

As you work on your manuscripts, theses, and proposals, please keep the following suggestions in mind (most are from Turabian, Chapter 11):

1. Focus on the **first ten words** of each sentence. Make them count. For example:

***Weak:** Exotic climate regimes that are inherently out-of-sample realizations of forced hydroclimate states that we have not observed over the relatively short period of the late 20th Century could result in prolonged and widespread megadroughts.*

[1] [2] [3] [4] [5] [6] [7] [8] [9]

***Better:** Prolonged and widespread megadroughts arise from exotic climate regimes that are inherently out-of-sample realizations of forced hydroclimate states that we have not observed over the relatively short period of the late 20th Century.*

2. Break up **long whole subjects** (whole subject is in orange):

Weak:** Prolonged and widespread megadroughts arise from **exotic climate regimes that are inherently out-of-sample realizations of forced hydroclimate states that we have not observed over the relatively short period of the late 20th Century.

***Better:** Prolonged and widespread megadroughts arise from exotic climate regimes. These regimes have not been observed over the late 20th century, making them inherently out-of-sample realizations of hydroclimate states.*

3. Keep **verbs close to nouns**, and make those nouns **people** whenever possible.

***Weak:** The term “megadrought,” which was first used in the early 1980s, but didn’t become widely adopted by climate and paleoclimate research communities until the late 1990s, is defined here as an event lasting 35 years or longer.*

***Better:** The term “megadrought” was first used in the early 1980s, but didn’t become widely adopted by climate and paleoclimate research communities until the late 1990s. Here, we define a megadrought as an event lasting 35 years or longer.*

Note: that the example above has both corrections: in the first sentence, the subject—an inanimate “megadrought”—is separated from its clause (“is defined”) by 23 words and two clauses. In the improved version, **we** become the actors defining megadrought, and the verb “define” is in the active tense immediately after the word “we.”

4. Refer to figures **parenthetically**, and put those figure references at the end of sentences.

***Weak:** Fig. 1 shows the results of averaging SST over all years during the event.*

***Better:** SSTs were cooler than average during the event (Fig. 1).*

5. If you start a sentence with the word “this,” make sure a noun follows it.

***Weak:** This implies that the tropical Pacific was locked in a La Niña-like state for multiple decades.*

***Better:** This finding implies that the tropical Pacific was locked in a La Niña-like state for multiple decades.*

6. Read Turabian, Chapter 11.