

## Mise au point

### ► Brevity is the soul of wit

Les francophones pensent souvent qu'il faut faire de longues phrases alambiquées regorgeant de termes compliqués pour impressionner son lecteur. Mais un style clair, net, précis, qui va droit au but, est en fait souvent un atout. Quand les professeurs disent qu'il faut privilégier la qualité à la quantité, ils le pensent ! De plus, des phrases plus courtes vous éviteront de faire des fautes de langue. Enfin, de façon générale, la stylistique anglaise supporte mal les phrases longues.

On peut aussi essayer de se dire que chaque phrase doit faire avancer le raisonnement d'un cran, que ce soit en donnant un nouvel exemple ou une nouvelle idée. Si la phrase que vous écrivez dit, au fond, la même chose que la phrase précédente, il y a un souci.

Voici un travail qui présente ce type de problème.

Duality is a pervasive theme in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, a novella which R. L. Stevenson published in 1886 in the late Victorian era, and that motif is obvious in many scenes of the text, for example when one character wakes up in the body of the other after a transformation – such incidents occur many times, in Jekyll's bedroom or in a public park – and the transformation is then made visible through the physical characteristics of the protagonists (e.g. their hands, their height), but it is also made obvious through the psychological character traits of the two men (e.g. Hyde's explosive temper), which always causes panic for Jekyll, who after all metamorphoses into a wanted criminal following the murder of Sir Danvers Carew.

Mettez-vous à la place du lecteur. Trouvez-vous que ce paragraphe est agréable à lire, ou même facile à déchiffrer ? Soit dit en passant, cela devient encore plus difficile quand la ponctuation n'est pas soignée...

Dites-vous que votre lecteur a probablement de très nombreux travaux à lire en peu de temps, que le vôtre est peut-être le dernier de la journée, que même la caféine à fortes doses ne lui permet plus de garder les yeux ouverts. Le but pour vous est de communiquer votre pensée à un tiers qui ne vous connaît pas. Votre propos doit être suffisamment clair pour que même un lecteur exténué puisse vous suivre facilement. Comment, dans ces conditions, produire un texte nuancé et complexe, mais qui soit aussi facile à comprendre ?

Il ne faut pas hésiter à prendre votre lecteur par la main pour le guider à travers votre texte. Une annonce de plan et des transitions claires sont autant de repères. En outre, la première phrase d'un paragraphe annonce de manière succincte le thème de l'ensemble du paragraphe (voir unité 1, chapitre 4).

Mais un style clair, ce sont aussi des phrases courtes, qui vont droit au but.

## ► Quelques solutions

La première astuce pour élaguer ses phrases consiste évidemment à employer une ponctuation plus forte, par exemple un point à la place d'une virgule.

*Stem cell research carries huge potential for the treatment of rare genetic disorders, but it remains controversial for ethical reasons.* → *Stem cell research carries huge potential for the treatment of rare genetic disorders. But it remains controversial for ethical reasons.*

Cela suppose aussi de savoir reprendre un élément issu de la première phrase, par exemple par un synonyme, un pronom ou une locution. Au pire, on peut répéter un groupe nominal court, l'anglais étant moins réfractaire à la répétition que le français.

*In picaresque novels, the protagonist often comes from a poor background and follows a sinuous path leading to many adventures.* → *In picaresque novels, the protagonist often comes from a poor background. He follows a sinuous path leading to many adventures.*  
*In the world of the Victorian workhouse, orphans and destitute people were supposed to find not only education and meaningful work, but also religious redemption, through hard labour, strict discipline and constant surveillance.* → *In the world of the Victorian workhouse, orphans and destitute people were subjected to hard labour, strict discipline and constant surveillance. In this way they were supposed to find not only education and meaningful work, but also religious redemption.*

La reprise par un pronom fonctionne particulièrement bien pour éliminer de longues propositions subordonnées relatives.

*The government decided to bail out the banks instead of holding them accountable, which has angered many voters.* → *The government decided to bail out the banks instead of holding them accountable. This has angered many voters.*



**ASTUCE.** Pour traduire « ce dernier » ou « celui-ci » employés seuls, on reprend tout simplement le dernier élément cité grâce à un pronom.

La duchesse se leva tôt et sortit sans être vue de personne. Cette dernière / Celle-ci avait un rendez-vous des plus importants.

*The duchess got up early and went out without being seen by anyone. She had an extremely important rendez-vous.*

On peut également remplacer un mot de liaison qui s'emploie en milieu de phrase par un mot de liaison qui s'utilise au début.



**ASTUCE.** Si vous n'êtes pas au point sur les mots de liaison, l'unité 5 est faite pour vous!

*The question of racism is obviously central to Othello, although many critics argue that a feminist perspective is equally valid. → The question of racism is obviously central to Othello. However, many critics argue that a feminist perspective is equally valid.*

On peut détacher de la phrase les exemples, les compléments circonstanciels (de lieu, de temps, de manière, de moyen...), ou d'autres éléments secondaires d'un point de vue grammatical.

*The speech, for instance in the third paragraph, relies on false information gleaned from social media. → The speech relies on false information gleaned from social media. The third paragraph is a case in point.*

Enfin, on a parfois tendance à employer des synonymes là où un seul mot ferait très bien l'affaire. Il faut donc éliminer ces redondances pour alléger le style.



**ASTUCE.** Cette méthode fonctionne dans deux directions si vous devez rendre un texte où l'on compte le nombre exact de mots que vous avez écrits. Vous pouvez ainsi allonger ou au contraire raccourcir votre travail selon vos besoins.

*The psychologist claims that this experience has given her a completely new perspective, helping her see small children's education in a whole new light. → The psychologist claims that this experience has given her a new perspective on small children's education.*



## Entraînement

- 1. **Coupez les phrases suivantes, notamment en reprenant les éléments qui se répètent (par ex. le sujet de la phrase) par l'emploi de pronoms (*he, she, it...*).**
  - a. The American president has many roles, as he is not only head of state but also head of government, not only commander-in-chief but also head of the executive, which gives him wide-ranging powers that are the envy of many other leaders in the world.
  - b. Marie Curie (1867-1934), who was born in Poland and remained proud of her Polish roots all her life, studied and worked most of her life in France, where she made the discoveries that led to her later fame, becoming the first woman to be awarded a Nobel Prize and remaining one of only four people to have received two Nobel Prizes.

- c. The Amazon forest is threatened because farmers destroy trees to create more farmland, but other industries such as fishing or mining are equally responsible for a lot of the environmental damage that can be seen in the region, which, in the final analysis, is also explained by a lack of government action to put in place meaningful protections.
- d. Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) is best remembered today as the mother of the famous author of *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley, but that is to ignore her own numerous achievements, the first of which is her role as a precursor of the feminist movement through her essay *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, but also her ardent defence of the French Revolution in her fiery rebuke to Edmund Burke.

■ 2. **Remplacez les mots de liaison soulignés par des mots de liaison qui s'emploient en début de phrase. Coupez ainsi les phrases et opérez tous les changements qui vous paraissent nécessaires.**

- a. The rapid growth of the Indian economy is hardly surprising, as the government introduced major reforms: not only did the state invest more into infrastructure, it also privatised public sector companies and eliminated subsidies as well, which, together with changes in the taxation system, attracted more international investment.
- b. Although feminism has won many victories over the past two centuries and women now have the right to vote and to open bank accounts without their husbands' consent, the gender pay gap – even though a differentiated analysis across industry sectors, taking into account a broad variety of educational achievements and skills, is of course necessary – still has not been closed, in spite of numerous attempts from governments to give incentives to companies to pay their female employees better, which have so far proven unsuccessful even if wages have risen in the economy as a whole.
- c. In certain specific urban areas – often disaffected parts of cities where underprivileged citizens gather – it can be difficult to access medical care or good quality education, so that people who live there often remain stuck in poverty for their whole lives, and there is such strong social determinism that even the following generations are affected, so that in these specific areas life expectancy is actually dropping below the average usually observed in developed countries.

■ 3. **Détachez les exemples et les compléments circonstanciels pour couper les phrases.**

- a. The Industrial Revolution, which sparked the development of many new technologies, e.g. the steam engine, railways, the telegraph, etc., took place in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a period which also saw many intellectual innovations, for example the emergence of liberalism, feminism and the birth of the nation-state.

- b. In Britain, a country with a regime of parliamentary monarchy, the queen holds numerous powers, including the issue of passports or the management of the armed forces, which she simply does not exercise herself, leaving these tasks to the government instead, while many other duties are still carried out by the monarch, such as summoning parliament, appointing new prime ministers, giving royal assent to bills, creating lords and granting titles.
- c. Food production is bound to become a major issue in the next decades, since for example meat production, which releases greenhouse gases such as methane and often contributes to water pollution, will have to be managed in a more environmentally friendly way, but the question is even more pressing in light of increasing urbanisation and, in big cities with many high-rise buildings and little space for extensive agriculture, architects might have to come up with innovative solutions to enable city-dwellers to produce their own food, thereby shortening supply chains, increasing food quality and ultimately preserving the environment.
- d. Romanticism is one of the most important literary movements in Britain and is famous for celebrating the British countryside, which can be seen for instance in the work of one of the most well-known Romantic poets, William Wordsworth, who lived and worked in the Lake District with its wild landscapes and of course its many lakes, where he even wrote a tourist guide which encouraged many people to visit the region, while of course he is also the author of “Daffodils”, perhaps the most famous example among the many poems which celebrate the beauty of the District.

■ 4. **Allégez les phrases suivantes en supprimant toutes les redites.**

- a. Scientists generally tend to agree among themselves that we need to focus our attention in particular on the discovery of new and unknown interstellar objects.
- b. Shakespeare is often perceived by many critics, theatre-goers and indeed the public at large as being complicated, difficult to understand and obscure, in a widespread and unfortunately deep-rooted misconception that we hope to challenge, if not debunk completely, in the present analysis.
- c. A good, high-quality education system delivering satisfactory tuition to each and every student, regardless of their social background or class, has been designed, organised and built from the ground up in the space of just two years.
- d. Obesity and excessive weight, which we can often see in many adults in this region, has now also become a problem for school-age children and even babies, as youths do not learn about the necessary and indeed essential tools needed to choose healthy options at home from their parents.



## Application

- 5. Cette analyse très fine du livre de l'auteure indienne Anita Desai, *In Custody* (1999), passe par une syntaxe complexe. Tentez de couper les phrases tout en préservant la richesse de la pensée de la critique Marta Dvorak.

[...] I posit that certain constants in multiple belief systems and their myths will also allow points of entry, particularly in light of the internationalization of new literatures in the post-colonial period which has transformed how writers write, how readers respond, and even, as Vinay Dharwadker has judiciously argued, how publishers mediate between the two, opening up new markets, boosting their transnational distribution to reach global audiences. I argue that Desai's *In Custody* is exemplary of syncretic transnational writing grounded in the local or national but reaching out to international readerships, notably redeploying the vantages and techniques of literary predecessors throughout the globe belonging to aesthetic and philosophical movements which have always migrated, mixed, and mutated.

Marta Dvorak, *The Faces of Carnival in Anita Desai's In Custody*, Paris, CNED & PUF, 2008, p. 12.

- 6. Répondez au sujet suivant en écrivant un paragraphe dans lequel aucune phrase ne dépasse 15 mots – idéalement 10 mots.

**Do you think that artificial intelligence (AI) will replace humans in future?**

- 7. Écrivez l'histoire de Blanche Neige (*Snow White*) et des sept nains (*seven dwarfs*) en limitant vos phrases à cinq mots maximum.



## Proposition de corrigé

1. a. The American president has many roles. He is both head of state and head of government. Not only he is commander-in-chief, he is also head of the executive. This gives him wide-ranging powers that are the envy of many other leaders in the world. • b. Marie Curie (1867-1934) was born in Poland and remained proud of her Polish roots all her life. She studied and worked most of her life in France, where she made the discoveries that led to her later fame. She became the first woman to be awarded a Nobel Prize and remains one of only four people to have received two Nobel Prizes. • c. The Amazon forest is threatened because farmers destroy trees to create more farmland. But the threat also comes from other industries such as fishing or mining. They are equally responsible

for a lot of the environmental damage that can be seen in the region. This damage, in the final analysis, is also explained by a lack of government action to put in place meaningful protections. • d. Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) is best remembered today as the mother of the famous author of *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley. Many people ignore her own numerous achievements. She was a precursor of the feminist movement through her essay *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. She also defended the French Revolution in a fiery rebuke to Edmund Burke.

2. a. The rapid growth of the Indian economy is hardly surprising, as the government introduced major reforms. The state invested more into infrastructure. In addition,

it privatised public sector companies. Furthermore, it eliminated subsidies. Finally, it changed the taxation system, which attracted more international investment. • **b.** Feminism has won many victories over the past two centuries and women now have the right to vote and to open bank accounts without their husbands' consent. Nevertheless, the gender pay gap still has not been filled. There have been numerous attempts from governments to give incentives to companies to pay their female employees better. But these have so far proven unsuccessful. Yet, wages have risen in the economy as a whole. Having said that, a differentiated analysis across industry sectors, taking into account a broad variety of educational achievements and skills, is of course necessary. • **c.** In certain specific urban areas – often disaffected parts of cities where underprivileged citizens gather – it can be difficult to access medical care or good quality education. As a result, people who live there often remain stuck in poverty for their whole lives. Consequently, social determinism is still strong and even the following generations are affected. In these specific areas, therefore, life expectancy is actually dropping below the average usually observed in developed countries.

**3. a.** The Industrial Revolution sparked the development of many new technologies. For instance, the steam engine, railways, the telegraph, etc., were developed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This period also saw many intellectual innovations. Examples include the emergence of liberalism, feminism and the birth of the nation-state. • **b.** Britain has a regime of parliamentary monarchy. The queen thus holds numerous powers which she simply does not exercise herself. These include the issue of passports or the management of the armed forces. She leaves these tasks to the government instead. However, many other duties are still carried out by the monarch. For example, she summons parliament, appoints new prime ministers, gives royal assent to bills, creates lords and grants titles. • **c.** Food production is bound to become a major issue in the next decades. For example, meat production releases greenhouse gases such as methane and often contributes to water pollution. It will have to be managed in a

more environmentally friendly way. But the question is even more pressing in light of increasing urbanisation. Big cities have many high-rise buildings and offer little space for extensive agriculture. There, architects might have to come up with innovative solutions to enable city-dwellers to produce their own food. This would shorten supply chains, increase food quality and ultimately preserve the environment. • **d.** Romanticism is one of the most important literary movements in Britain. It is particularly famous for celebrating the British countryside. The work of one of the most well-known Romantic poets, William Wordsworth, is a case in point. He lived and worked in the Lake District. The area boasts wild landscapes and of course many lakes. He even wrote a tourist guide which encouraged many people to visit the region. Of course, he is also the author of “Daffodils”. This is perhaps the most famous example among the many poems which celebrate the beauty of the District.

**4. a.** Scientists generally agree / Scientists tend to agree that we need to focus on the discovery of unknown interstellar objects. • **b.** Shakespeare is often perceived as being difficult to understand. We hope to debunk this widespread misconception in the present analysis. • **c.** A high-quality education system delivering satisfactory tuition to every student, regardless of their social background, has been built in just two years. • **d.** Excessive weight, which we can see in many adults in this region, has now become a problem for school-age children, as youths do not learn about the tools needed to choose healthy options from their parents.

**5.** [...] I posit that certain constants in multiple belief systems will allow points of entry. This is particularly true in light of the internationalization of new literatures in the post-colonial period. It has transformed how writers write, how readers respond, and even how publishers mediate between the two (Vinay Dharwadker). This has opened up new markets, boosting transnational distribution. As a result, post-colonial writers have reached global audiences. I argue that Desai's *In Custody* is exemplary of syncretic transnational writing. It is grounded in the

local or national. But it also reaches out to international readerships. It thus redeploys the techniques of global literary predecessors. These belong to aesthetic and philosophical movements which have always migrated, mixed, and mutated.

▶ À propos de ce corrigé...

On aurait pu garder quelques phrases plus longues, mais on a préféré ici couper le plus possible. Les techniques employées sont :

- ◆ Des pronoms remplacent des groupes nominaux pour les reprendre dans une nouvelle phrase (*literary predecessors* → *these*).
- ◆ Des mots de liaison clarifient la pensée et coupent les phrases (*as a result*).
- ◆ Des compléments circonstanciels ont été isolés dans des phrases à part (*This is particularly true... in the post-colonial period*).
- ◆ Quelques redites ont été allégées (*vantages and techniques* → *techniques*).

**6.** Artificial intelligence (AI) has developed massively in recent years [9]. It can be applied in many fields [7]. Examples include self-driving cars or medical diagnoses [7]. Doubtlessly AI will improve our lives [6]. Some transformations cannot even be foreseen yet [7]. But there are also drawbacks to AI [7]. It is expensive and may be unaffordable for the poorest [10]. Consequently, it could widen the gap between rich and poor [10]. Moreover, the goal is to replace human intelligence [8]. The logical consequence is that AI might replace humans themselves [10]. Professional drivers, for instance, might disappear [6]. This would prove even more detrimental to low-income workers [9].

**7.** Snow White is a girl [5]. Her mother-in-law hates her [4]. She tries to kill her [5]. Snow White runs away [4]. She lives in the forest [5]. There she meets seven dwarfs [5]. They take care of her [5]. She cleans their house [4]. Her mother-in-law tries again [4]. She gives her an apple [5]. It is poisoned [3]. Snow White faints [3]. A prince arrives [3]. He kisses her [3]. She awakes [2]. They marry [2]. The mother-in-law is punished [4].