Sentences: Devices for Tightening

I. Use different types of phrases for variety.

A. **Participial Phrases** use a form of a verb to further describe (modify) the main clause.

   In the **present** tense, the form will end in **–ING** (a present participle):

   **Example:** Looking out the window, the student wondered if class would ever be over.

   In the **past** tense, the form will end in **–ED** (a past participle):

   **Example:** Accustomed to losing, Ellen chose not to enter the Olympics.

B. **Gerund Phrases** also use a verb ending in **–ING**, but the phrase functions as a noun.

   **Example:** Since the baby arrived, running to the store gives John his daily workout.

C. **Absolute Phrases** are words or phrases that qualify the rest of the sentence and are not related to the sentence by a connective (such as **and, which, not only**, etc.). An absolute does not modify a specific word or phrase in the sentence.

   **Examples:** True, Rome was not built in a day.  
The hostages free at last, America rejoiced.  
The expressway jammed with rush-hour traffic, we were delayed two hours.

II. Alter the pattern of the simple sentence.

   Simple sentences (subject + predicate + modifier) can be rearranged to add flair to your writing.

   **Examples:** Some desserts are not for dieters.  
   One of these is a double-chocolate fudge brownie.  
   Desserts like double-chocolate fudge brownies are not for dieters.

III. Use subordinating conjunctions or relative pronouns to combine ideas.

   A list of **subordinating conjunctions**:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>after</th>
<th>that</th>
<th>where</th>
<th>even though</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>although</td>
<td>though</td>
<td>wherever</td>
<td>in order that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as</td>
<td>till</td>
<td>while</td>
<td>in that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>because</td>
<td>unless</td>
<td>when</td>
<td>so that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>before</td>
<td>until</td>
<td>whenever</td>
<td>as if</td>
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<tr>
<td>if</td>
<td>since</td>
<td>as though</td>
<td>as soon as</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

   **Example:** If we want to finish on time, we must begin now. Judy failed to go to the grocery store **after** she got home from work.
A list of the most common relative pronouns:

- that
- which
- what
- who
- whoever
- whomever
- whom
- whose

Example: The woman whom you were expecting has not arrived yet.

IV. Avoid expletives.

Expletives are the words there and it used as structural fillers without adding to the meaning of the sentence.

Examples: There were only three club members present. (Poor)
Only three club members were present. (Good)

It is for certain that John has measles. (Poor)
John has measles for certain. (Good)

V. Do not overuse the passive voice.

While sometimes you might want to use the verb to be, choose the most direct verb for the sentence. The passive voice shows what is done to the subject, whereas the active voice shows what the subject does.

Examples: John was chosen by Priscilla. (passive)
Priscilla chose John. (active)

The lead role in The Fugitive was played by Harrison Ford. (passive)
Harrison Ford played the lead role in The Fugitive. (active)

VI. Use appositives whenever possible.

An appositive is a word group that renames a noun or noun phrase.

Example: Rita, a good friend of mine, works as a police officer.

The word group a good friend of mine is an appositive that renames the word Rita.

The word group that acts as an appositive may be a single noun or a noun phrase. The appositive is usually set off by commas.

Examples: Her favorite exercise, walking, was denied to her by her doctor. (gerund)

Tom stuck to his creed, to do as he pleased. (infinitive phrase)

NOTE: If the appositive is a personal pronoun, the antecedent must be in the same case.

Example: All of our group, Ina, Phoebe, and I, left early.