words). You might experiment with the order of your words to emphasize one part of the sentence over another.

How to Use Sentence Workshops

- Read your piece aloud sentence by sentence, focusing on the paragraphs of your piece that you think need the most polish.
- Identify, with a pen or highlighter, which parts of each sentence you found yourself stumbling over, and which parts read more smoothly.
- Go back to each highlighted phrase or section and try replacing it with two or three other alternatives, reading aloud each time.
- Identify the subject and verb of the sentence.
- If the stumbling point is in a clause, experiment with moving it to a different part of the sentence.
- Paraphrase the sentence in plain language to rewrite it more simply.

Overview

When you understand how sentences can be combined, you have lots of freedom to style sentences intentionally. You may try these strategies for different purposes of your writing and depending of your desired results.



Strategy 3: Sentence Combining

How to Use Sentence Combining

- Pick two or more sentences that read aloud as “choppier” and try connecting them with Coordinating Conjunctions.
- If two of your sentences relate to each other causally (i.e. one idea depends on another), you can use a Subordinating Conjunctions to help your ideas flow.
- You might experiment with an AI-powered writing tool like Wordtune to help you rephrase your sentences to your desired tone.
- Use colons or semicolons to link two sentences expressing related ideas.