

Writing Don'ts

- 1. DON'T start a sentence with a long name, or the title of a person or agency.** Put the action first (what is actually happening). THEN tell who or what is doing it. A long name or title is boring. Starting a sentence the right way forces you to include more details.

BAD:

The head of the National Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C., Kenneth Johnson, today announced that he will be the first man to walk on Mars.

GOOD:

To be the first person to walk on Mars, Kenneth Johnson will have to learn how to live for days in a space suit. As head of the National Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C., he will have plenty of opportunity.

- 2. DON'T start a lead (the first paragraph in your story) with a day, date, or time.** This is especially important if the day, date, or time is NOT the current day, date, or time. It makes your story look old.

BAD:

On December 7, 1941, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor.

GOOD:

The Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

BETTER:

America's involvement in World War II began with the sound of airplane engines. When Japanese fighter planes attacked unsuspecting Americans in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on December 7, 1941, U.S. citizens went to war.

- 3. DON'T use too many conjunctive sentences (sentences tied together with "and").** Break any long sentences into two or three sentences.

- 4. DON'T start sentences with "But" or "And".**

Anytime you write a sentence starting with "But" or "And", take those words out and see if your sentence doesn't work just as well. Most times it does. If it doesn't work just as well, rework the sentence.

- 5. DON'T start sentences with "There is" or "There was" or "There were."** Write SUBJECT-VERB-OBJECT sentences. Your sentences will be sharper. The idea you are trying to convey will be clearer.

There are many vague sentences and most of them start with "There are."