

# What Nobody Ever Tells You: Writing Tips for International Graduate Students



Jen Ramos

English Language Institute  
January 26, 2021

# I began teaching at UF ELI in 2005

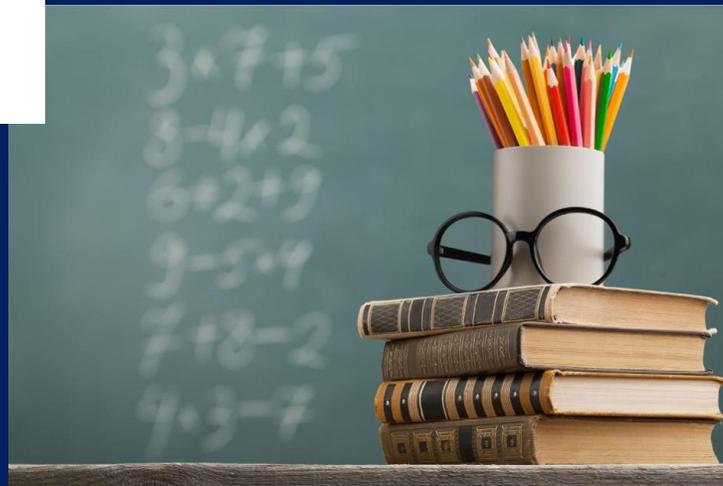
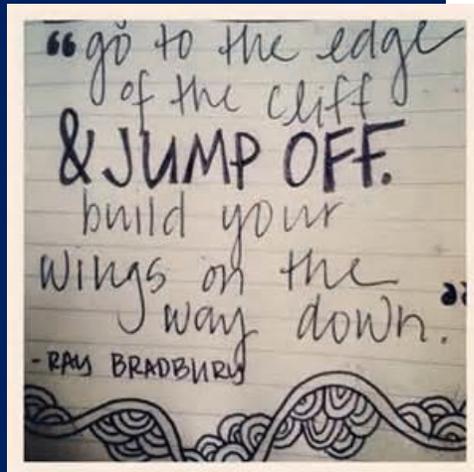


- ELI, English Language Institute
- Department of Linguistics
- 6-level program; Beginning to Advanced
- Reading, Writing, Grammar, Listening and Speaking
- Scholarly Writing (6-week course, non-credit)

# I'm from Connecticut



Biology (Bachelors)  
Nonfiction Writing (Masters of Fine Arts)  
ESOL Education (Masters of Education)





I have lived in 4 countries (besides U.S.)



# Today's Plan





# The Scholar-Writing Connection



**Scholars/Researchers/Scientists writers**

**In university, professors read your writing**

**Outside university, no guaranteed audience!**

**Become a proficient writing early; use resources around you (read widely; ask professors about their own writing; use writing studio)**

**Scholars can be excellent writers—but not necessarily have vocab or skills to teach writing**

# Expectation

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## Graduate-Level Writing



- What do professors assume you already know about academic writing?
- A lot!
- Genre familiarity
- Find/Evaluate sources
- Develop research question
- Support a claim
- Organization
- Format
- Grammatical Accuracy
- Find sources/evaluate sources
- Paraphrase
- Direct Quotes
- Academic Style
- Citations and references
- Which of the above are a challenge for you?

# Expectation

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## UF Campus Resources

➤ Just to name a few...



# UNIVERSITY WRITING PROGRAM

[About Us](#)[Courses](#)[Writing Studio](#)[Resources](#)[Events](#)

## Writing Studio



### Mission

<https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>

The new Writing Studio is committed to helping University of Florida students and faculty meet their academic and professional goals by becoming better writers. We support independent learning and encourage scholarship by providing one-on-one consultations, workshops tailored to specific classes (graduate and undergraduate), and faculty retreats focusing on publishing original research.

Students and faculty at all levels and in every discipline are welcome!

### Who Are We?

Directed by **Dr. Martin Simpson**, the *Writing Studio* is staffed by consultants with extensive writing backgrounds. Most have graduate degrees, and many teach in the University Writing Program or English Department. We are located in 2215 Turlington Hall, and our office phone is (352) 846-1138.

### What Do We Do?

[SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT](#)

► **ONE-ON-ONE TUTORIALS.** The *Writing Studio* is a free service for current UF graduate and



# DIAL CENTER FOR WRITTEN AND ORAL COMMUNICATION

[About](#)[Programs](#)[Courses](#)[People](#)

## Public Speaking Lab

### Mission:

The Public Speaking lab offers assistance to those seeking to develop effective speaking skills across academic disciplines. We are open to all of the UF academic community, including undergraduates, graduate students, TAs, faculty, and UF alumni. Located in 201 Rolfs Hall, the speech lab is a free service and provides an opportunity for individuals to brush up on this critical communication skill

### Types of assistance:

- Video-taping of speeches and feedback
- Reviews of speech outlines
- Assistance with making your delivery engaging and powerful
- Preparation for a defense of thesis or dissertation
- Help with speech anxiety
- Guidance on speeches given during the interview process
- Preparation for conference presentations
- Feedback on team presentations

<https://cwoc.ufl.edu/public-speaking-lab-2/>

# Starting Small Formatting

### The Cognitive Benefits of Being Bilingual

More of the world's population is bilingual or multilingual than monolingual (speaking only 1 language). In addition to facilitating cross-cultural communication, being bilingual also positively affects cognitive abilities (ability to process and use information). Researchers have shown that the bilingual brain can have better attention and task-switching skills than the monolingual brain, thanks to its developed ability to inhibit or block one language while using another. In addition, bilingualism has positive effects at both ends of the life spectrum: Bilingual children as young as seven months can better adjust to environmental changes, while bilingual seniors can experience less cognitive decline.

We are surrounded by language during nearly every waking moment of our lives. We use language to communicate our thoughts and feelings, to connect with others and identify with our culture, and to understand the world around us. And for many of us, a multilingual environment involves not just one language but two or more. In fact, the majority of the world's population is bilingual or multilingual. In a survey conducted by the European Commission in 2007, 16 percent of European respondents reported being able to speak in a language other than their mother tongue. In many European countries that percentage is even higher—for instance, 99 percent of Luxembourgers and 95 percent of Latvians speak more than one language. Even in the United States, which is widely considered to be monolingual, 20 percent of those over the age of five reported speaking a language other than English at home in 2007, an increase of 140

Left-Justified Text



Ragged-right margin



Double-Spaced Text

 Uniform double-spacing

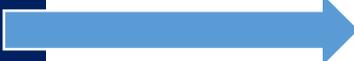
Repeat Title Here

 Uniform double-spacing

With American Psychological Association (APA) style, the first heading should never be “Introduction”. Instead, the paper’s title should be used. The entire paper is to be double-spaced throughout, and font should be 12-point, Times New Roman unless otherwise indicated by the instructor. Margins should be 1” all around unless otherwise indicated by instructor.

 Uniform double-spacing

First level  
heading



**This is a First Level Heading with Bold Lettering**

One of the most important aspects of APA citation style is in-text citation. In general, the author’s name and the year should be included, with a comma separating the two (Noeau, 1999). Remember that the period always comes after the citation to enclose it with the sentence. When there are two or more names, they are separated by commas, and there is an ampersand before the last name (Eichner, Nakashita, & Chung, 2005). If there are three or more authors, all names are listed with the first citation, and then each subsequent citation can use the “et al.” notation, which is Latin for “and others” (Eichner et al.). The preceding citation does not have a year because when the same source is cited within the same paragraph, the year does not need to be listed again.

**This is a Second Level Heading with Bold Lettering**

Second level  
heading



According to Blath (2000), the citation can also be put at the beginning of the sentence in this way, and does not need to be cited again at the end of the sentence. One exception to the “et al.” rule is when a source has seven or more authors, in which case the writer does not need to cite all names the first time and can automatically use “et al.”. In some cases, multiple sources are cited to support one point, in which case the sources are separated by semicolons (Eichner et al., 2005; Satakar, 2010).

Second level  
heading



**This is a third level heading with bold lettering and indentation.** According to Satakar

- General Formatting for Academic Papers:  
Set page margins to 1 inch on all sides.  
Double-space all text, including headings.  
Indent the first line of every paragraph 0.5 inches.  
Use an accessible font (e.g., Times New Roman 12pt., Arial 11pt., or Georgia 11pt.).  
Include a page number on every page.

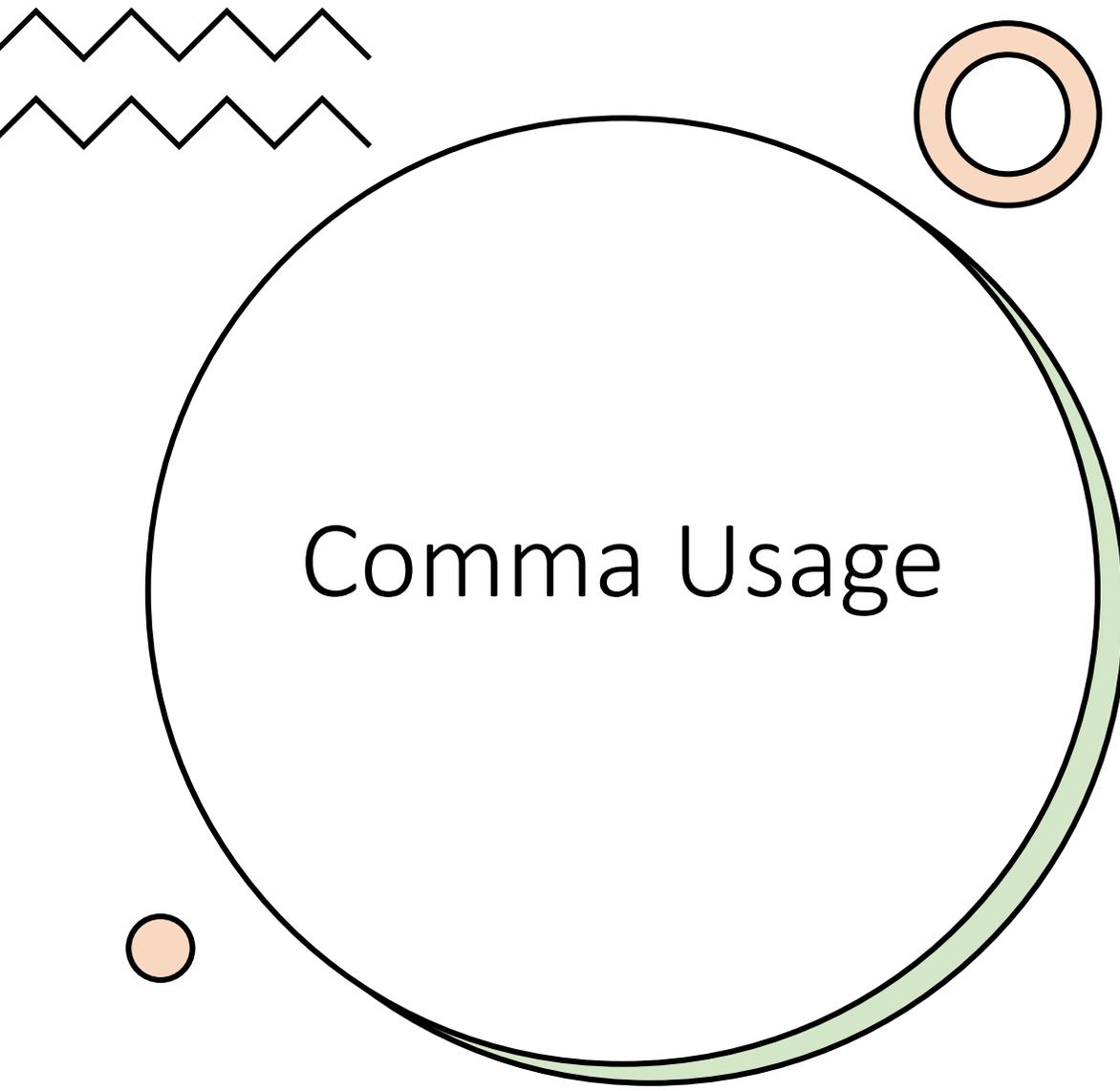
# Sentence Elements

## Anatomy of a Sentence:

|                          |  |  |
|--------------------------|--|--|
| Independent Clause       | a clause that can stand alone syntactically as a complete sentence; contains at least a subject and a verb             | She ate an apple.                          |
| Subordinate Clause       | a clause that cannot stand alone as a sentence, but functions as either a noun, adjective or adverb in a sentence      | when she ate an apple                      |
| Coordinating Conjunction | a conjunction, such as "and," "but," or "or," that joins two grammatical elements of the same sentence or construction | She ate an apple, but she did not like it. |

# Fragments & Run-on Sentences

| Fragment: Incomplete sentence                        | Run-on: Sentence with too many elements  |
|--|--|
| <p>X Although the data has not yet been analyzed</p> | <p>X We researched several companies who have implemented this type of data mining, however, we haven't found one that is willing to tell us more about their methods.</p> |
|  |  |



# Comma Usage

Before **coordinating conjunctions** (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so) when they link **two independent clauses**:

- It was raining, and I was hurrying to get home.
- She felt terrible, but she went to class anyway.

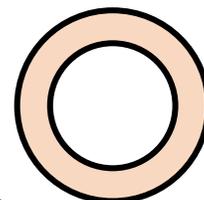
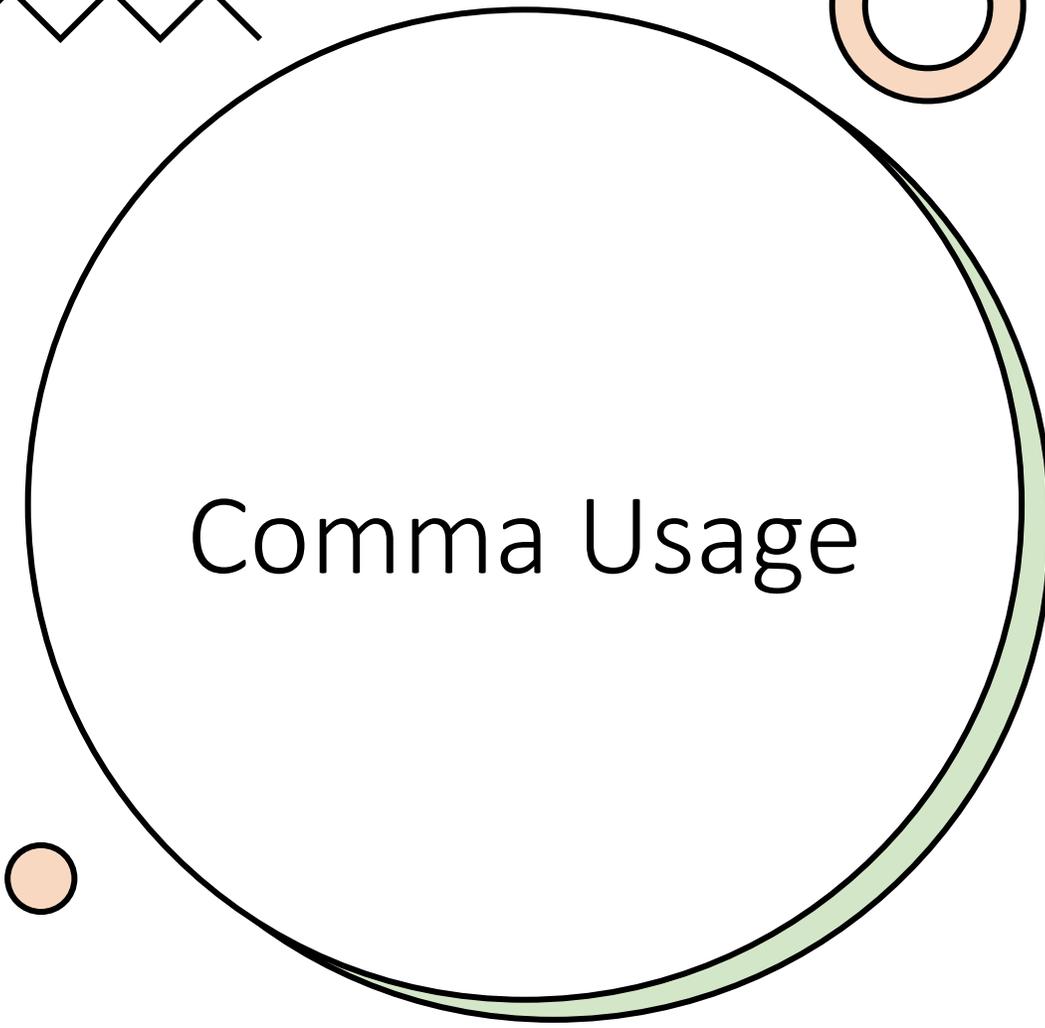
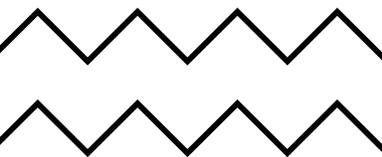
Separate **items in a series**:

- He bought bananas, apples, oranges, and cheese.
- She had long, dark, straight, thick hair.

Set off **parenthetical elements** that rename or describe the noun directly beside it

- The Washington monument, a massive obelisk, was completed in 1884.
- My parents, who met each other in 1962, have been married for 50 years.





# Comma Usage

Set off **transitional phrases**:

- On the other hand, many diets decrease stamina and strength.
- As a matter of fact, American football was derived from rugby.
- Many people, however, are allergic to cats.

Follow **introductory clauses** and phrases:

- On the way home, I stopped to buy groceries.
- Because it was raining, I took a taxi home.
- To our surprise, they were brothers.

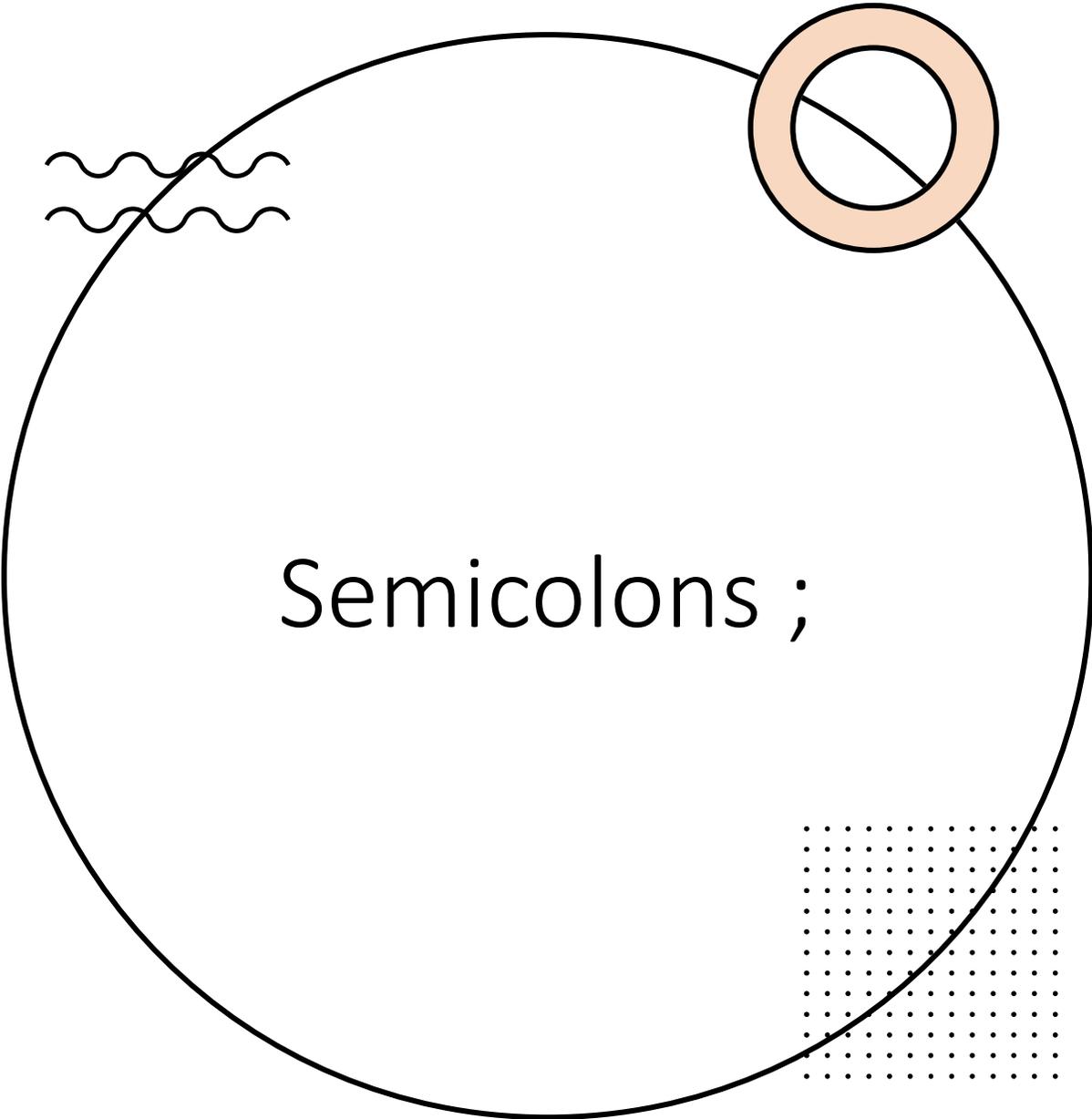
Indicate **direct quoted speech**:

- He shouted, "Let's go!"
- The professor asked, "How does this relate to the larger issue?"

Go **inside quotation marks**:

- You used the word "big," but a better choice would be significant or substantial.





# Semicolons ;

Connect **two independent clauses** that are closely related:  
The book is informative; it has helpful charts and graphs.

- My brother is going to Costa Rica for the summer; he will be studying Spanish.

Separate **three or more items in a series** that contain **commas**:

- I like big, purple shirts; red, high-heeled shoes; and fluffy, yellow pillows.
- I live with Larry, a student; Moe, an executive; and Curly, a cop.

Separate **two independent clauses** that are joined by a **transition word or phrase**:

- It is important to get enough sleep; however, too much sleep can be bad for your health.
- Jack did not eat the leftovers in the fridge; instead, he ordered a pizza.

Go **outside** quotation marks:

- He had heard about “The Fermi Paradox”; he didn’t know what it was.

# Punctuation and Quotes

**Commas and periods always go inside the quotation marks** in American English

Dashes, colons, and semicolons almost **always go** outside the **quotation marks**; question **marks** and exclamation **marks** sometimes **go inside**, sometimes stay outside.

- What did John Kennedy mean when he said, “Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country”?
- My colleague asked, “Is this meeting really necessary?”

# Practice

The best method for a classroom with a diverse group of students is to vary the different learning styles, it is important to continue to anticipate problems and solutions in order to help the students learn best in their own ways. Some students learn best through discussions others learn best through projects or “hands-on learning”. To individualize the learning process, the instructor must evaluate the needs of each student for example some students maybe be auditory learners while others process information visually. Although individualization is effective. This mode of teaching requires the instructor to devote more time to planning and customizing classroom lessons. The instructor may need extended planning time, however, a teaching assistant may be able to reduce this extra time investment.

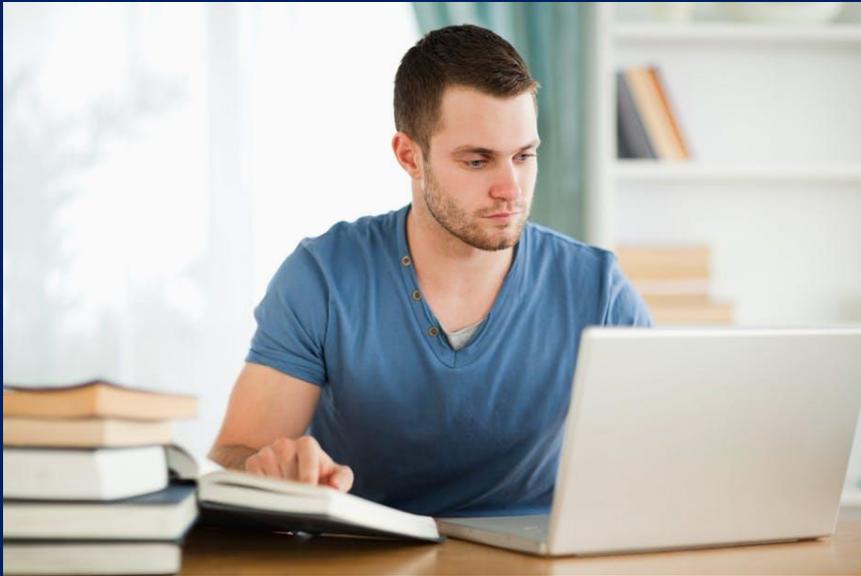
# Email

It's a little tricky. Why?

# Communication

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## Email



- **Hybrid Spoken & Written English**
- **Formal and Information Continuum**
- **Integral part university communication**
  - **Professors**
  - **Classmates**
  - **Staff**
- **Varies individually; Tone often hidden**

# Communication

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## Email—Common Elements



1. Greeting
2. Pleasantry/Identification
3. Purpose, Request, Outcome
4. Summary
5. Closing
6. Signature

# Sample Professional Email

Dear Dr. Forbes,

← Opening

My name is Janice Carrillo and I am the Director of the MSISOM program. I met one of your staff members Daryl Bish when he accompanied a group of us from the business school to recruit students from China last spring. He mentioned that you may be able to help us with our orientation workshop for incoming international students.

← Identification and Necessary Background

We **would like** to tailor a program for our incoming international students this upcoming Spring semester. Specifically, we are anticipating that we will have a small group of only 10-15 incoming students. In the past, we have required them to come to campus a few days early for a small orientation of about 15 hours. This orientation has typically been focused on Professional Writing and Presentations. From your website, it looks like you **may be able** to help us with this. We **would be interested** in incorporating topics on the following items: ← Purpose/Desired Outcomes

- English for Specific Purposes (business English)
- Accent Reduction
- Introduction to American Culture
- Professional Presentations

← Specific Request

**Please** let me know if this sounds like a viable option for our program, and how to proceed with this request.

← Summary & Next step

Best Regards,  
Janice Carrillo

← Closing

UF

# Email

## Do

Give context or explanation

*I wanted to prepare for the final exam, and I think knowing how I did on our previous class exam will help me know what to study.*

Use polite modals: would, could

*Would you be able to tell me my grade on the last exam?*

Make the information concise

*I could meet Monday, Wednesday or Friday from 9am until 1:30.*

Offer something convenient to the other person

*If those times don't work for you, I could try to come when you are available.*

Be appreciative and friendly.

*Thank you for your time. Enjoy the rest of your day.*

## DON'T

Assume the reader knows why you are making the request

--

Use commands

*Tell me my grade.*

Give unnecessary or confusing details

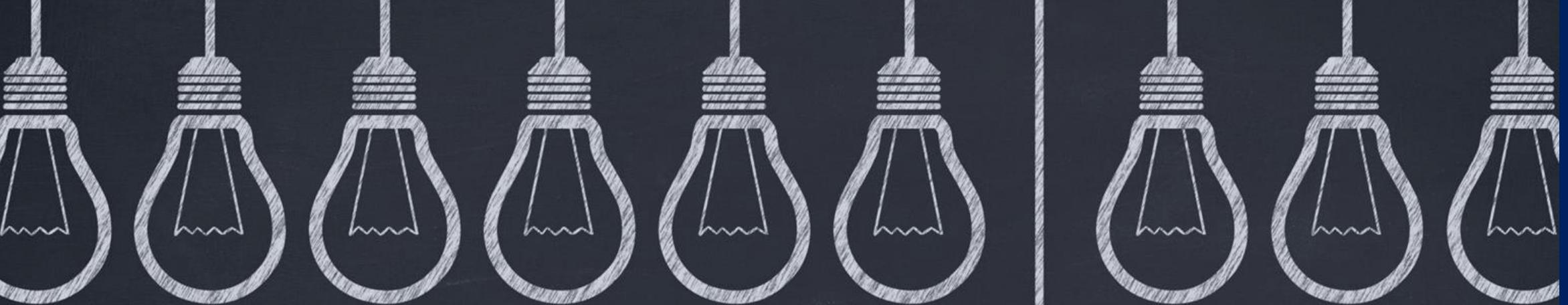
*I could meet on Monday, Wednesday or Friday from 9am until 1:30pm. At 2pm I have another class that takes a while to walk to. So, I am only available those times.*

Be too restrictive

*I can only meet during those times. With my class schedule, any other time is impossible.*

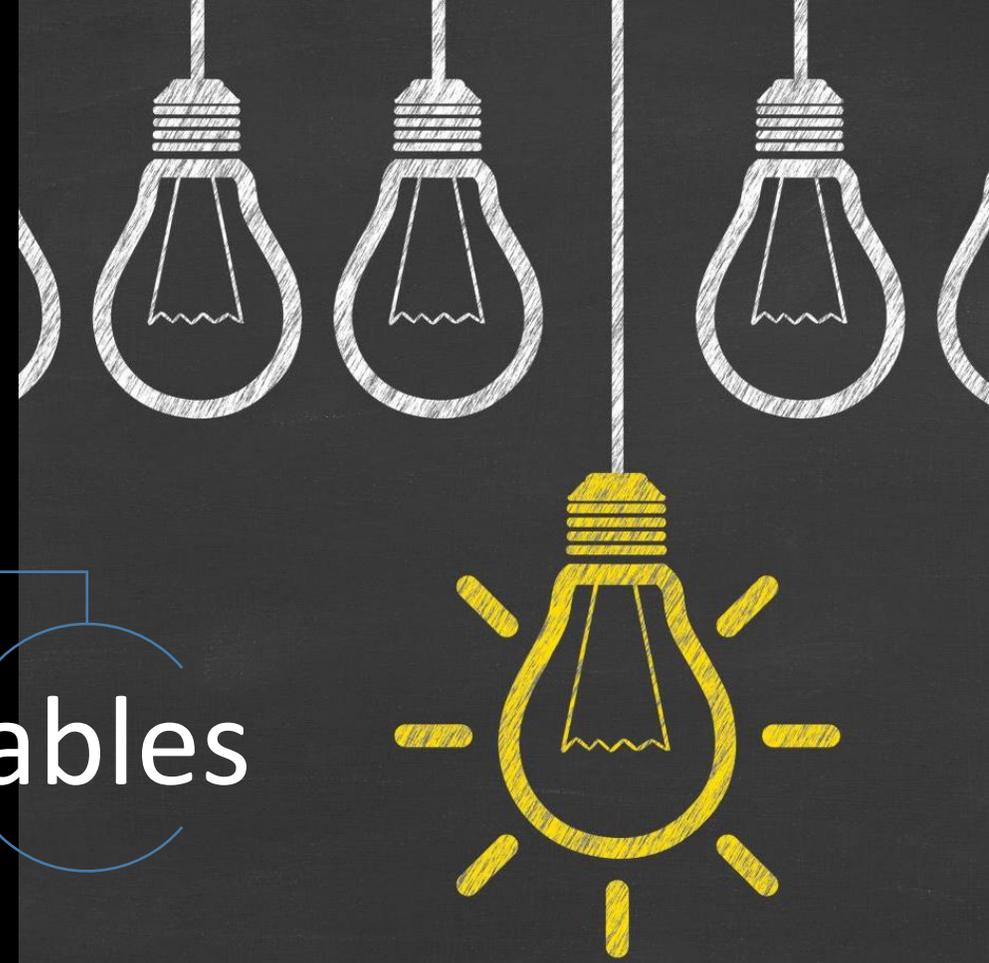
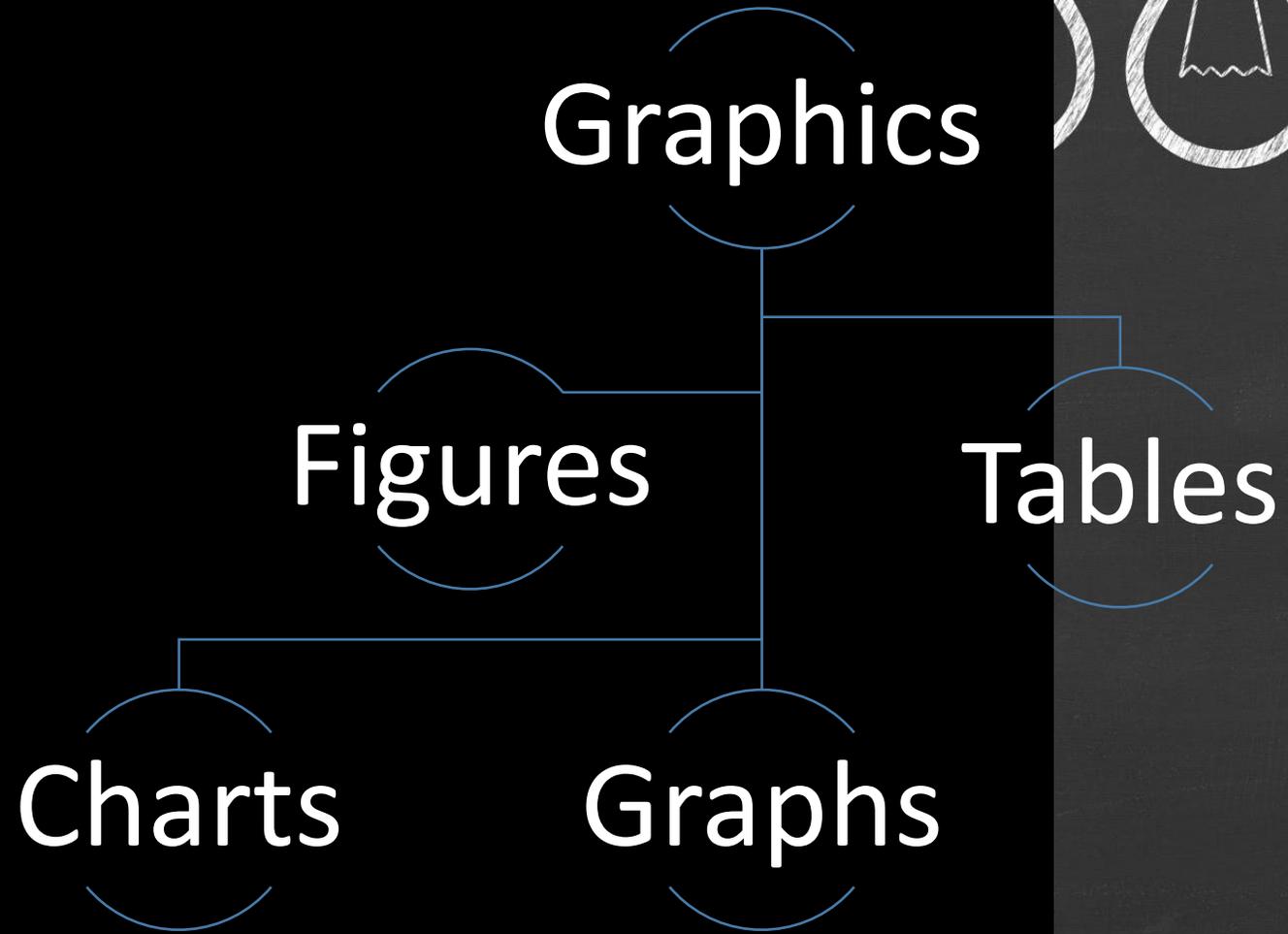
Flatter

*Thank you. Your class is amazing! You are a great professor.*



# Tables & Figures

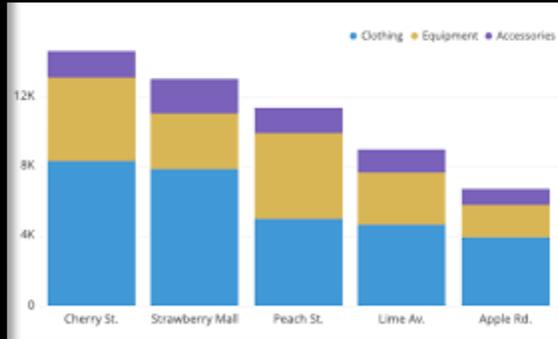
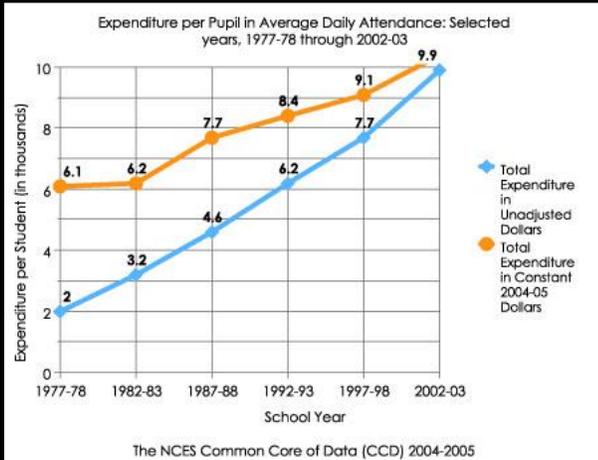




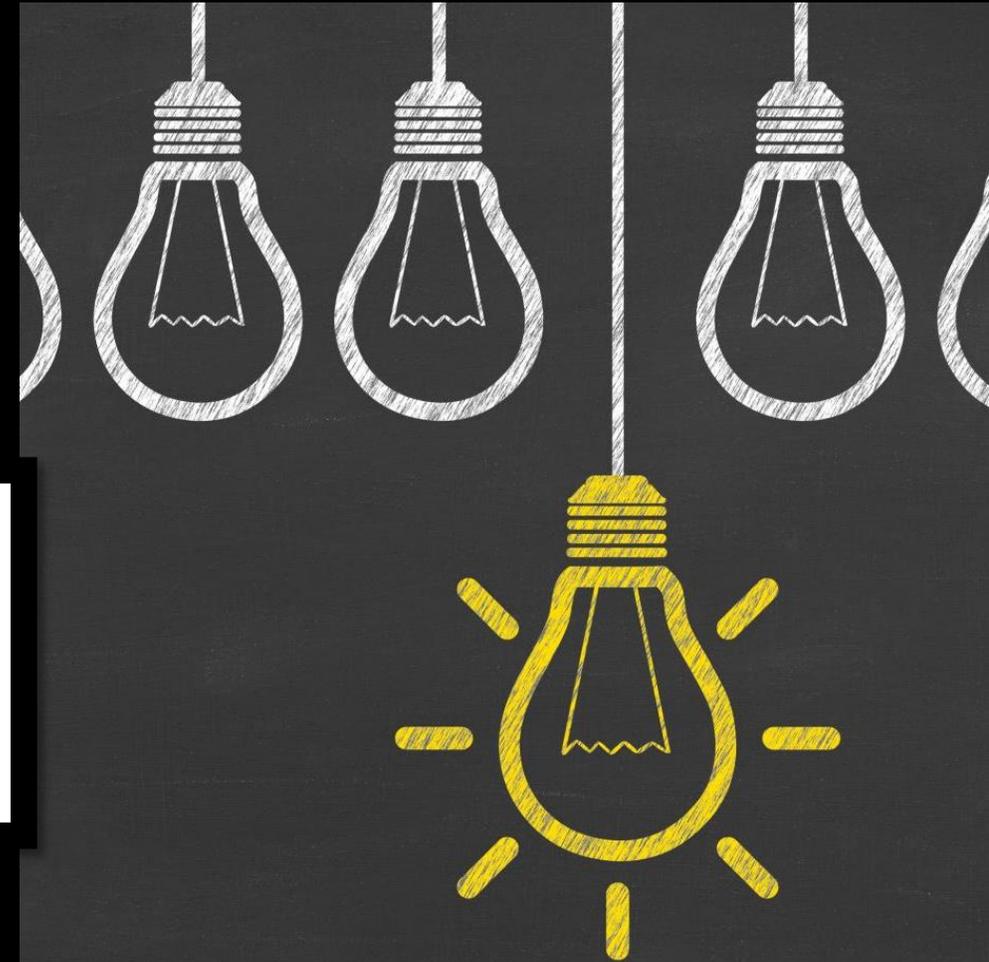
How to choose?

Achieve the effect you want!

Beginners: choose basic tables, bar charts, line graphs



| Category        |   |               |                     |                     |
|-----------------|---|---------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 010-Womens      |   |               |                     |                     |
| 020-Mens        |   |               |                     |                     |
| 030-Kids        |   |               |                     |                     |
| 040-Juniors     | ● | \$7.00        | \$3,105,550         | \$2,930,385         |
| 050-Shoes       | ● | \$13.84       | \$3,640,471         | \$3,574,900         |
| 060-Intimate    | ● | \$4.28        | \$955,370           | \$852,329           |
| 070-Hosiery     | ● | \$3.69        | \$573,604           | \$486,106           |
| 080-Accessories | ● | \$4.84        | \$1,273,096         | \$1,379,259         |
| 090-Home        | ● | \$3.93        | \$2,913,647         | \$3,053,326         |
| 100-Groceries   | ● | \$1.47        | \$810,176           | \$829,776           |
| <b>Total</b>    | ● | <b>\$5.49</b> | <b>\$23,132,601</b> | <b>\$22,051,952</b> |



# General Tip: Good Labels

**Label** each graphic in a way that **describes** its data.

- For a **table**, the label is called a **title** (flush left above table)
- For a **figure**, the label is called a **legend** (flush left below figure)
- **Avoid** making label a **general** topic

**Heads of Household x**

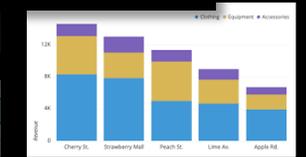
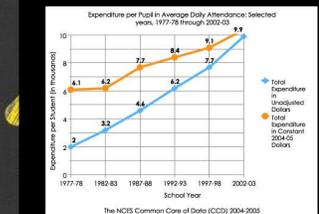
**Changes in two-parent households, 1970 to 2010**

- **Avoid** characterizing what data implies

**Counselling's effects weaker before professionalization of staff, 1995 to 2000 x**

**Effects of counselling on depressed children, 1995 to 2000**

- Create **labels** that help **distinguish** graphics presenting **similar** data



| Category        | This Year Sales Status | Average Unit Price | 2004-2005           | 2005-2006           | 2006-2007           | 2007-2008 |
|-----------------|------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------|
| 010-Womens      | ●                      | \$7.30             |                     |                     |                     |           |
| 020-Mens        | ●                      | \$7.12             |                     |                     |                     |           |
| 030-Kids        | ●                      | \$5.30             |                     |                     |                     |           |
| 040-Juniors     | ●                      | \$7.00             |                     |                     |                     |           |
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| <b>Total</b>    |                        | <b>\$5.49</b>      | <b>\$23,132,601</b> | <b>\$22,051,952</b> | <b>\$23,132,601</b> |           |

# General Tip: Inserting Labels

Label all rows and columns in tables and both axes in charts and graphs

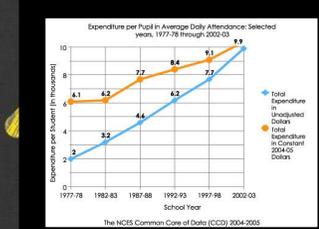
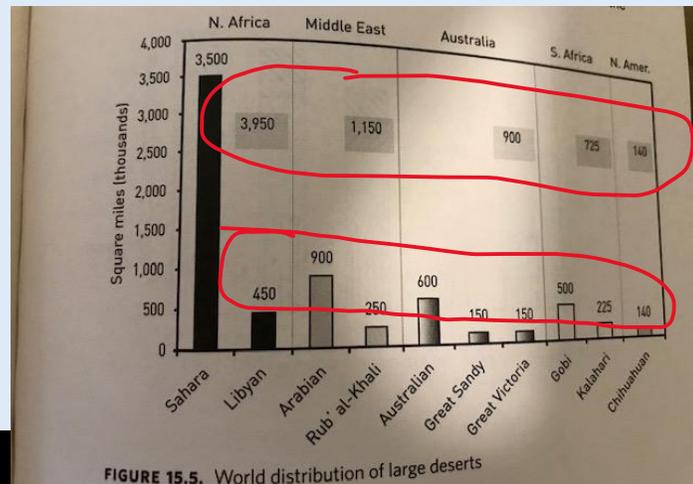
Use tick marks and labels to indicate intervals on the vertical axis of a graph

If possible, label lines, bar segments on the image rather than in a legend set to the side.

Use legend if the labels are too complex

When specific numbers matter, add them to bars, segments, or dots on lines

Ex:

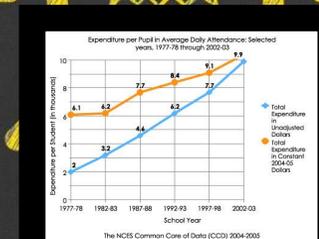
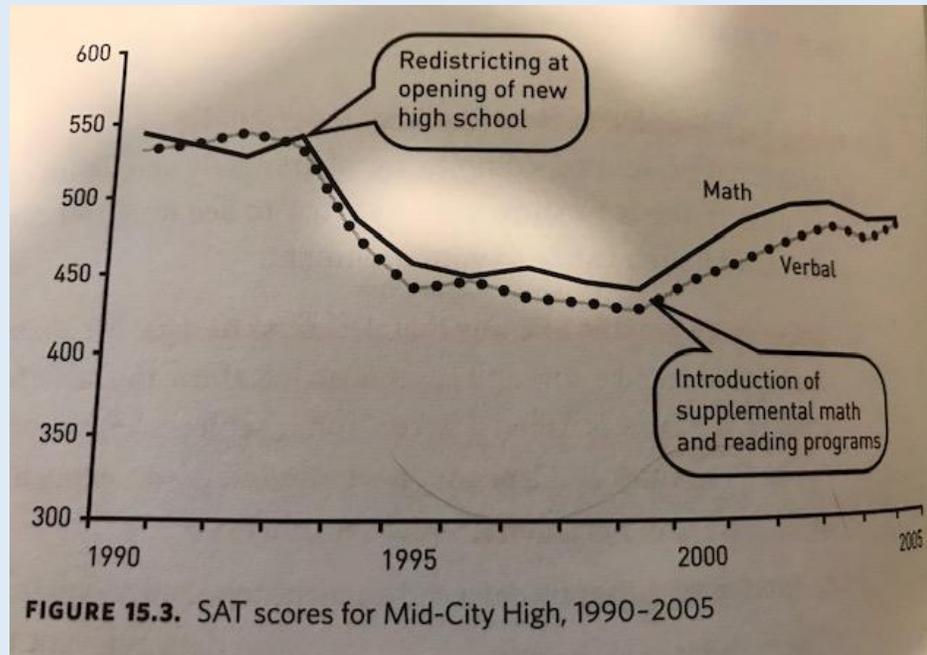


# General Tip: Insert Info

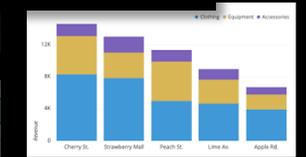
**Insert** info that helps reader see how data supports your point

- If numbers in a table show a trend, indicate % change in final column
- If a line graph changes in response to event not mentioned in graph, add text to the image to explain it.

Ex:



| Category        | This Year Sales Status | Average Unit Price | 2004-2005           | 2005-2006           |                     |
|-----------------|------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 010-Womens      | ●                      | \$7.30             |                     |                     |                     |
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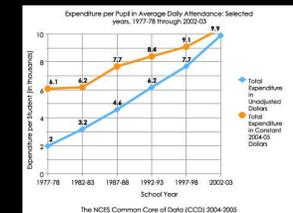
# General Tip: Introduce

In the body of your paper, **introduce** table or figure with a sentence that explains how to interpret it.

Then **highlight** what it is the table to focus on

Ex.

“Figure 8 compares students’ socio-economic background as a child with their earnings for the first 5 years post-graduation. The data suggest that a university education does not act as an equalizer.”

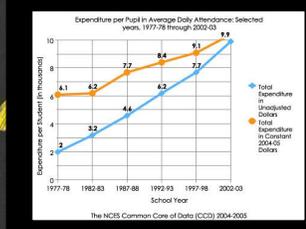


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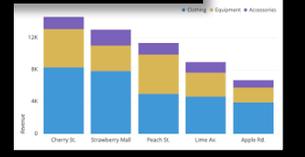
# General Tip: Relevance

Include only **relevant** data

If you keep data 'only for the record', and **not as evidence of your claim**, label it as so and put in **appendix**



| Category        | This Year Sales Status | Average Unit Price | 2004-2005     | 2005-2006           | 2006-2007           | 2007-2008           |
|-----------------|------------------------|--------------------|---------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 010-Womens      | ●                      | \$7.30             |               |                     |                     |                     |
| 020-Mens        | ●                      | \$7.12             |               |                     |                     |                     |
| 030-Kids        | ●                      | \$5.30             |               |                     |                     |                     |
| 040-Juniors     | ●                      | \$7.00             |               |                     |                     |                     |
| 050-Shoes       | ●                      | \$13.84            | \$3,640,471   | \$3,574,900         | \$3,640,471         |                     |
| 060-Intimate    | ●                      | \$4.28             | \$955,370     | \$852,329           | \$955,370           |                     |
| 070-Hosiery     | ●                      | \$3.69             | \$573,604     | \$486,106           | \$573,604           |                     |
| 080-Accessories | ●                      | \$4.84             | \$1,273,096   | \$1,379,259         | \$1,273,096         |                     |
| 090-Home        | ●                      | \$3.93             | \$2,913,647   | \$3,053,326         | \$2,913,647         |                     |
| 100-Groceries   | ●                      | \$1.47             | \$810,176     | \$829,776           | \$810,176           |                     |
| <b>Total</b>    |                        |                    | <b>\$5.49</b> | <b>\$23,132,601</b> | <b>\$22,051,952</b> | <b>\$23,132,601</b> |



# Table Tips: Simplify

## Keep visual impact simple

- Box a graphic only if you are grouping figures
- Do not color or shade background
- Do not use both horizontal and vertical black lines to divide columns and row.
- Use light gray lines only if the table is complex or you want to guide reader's eyes in one direction to compare data
- For tables with many rows, lightly shade every fifth row.

An illustration of several lightbulbs hanging from above. One lightbulb in the foreground is lit and colored yellow, while the others are unlit and shown in white outlines. The background is dark.

| Day       | Fat | Carbs | Protein |
|-----------|-----|-------|---------|
| Monday    | 70g | 94g   | 81g     |
| Tuesday   | 65g | 85g   | 95g     |
| Wednesday | 88g | 71g   | 105g    |
| Thursday  | 57g | 102g  | 78g     |
| Friday    | 73g | 96g   | 84g     |
| Average   | 74g | 85g   | 88g     |

# Graphic Tips: Simplify

Color or shade only to show contrast; Use **shades of same tone**

Never use iconic bars (e.g. images of cars to represent automobile production)

Never plot data in 3D unless there is a reason to justify doing so (ex. The best way to visualize the data)

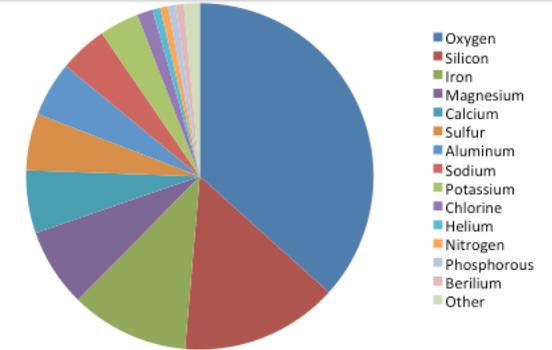
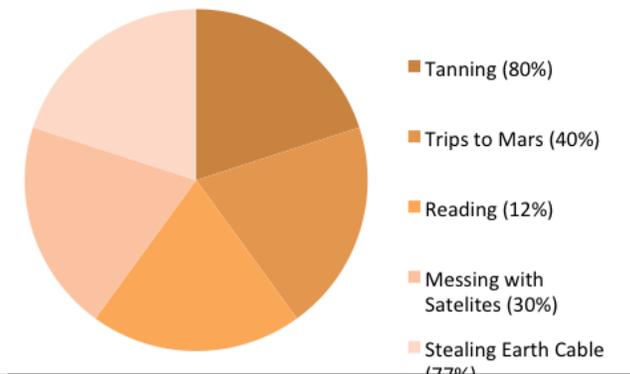


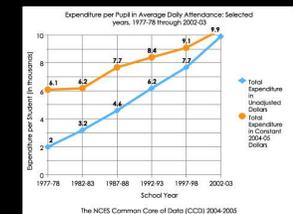
Figure 1. Elements in Martian soil

The chart shows the relative proportion of fifteen elements in Martian soil, listed in order of decreasing proportion: oxygen, silicon, iron, magnesium, calcium, sulfur, aluminum, sodium, potassium, chlorine, helium, nitrogen, phosphorous, beryllium, and other. Oxygen is the most abundant element, making up about 45% of the composition, while silicon and iron together make up about 25%. The relative proportions of the other elements are much smaller and are difficult to estimate from the chart. It is also hard to distinguish the colors in the key.

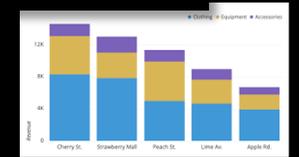


# General Tip: Placement

- **Placement of figures and tables** within the text is **discipline-specific**.
- In manuscripts (such as **lab reports**) it is conventional to put tables and figures on **separate pages** from the text, as near as possible to the place where you first refer to it.
- You can also put all the figures and tables **at the end** of the paper to avoid breaking up the text.
- In other types of writing, figures and tables may also be **embedded in the text**, as long as the text itself isn't broken up into small chunks.
- **Complex raw data** is conventionally presented in an **appendix**.
- Be sure to **check on conventions** for the placement of figures and tables in **your discipline**.

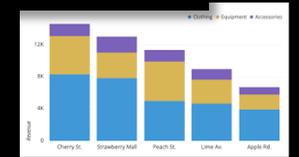
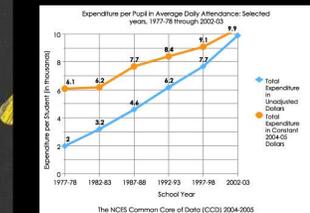


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# Overall

- Strive for clarity, simplicity, accuracy
- Tables and graphics should facilitate reader understand (not obstruct!)
- You can't pour all complexity of your data into one graphic or table
- Include only relevant data
- If you keep data 'only for the record', and not as evidence of your claim, label it as so and put in appendix
- Your text acts as a guide for the reader



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|-----------------|------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------|
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# Organized Writing

## Paragraph Organization

- Topic Sentence (topic + controlling idea)
- Supporting Sentences (explain/provide evidence)
- Concluding Sentence (summarize; preview next point)

# What is Old to New Pattern?

Method of idea organization: Sentence begins with 'old info' from previous sentence (see examples)

Example: One major issue faced by many poor communities is that of **food security**. **Food security** is a condition related to the supply of food and the population's access to it.

Example: Multinational Corporations, otherwise known as MNCs, are huge industrial organizations that have **multiple subsidiaries** (Chen, 2018). **The subsidiaries**, spread throughout the globe, are run by the parent company.

# Why use Old to New Pattern?

Connects sentences

Reduces need for transition signals and linking phrases

Increases ease of reading

## Comparison: Which box demonstrates Old to New?

### A

- With conflict and widespread famine affecting many parts of the world, it is long overdue that genetically modified (GM) crops take their place in the spotlight as the future of farming. Developed nations have a responsibility to share this new biotechnology with the world.

### B

- With conflict and widespread famine affecting many parts of the world, it is long overdue that genetically modified (GM) crops take their place to revolutionize farming. The future of farming depends on the union between man's ingenuity and technological breakthroughs.

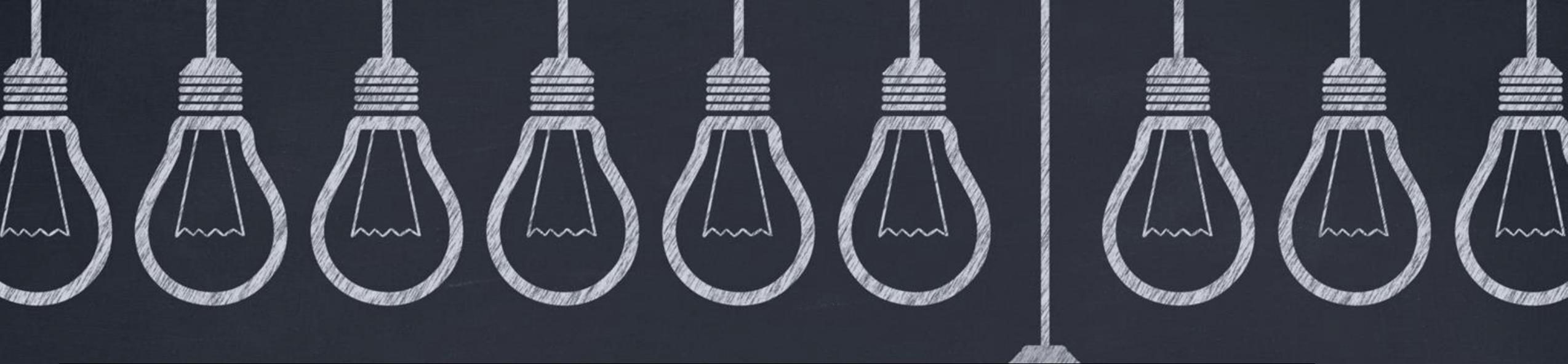
## Which box demonstrates Old to New?

### A

- With conflict and widespread famine affecting many parts of the world, it is long overdue that genetically modified (GM) crops take their place in the spotlight as the future of farming. Developed nations have a responsibility to share this new biotechnology with the world.

### B

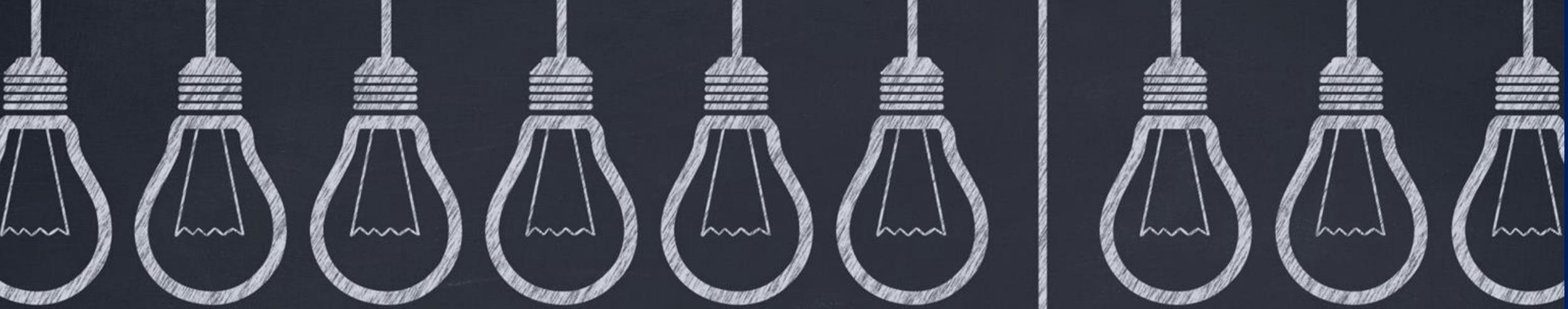
- With conflict and widespread famine affecting many parts of the world, it is long overdue that genetically modified (GM) crops take their place to revolutionize farming. The future of farming depends on the union between man's ingenuity and technological breakthroughs.



Info Patterns:

Old to New 

Basic to Complex



# Sentence Patterns

Concrete to Abstract  
Simple to Complex



## “Main Characters” vs. Abstractions as subjects

If Brazil strips its rain forests to serve short-term economic interests, they may damage the Earth’s atmosphere.

Stripping Brazils rain forests to serve short-term economic interests may damage the Earth’s atmosphere.

-----  
We cannot measure outcomes reliably when patients are hospitalized but not treated appropriately.

The hospitalization of patients without the appropriate treatment results in the unreliable measurement of outcomes.



Basic to Complex (grammatical or technical) sentence structure

The increasing demand for more land for agricultural use and for wood products for construction worldwide now threatens rain forests with destruction.

Rain forests are now threatened with destruction by the increasing demand for more land for agricultural use and for wood products used in construction worldwide.

---

Inappropriate simplification of an issue is often referred to as reductionism.

Reductionism refers to an inappropriate simplification of an issue.

----

The practice of maximizing crop production and biodiversity in individual fields is called landsharing.

Landsharing is the practice of maximizing crop production and biodiversity in individual fields.



# To Summarize

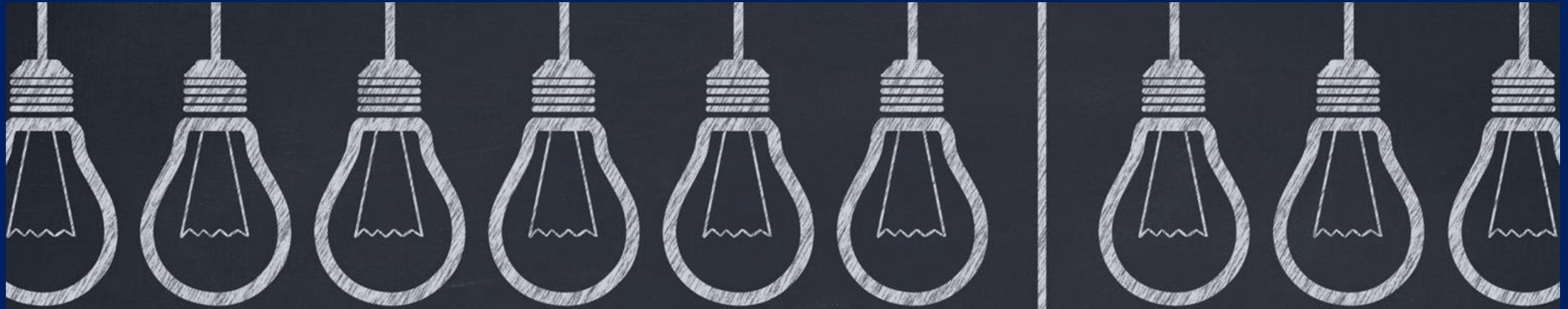
The first words of your sentences should...

- Connect to previous information
- Be 'characters' rather than abstraction concept
- Be the most basic part of the sentence

The last words of your sentences should...

- Contain technical words used for the first time
- Provide the new information
- Provide the most complex phrasing
- Provide a link to the next sentence





Thank you!



Q & A