

## 10 WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR STYLE

### 1) Put your main actions into your verbs, and use people (or at least agents) as subjects.

Trying to unsettle the academic hegemony of Eurocentrism, scholars in rhetoric have been attempting to insert voices that have been excluded from such a tradition. With works such as Cheryl Glenn's *Rhetoric Retold* and George Kennedy's *Comparative Rhetorics*, the field expands to include histories and traditions erased or silenced through the privileging of Greco-Roman male perspectives.

### 2) Develop cumulative structures that add complications at the ends of sentences, as in this sentence (also notice how the fifth example creates problems by interrupting the base clause).

### 3) Create topical chains by moving from old to new information.

When debates arise in the field of rhetoric and composition, many scholars turn to classical texts to examine how the ancient Greeks understood the topic, often because the debates have been around since then. One example is the debate over whether personal expressive writing or academic argumentative writing should be taught in the composition classroom, a controversy that has roots in antiquity. W. Ross Winterowd contends that "The history of rhetoric and the emergence of composition can be traced pretty much in terms of the idealist-empiricist dialectic" (2). Winterowd reads Plato as representative of individual, expressivist pedagogy and Aristotle as focused on integrating students into a discourse community, resulting in a "destructive schism" (11).

### 4) Vary sentence lengths to create rhythm.

Not only did *College English* print Gale's article, but simultaneously included responses by Cheryl Glenn and Susan Jarratt to the "charges" levied against them by Gale. Two volumes later, Gale and another reader responded to the responses of Glenn and Jarratt. It was a nasty little exchange.

5) **Unpack overloaded constructions.** While academics love complex syntax and often seem afraid to make simple declarative statements, academics who also value clarity, which has become increasingly important as we are challenged to write for broader audiences, should realize that overloading constructions with secondary, and therefore less important, complications taxes the memory in ways that make their ideas less memorable, if not unintelligible.

### 6) Don't simply repeat key terms, develop them.

In his examination of these two differences, Collins balances the tensions of comparing Afrocentric traditions with the Eurocentric tradition. He employs terminology of Greek tradition to draw parallels to the Afrocentric terms of *nommo*. While he highlights the deficiencies in the Eurocentric tradition, he does so only to explain how the Afrocentric tradition functions differently. Therefore, Collins establishes a challenge to the Eurocentric tradition that allows for the continuation of this tradition while providing agency to the Afrocentric tradition.

### 7) Forecast your arguments at key junctures such as topic sentences and introductions to sections.

### 8) Avoid unnecessary doubling of closely related terms.

By framing the argument in this way, scholars such as Glenn, Bizzell, Jarratt and Ong simultaneously avoid and dismiss the perceived traditional standard of proof and evidence.

### 9) Use plurals for terms such as students, teachers, citizens to avoid the sexist pronoun *he* or the clumsy construction of *she or he*

### 10) As expert writers, you should also follow more advanced grammatical conventions, including

- using parallel constructions that have the same grammatical elements,
- making sure every *this* has a specific referent,
- using *that* for bound constructions and *which* for nonrestrictive clauses (Gale argues that ancient women suffered from conditions that denied them citizenship, which was understood to be ill-suited to their nature), and
- making sure that participles have referents that serve as subjects (as is not done here: By situating herself as a postmodern scholar, objective standards of proof are dispensed with as no longer relevant to her methodology).