

# Paramedic method for revising prose

Adapted from Richard Lanham's *Revising Prose*, 3rd edition.

1. Circle the prepositions.
2. Circle the *is* forms. Ask, "Where's the action? Who's kicking who?"
3. Put this kicking action in a simple (not compound) active verb.
4. Start fast — no slow windups.
5. Read the passage aloud with emphasis and feeling.
6. Put space between each sentence on the screen and mark off its basic rhythmic units with a */*.
7. Compare the sentence lengths in the paragraph.

## Slow windups

Basically any opening which ends with *is that*, but also any digression at the start of a sentence: "The point is that..." "It is important to remember that..." "Let's consider this as well..."

## The official style

Here is a sentence in the official style, printed without emphasis, and then to show the effect of the excessive prepositional phrases.

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## Qualities of the Official Style

1. Built on nouns, often abstractions, often Latinate, often ending in *-tion*.
2. Adjectives made from other nouns often modify these nouns. Or, another noun usurps the place of the adjective to make a noun-cluster.
3. All action is passive and impersonal.
4. No active verbs, no direct objects, no attribute agency. (Ask "Who's kicking who?")
5. Nothing called by its ordinary name. Teachers=Learning Facilitators.
6. All motion is converted into stasis, preserving the status quo and concealing agency.