

6 Simple Exercises to Help You Write Better Short Sentences

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1

Describe a broad or complex subject in 100 words or fewer

Choose a subject you love. One you know well.

Maybe it's quantum mechanics or the history of Western civilization.

It could be a current event with lots of twists and turns.

Once you've described the subject in 100 words or fewer, shoot for 50 words. Then 10 words.

Find a new topic, and repeat.

2

Describe a topic using *only* monosyllabic words

You know ... monosyllabic ... words created from just one syllable.

Like: bone, two, fierce, lie, spade, blow, hill, brain, dark.

Think this will be easy? It won't.

To describe a *table* (a word with two syllables) I had to use 12 words (and one polysyllabic word): "Flat surface with

four legs made out of wood, metal, or glass."

Can you describe it with 12 or fewer?

You'll probably need a thesaurus for this exercise. Then work your way through that list of monosyllabic words I listed above, starting with "bone."

3

Write a 100-word article that contains *only* active verbs

Focus on the *subject performing the action*.

Active verbs are faster and more descriptive than if an object performs an action.

For example:

- “Dorothy yelled at the waiter.”
- “The rhino gored the pumpkin.”
- “The twister devastated Joplin.”

Avoid:

- “The waiter was yelled at by Dorothy.”
- “The pumpkin was gored by the rhino.”
- “Joplin was devastated by the twister.”

Those verbs are passive, and they inflate your word count.

There’s a more important reason to prefer active over passive voice: **active assigns responsibility**.

4 **Write a 100-word article using *only* simple sentences**

Revisit exercise number one above, but this time, limit your sentences to no more than four or five words. And don't forget about single-word sentences.

Short and snappy will be the sound you hear when you read the article aloud.

Here's what 52 words look like:

Dorothy watched the rhino. It sniffed the pumpkin. She sneezed. The rhino raised its head. Snorted. Dorothy waved. The rhino pawed the earth. She threw a high heel. It hit the rhino. The rhino ate the shoe. She yelled, "Hey!" Stomped her foot. "That was my shoe!" The rhino ate the pumpkin.

5 **Describe a topic in a sonnet**

This is another variation on exercise number one where you explain a broad or complex subject within the framework of a **sonnet**.

You don't have to rhyme or get the perfect iambic pentameter for each line; just get your story into 14 lines

and aim for about 10 syllables per line.

This will teach you how to write within boundaries, and you'll learn a little about poetry, which can help define your style.

6 Describe a topic using the PAS formula

PAS stands for **Pain-Agitate-Solve**, and the formula helps you limit your idea to only two sentences or fewer per element.

It looks like this:

*Insecure? Don't worry; you're not alone.
However, stay that way and you'll never
accomplish anything of significance.*

*Fortunately, there's a book called
Insecure No More, which will teach you
how to be confident and courageous in
just 30 days. Buy it now.*

Don't be overwhelmed by all these exercises.

Consider tackling just one exercise a day. Or one a week. But schedule a reminder so you don't forget.

For detailed descriptions (and additional examples), read the full post here: copyblogger.com/short-sentences