# Document Analysis

To George Kazanakis, NYC BHMH Researcher on Public Health:

I am a freelance professional writing expert and I have been hired to analyze and revise your "Notice of Intention" from the New York City Board of Health and Mental Hygiene web page. The Board faces some public relations problems because many readers found the document confusing. They have asked me to fix the problem.

First, I analyzed the audience and purpose of the document. Then, I analyzed the text and identified the major stylistic issues, providing explanations and examples. Finally, I revised the text.

In my analysis, I focused on the "Background" and "Basis…" sections. You have the skills to implement revisions in the rest of the text based on my recommendations, should you choose to take them.

## Audience and Purpose:

### *Audience*

The audience for this notice is the general population in New York City. As I am sure you know, the general population consists of roughly 8.5 million people ranging across demographics. About 80% of the population has graduated high school and about 35% have a Bachelor's degree or higher. Almost half of the families speak a language at home other than English. The median household income is about $52,000.

We can reasonably assume that many of the individuals who found the notice on the NYC BHMH website have basic literacy skills and could understand simple prose. However, we should not assume that those individuals can easily understand highly technical language or highly technical discussions of current research. I believe you could have done better at distilling the complex scientific information for your non-expert audience.

### *Purpose*

You wrote this document to inform the general population of New York City that the Board will conduct a public hearing about a new law that prohibits restaurants from using trans fats. In the document, you explain the effects of trans fats on the human body and disseminate the research that describes those effects.

To achieve your purpose more effectively, you might have taken into account the lower English proficiency of many in your audience. Furthermore, you might have considered that the proportion of the population who would understand highly technical information is relatively low and discussed the complex information differently. I attempt to do exactly this in my suggested revisions.

## Main Stylistic Concerns:

I have identified three major stylistic concerns in this document. First, you have not written your paragraphs coherently. I do not mean that the writing is babbling or incomprehensible. I use coherence as it is defined stylistically, which I will explain below. Second, you have not implemented the principle of cohesion where strategically useful. Third, you do not emphasize the grammatically or technically complex information by placing it at the end of your sentences. I will now explain what all this means.

### *Review: Subjects and Verbs*

To begin, let us review. You probably know that subject and verb are grammatical terms. We define the whole subject of the sentence[1] as everything that comes before the verb that is not preliminary remarks (i.e., fortunately, to this end, etc.). We define the verb as what comes after the subject and we know that it is inflected for tense. You have probably noticed that the definitions for whole subject and verb are circular, but fortunately, we can usually identify the verb first because it has the second criterion – if we can change the tense, then we have found a verb. From there, we can work backward to determine the whole subject of the sentence. And once we know the whole subject, we can identify the simple subject, which we define as the single word or group of words in the whole subject that matches the verb.

### *Style Problem 1: Cohesion*

We achieve cohesion when the last few words of one sentence set up the information in the first few words of the next sentence. We sometimes call this "flow." Readers prefer to read what is old before what is new and they prefer to read what is easy before what is hard. When we build sentences in this manner, we give readers a context they are familiar with or a context that they can easily understand, before we launch new or hard information at them. They have an easier time understanding that new or hard information if they have a context to fit it into. We offer readers that context when we construct our sentences to achieve cohesion.

#### *Cohesion: An example*

Sometimes, we find abstract concepts difficult to understand, so I will provide and explain an example of cohesion.

Consider the following pair of sentences:

> Chain-growth polymerization is what <u>we will discuss in this chapter</u>. <u>The linking of molecules that</u> incorporate double- or triple-carbon bonds creates chain-growth polymerization.

Notice that in both sentences, the writer begins with the new information that the reader has (likely) not encountered before. Readers find this kind of construction hard to follow because they need to store information they have not encountered before in their minds, learn some details about that new information, and then try to bridge the two concepts. If writers do the bulk of the work and begin with the information a reader will recognize, readers have an easier time understanding the information they do not recognize.

Consider this revision:

> In this chapter, we will discuss chain-growth polymerization. Chain-growth polymerization is the linking of molecules that incorporate double- or triple-carbon bonds.

In this revision, I have inverted each sentence so that the end of the first sentence (chain-growth polymerization) sets up the beginning of the second sentence (chain-growth polymerization). I begin the first sentence with information the reader is familiar with ("chapter" and "we") and ended it with the new concept they should learn ("chain-growth polymerization"). Then, I begin the next sentence with that now-familiar information ("chain-growth polymerization") so the reader is prepared with a context in which to fit the complicated, hard information (the definition of chain-

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1  Recall that the grammatical definition of "sentence" is a subject and verb in a main clause and everything depending on that clause. In the grammatical definition, we can have three types of sentences: simple, complex, and compound. In a compound sentence, we will have two or more independent clauses. Each of these clauses will have its own subject.

growth polymerization). Obviously, I have offered something of an extreme example (repeating the information from the end of one sentence at the beginning of the next), but I think it illustrates the concept.

*Cohesion: Examples from the text*

Now, I will discuss examples of sentences lacking cohesion. Sometimes cohesion and coherence will be at odds, which I will discuss later. For now, I have chosen examples where implementing cohesion is most appropriate given the intention of the text.

In the following example, the principle of old-new information is followed (FSEs are mentioned earlier in the text), but I believe you could have increased reader comprehension by more explicitly bridging the concepts of the Department's purpose and what they are trying to do.

> The Department is charged with preventing and controlling diseases, including chronic disease, through approaches that may address individual behavior or the community environment. By restricting FSEs from serving food that contains artificial trans fat, except for food served in the manufacturer's original sealed package, we can reduce New Yorkers' exposure to an avoidable hazard in the food environment that is associated with increased heart disease risk.

I have underlined the last few words of the first sentence and the first few words of the second sentence to illustrate the disconnect between the content of each. In a cohesive set of sentences, the content in these places would match up. That is, the second sentence would discuss individual behavior or the community environment. Thus, in the revision, I mention the community environment (which is what I believe the Department's intervention is) to set up the reader for the next set of information.

> The Department prevents and controls diseases, including chronic disease, through approaches that address individual behavior or the community environment. An approach that addresses the community environment is restricting FSEs from serving food that contains artificial trans fat, except for food served in the manufacturer's original sealed package, which will reduce New Yorkers' exposure to an avoidable hazard in the food environment that is associated with increased heart disease risk.

I felt that implementing cohesion here was the better method since I wanted to end the sentence with "heart disease risk" which would lead cohesively to the topic of the next paragraph (heart disease).

In this next example, you could argue that the two sentences are cohesive (dining options relate back to restaurants). However, I think the connection could be stronger.

> Restaurants (the term is being used interchangeably with "food service establishments" or "FSEs") are an important source of daily food intake for New York City residents: an estimated one third of daily caloric intake comes from foods purchased in restaurants. Assuring safe and healthy dining options is a public health priority.

In this pair of sentences, you have ended the first with a comment about caloric intake from foods in restaurants. In the next, you begin with assuring safe and healthy dining options. While these two concepts are linked, I think applying the principle of cohesion will increase the link and help readers understand the connection. In the revision, I have begun the second sentence with information that refers back to the last information in the first sentence.

> Restaurants (the term is being used interchangeably with "food service establishments" or "FSEs")
> are an important source of daily food intake for New York City residents: an estimated one third of
> daily caloric intake comes from foods purchased in restaurants. Because restaurants provide so
> much of the caloric intake for NYC residents, safe and healthy dining options are a public health
> priority.

You probably noticed that the topics of the sentences in the original example do not quite align (technically, the topic of the second sentence is "assuring"). In the full revision, you will see that I have implemented the principle of coherence on this paragraph. However, cohesion is a principle that apples to the last few words of one sentence and the first few words of the next. I chose to implement cohesion by providing some preliminary thoughts in a subordinate clause to set up the next sentence, but maintain coherence by making the subject something that aligns with "restaurants."

I chose this final example to illustrate a paragraph in which I implemented a kind of hybrid structure. The final paragraph had two main ideas that were relatively linked (successful removal of trans fat and alternatives to trans fat). In the middle of the paragraph, I wanted to transition from a topic string of organizations to a topic string of alternatives to trans fat or PHVOs. I did this using cohesion.

In this original example, however, the connection is not so explicit.

> This experience demonstrates that artificial trans fat can be replaced without consumers noticing
> an effect. Acceptable healthier alternatives to PHVOs include traditional mono and poly unsaturat-
> ed vegetable oils (e.g., canola, corn, olive, etc.) that have not been hydrogenated, as well as newly
> developed oils such as those made from specially cultivated varieties of soybeans, safflowers, and
> sunflowers..

In this sentence, again I think the two concepts are linked, but you could have made that link more explicit by implementing the principle of cohesion. By performing some mental gymnastics, I recognize that consumers failing to notice the replacement of trans fat is connected to what the possible replacements are, but I think you could have made that bridge smoother. I have tried to do this in the revision, by setting up the beginning of the second sentence with information found at the end of the first sentence[2].

> Clearly, manufacturers can remove artificial trans fat without consumers noticing an effect. Alterna-
> tively, manufacturers can replace artificial trans fat with healthier alternatives. Acceptable healthier
> alternatives to PHVOs include traditional mono and poly unsaturated vegetable oils (e.g., canola,
> corn, olive, etc.) that have not been hydrogenated and newly developed oils such as those made
> from specially cultivated varieties of soybeans, safflowers, and sunflowers..

In the revision, I linked the two concepts by ending the first sentence with "healthier alternatives" and beginning the next sentence by referencing "healthier alternatives." By using this technique, I have set up readers to fit the information about alternatives to PHVOs into the context of what they have already read.

### *Style Problem 2: Coherence*

We achieve coherence when the topic strings of sentences in a paragraph are similar. We

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2  You will notice that I have also included a third sentence in this revision. I needed a cleaner way to transition from manufactur-
ers in the beginning of the paragraph to alternatives to trans fat in the latter part of the paragraph. I used cohesion to do this.

generally define the *topic* of a sentence as its subject[3], which is the piece of information that the rest of the sentence comments on. Readers prefer paragraphs with consistent topic strings because this kind of construction allows them to contextualize information. When they read a sentence with inconsistent topic strings, they have a hard time relating all the information or figuring out how it all fits together. Think of a jigsaw puzzle. When we put all the pieces together, we have the picture from the front of the box. But we do not get that whole picture if the pieces do not fit together. In the same way, when you do not fit your topics together, the reader will not grasp the whole picture.

*Coherence: An example*

I will illustrate the concept of coherence with an example so you have an easier time understanding it. Consider this paragraph:

> **Vegetation** covers the earth, except for those areas continuously covered with ice or utterly scorched by continual heat. Richly fertilized **plains** and **river valleys** are places where plants grow most richly, but also at the edge of perpetual snow in high mountains. The **ocean and its edges** as well as in and around **lakes and swamps** are densely vegetated. The **cracks** of busy city sidewalks have plants in them as well as in seemingly barren cliffs. Before humans existed, the **earth** was covered with vegetation, and the **earth** will have vegetation long after evolutionary history swallows us up.

I have bolded the topic of each sentence (in each of these sentences, the topic is the simple subject). You will notice that none of these topics match and don't even seem to relate to one another. We should not expect readers to construct any reasonable meaning from such a mishmash of topics. Instead, we should determine the original topic string (vegetation), determine the paragraph's main characters (vegetation, plants, and the like), and then start each sentence with a character that relates back to that original topic string.

We should give readers the following revision:

> **Vegetation** covers the earth, except for those areas continuously covered with ice or utterly scorched by continual heat. **Plants** grow most richly not only in richly fertilized plains and river valleys but also at the edge of perpetual snow in high mountains. **Vegetation** grows most densely in the ocean and in and around lakes and swamps. **Plants** can grow even in the cracks of busy sidewalks or seemingly barren cliffs. **Vegetation** covered the earth before humans existed and [**vegetation**] will continue to cover the earth long after evolutionary history swallows us up.

Consider this set of topics; notice how they overlap[4]. Readers are more likely to grasp the big picture of this paragraph because they know that the paragraph is about vegetation. From there, they can add the new information (it covers the earth, it grows in various places, it has covered the earth for a long time and will continue to do so), building on the mental model they have begun with that initial topic string.

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3  This definition has three major exceptions. I have listed them here for your reference, but I found no place in the text where they were necessary.
1. A sentence that begins with "it"
2. A sentence that begins with "In regards to…," "About…," or the like
3. A sentence with a direct object placed first for emphasis

4  In the last sentence, I have added "vegetation" in brackets because generally we would not include the repeat, however, since coordinating conjunctions give us a second sentence, I thought it best to show that even this second sentence has a topic that aligns with the topic string of this paragraph.

We should note that sometimes we cannot maintain the same topic string through every sentence. We generally judge a paragraph as coherent when 75% of our topics align.

*Coherence: Examples from the text*

Now, I will discuss examples from the text of paragraphs that are not coherent.

In this first example, I think you were mostly talking about restaurants and their role in forcing consumers to consume trans fat. The issue is that your topics jump about.

> **Restaurants** (the term is being used interchangeably with "food service establishments" or "FSEs") are an important source of daily food intake for New York City residents: an estimated one third of daily caloric intake comes from foods purchased in restaurants. **Assuring** safe and healthy dining options is a public health priority. The **Department** issues permits and inspects all New York City FSEs and non-retail food processing establishments, as defined in §81.03(j) and (p) of the Health Code. The public health **concern** addressed by this amendment is the presence of trans fat in foods served in restaurants, which represents a dangerous and entirely preventable health risk to restaurant goers. Yet New York City restaurant **patrons** currently have no practical way to avoid this harmful substance.

I have bolded the simple subjects which introduce the topics for each sentence.

You might notice that you tend to start a new topic in each sentence, and often the topic is something that has not been mentioned before, even in the comment of a preceding sentence. For example, the first topic is "restaurants." The topic of the sentence immediately following it is "assuring safe and healthy dining options." While "dining options" is perhaps tangentially related to "restaurants," the simple subject of this sentence is "assuring," which is not at all related to "restaurants." Thus, the reader is unsure how the second sentence relates to the first sentence until they get farther into it, which places too high a cognitive burden on the reader. The following sentences follow this same pattern, with topics in subsequent sentences relating back to previous sentences only weakly if at all.

In the revision, I have aligned the topics by making them similar, if not identical. Doing so allows the reader to set up a context for the following information.

> **Restaurants** (the term is being used interchangeably with "food service establishments" or "FSEs") are an important source of daily food intake for New York City residents: an estimated one third of daily caloric intake comes from foods purchased in restaurants. Because restaurants provide so much of the caloric intake for NYC residents, safe and healthy **dining options** are a public health priority. All New York City **FSEs** and **non-retail food processing establishments** as defined in §81.03(j) and (p) of the Health Code are inspected and issued permits by the Department. **Restaurants** serve food with trans fat, which represents a dangerous and entirely preventable health risk to restaurant goers, but because restaurant patrons currently have no practical way to avoid this harmful substance, the **Department** proposes an amendment to the current law.

Now, readers can understand this paragraph in the context of restaurants. They learn that restaurants are a large provider of trans fat, which is a problem, so they are more prepared to accept the amendment that will prevent restaurants from serving foods with trans fat in them.

You probably noticed that the final topic does not align with the rest of the topics. Recall our 75% rule. Even with this deviation, I have created a coherent paragraph.

This next example starts off strong, but then the topic string segues into something new.

> Dietary **trans fat** increases the risk of heart disease by elevating LDL ("bad") cholesterol, and lowering HDL ("good") cholesterol. Because of its negative effect on "good cholesterol", **trans fat** appears to be even worse than saturated fat. The **Institute of Medicine** ("IOM") reviewed the scientific evidence and concluded that there is "a positive linear trend between trans fatty acid intake and total and LDL concentration, and therefore increased risk of coronary heart disease." The **2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans**, issued by the United States Department of Agriculture ("USDA"), recommends that dietary intake of trans fat be "as low as possible" and the American Heart Association **guidelines** issued in June 2006 recommend that trans fat intake be kept below 1% of total energy intake. In January of 2006, the FDA's mandatory **listing** of trans fat content on the nutrition facts labels of packaged foods came into effect.

For the most part, you have not aligned your topic strings in this paragraph, so the reader comes away unsure of what they needed to learn. The reader does not realize until halfway through the third sentence that there is a connection between the Institute of Medicine and trans fat (the topic of the preceding two sentences). Then, you jump to dietary guidelines and end with a mandatory listing of trans fat content. The reader probably has no idea what to focus on or what to take away from this paragraph. Although you have mentioned trans fat and scientific research in almost every sentence, you have not structured this paragraph effectively enough to allow your reader to bridge the connections between the sentences.

In the revision, I have aligned the main topics so the reader knows what the overall goal of the paragraph is.

> **Scientists** have determined that dietary trans fat increases the risk of heart disease by elevating LDL ("bad") cholesterol and lowering HDL ("good") cholesterol. **They** suggest that trans fat's negative effect on "good cholesterol" makes it even worse than saturated fat. The **Institute of Medicine** ("IOM") reviewed the scientific evidence and concluded that there is "a positive linear trend between trans fatty acid intake and total and LDL concentration, and therefore increased risk of heart disease." In their 2005 Dietary Guidelines, the **United States Department of Agriculture** ("USDA") recommend that dietary intake of trans fat be "as low as possible" and the **American Heart Association** issued guidelines in 2006 in which they recommend that trans fat intake be kept below 1% of total energy intake. The **FDA** passed legislation in January of 2006 in which they require a listing of trans fat content on the nutrition facts labels of packaged foods.

In the revision, readers learn that scientists have shown a link between trans fat and increased cholesterol, which is a large part of the reason why the Department is trying so hard to remove trans fat from foods. Now, the reader can focus on the new information (the various recommendations by scientific authorities) because they don't have to decipher the content in the sentence.

In this final example, you have given the reader a lot of information about the link between heart disease and trans fat, but because you have not aligned your topics, I think readers had a hard time discerning the important information.

> **Heart disease** is New York City's leading cause of death. In 2004, 23,000 **New York City residents** died from heart disease and nearly **one-third** of these individuals died before the age of 75. **Scientific evidence** demonstrates a clear association between increased trans fat intake and the risk of coronary heart disease. Most **dietary trans fat** is found in partially hydrogenated vegetable oil ("PHVO") - oil that has been chemically modified. Scientific studies which examine the change in cholesterol levels when trans fat is replaced with currently available heart healthy alternatives conservatively estimate a reduction of 6% in coronary heart disease events such as heart attacks. Even in the most conservative estimates, based on replacing trans

fat primarily by saturated fat - an unlikely outcome given the widespread trend to healthier fats by food producers - a significant although smaller **reduction** in coronary heart disease events is still expected. **Other scientific studies**, based upon observing large groups of people over time, estimate that up to 23% of coronary heart disease events could be avoided by replacing trans fat with healthy alternatives. Because an estimated one third of dietary trans fat comes from foods purchased in restaurants, the **continued presence** of PHVO in restaurant foods represents an important contribution to cardiovascular risk for New York City diners.

In a paragraph this long, a consistent topic string is essential to ensure readers do not get lost or confused. However, here, the topics range from "dietary trans fat" to "scientific studies" to "reduction" to "presence." Readers have no idea what to take from this paragraph or what it was even about to begin with.

In the revision, I not only aligned the main topic string (researchers), but I also aligned the subtopic string (heart disease). Because I have done this, readers can quickly move from the research that has proven something about heart disease to what has actually been proven – the important part of the sentence.

**Researchers** claim that heart disease is New York City's leading cause of death. **They** show that, in 2004, heart disease killed 23,000 New York City residents, nearly one-third of whom were younger than 75. With scientific studies, **researchers** demonstrate that heart disease poses a higher risk for individuals who have a higher trans fat intake. **They** explain that most dietary trans fat is found in partially hydrogenated vegetable oil ("PHVO"), or oil that has been chemically modified. Based on evidence from scientific studies, **researchers** conservatively estimate that coronary heart disease events, such as heart attacks, can be reduced by 6% if we replace trans fat with currently available heart healthy alternatives, because in the studies **they** examined how replacing trans fat with currently available heart healthy alternatives will change cholesterol levels. **Researchers** believe that heart disease can be significantly reduced even if trans fat is replaced primarily by saturated fat, which is an unlikely outcome given the widespread trend to healthier fats by food producers. In other scientific studies where large groups of people are observed over time, **researchers** have found that coronary heart disease events can be reduced by up to 23% if we replace trans fat with healthy alternatives. **Researchers** have shown that cardiovascular risk to New York City diners is heightened by the continued presence of PHVO in restaurant foods because those foods contain an estimated one-third of dietary trans fat..

Because I have aligned the main topics and subtopics, readers learn efficiently and clearly that research has shown that heart disease is linked to trans fat intake. Because this link is so clear, they realize that the Department's desire to remove trans fat from New Yorkers' diets is a valid and reasonable one.

### *Choosing Coherence or Cohesion*

You have probably realized that cohesion and coherence can sometimes disagree. That is, we can make a paragraph of cohesive sentences but that paragraph will not necessarily be coherent[5]. When this is the case, we must decide which element of style should take precedence. We should choose strategically, depending upon what our overall goal is. If we are discussing a sequence of events, we should prioritize cohesion. If we are discussing one main topic, we should implement

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5  If you want to test this claim, try the following exercise: Get together a group of friends. Write a sentence and give it to the first friend, without showing it to any of the others. Have them write a sentence using a noun from that sentence that is not the topic. Then, have them give their sentence to the next friend, again without showing the sentence to anyone else. Repeat the original process. Put all the sentences together in a paragraph. Laugh uproariously as you see where it goes.

coherence. Sometimes, we can create a hybrid. Maybe we set up a coherent paragraph by beginning with a sentence that ends on the key topic and flows cohesively to the next sentence, with the rest of the paragraph maintaining a consistent topic string. However we choose, we need to prioritize the readers' comprehension and ensure that our strategy will not detract from it.

### *Style Problem 3: Emphasis*

We saw earlier that readers tend to prefer sentences that begin with familiar or easy information and end with new or hard information because they need the beginning of sentences to set themselves up to understand the information at the end. As our cohesion example displayed, we can set readers up to understand complex technical information by starting the sentence with information they recognize and ending it with the complex information.

We can add another dimension to the concept of ending sentences with new information. Readers naturally stress the end of sentences, so if writers wish to emphasize certain information, they should place it at the end of the sentence. We call this concept *emphasis*.

If you wish to emphasize a highly technical definition of a new term, place the definition at the end of the sentence (recall the cohesion example). If you wish to emphasize the most interesting information in a sentence, place it at the end so that readers will naturally stress it. You can also use this concept of emphasis to introduce a key theme by ending the first sentence of a paragraph with that theme.

#### *Emphasis: An example*

To help you understand the concept of emphasis, I will give you an example here.

> A week after it was retrieved from a home freezer where it lay stored for maybe 9 days, 84-year-old Flora Duncan's body was cremated on Friday.

Readers may not find this sentence particularly difficult to understand, but they will find it to be something of a let-down. The writer has stressed the information "on Friday," which is probably the least interesting bit of information in the sentence. You can revise this sentence in multiple ways to achieve the desired emphasis. First, you need to decide which bits of information set up the sentence ("on Friday," for example) and then decide which bit of information you wish to stress. Personally, I think the most startling part of this sentence is that the body was stored in a home freezer for 9 days, so I will end the sentence on that piece of information.

> On Friday, 84-year-old Flora Duncan's body was cremated a week after it had been stored in a home freezer for maybe nine days.

In this revision, I begin the sentence with some expository information (when, who) and ended the sentence with the interesting information (in a home freezer for 9 days). Readers will naturally stress the end of this sentence, a phenomenon I use to emphasize the interesting information in this sentence.

#### *Emphasis: Examples from the text*

Finally, I will discuss some examples from the text that could benefit from the principle of emphasis.

In this first example, you end the sentence with heart disease, which is a known and easy piece of information.

> Scientific evidence demonstrates a clear association between increased trans fat intake and the risk of coronary heart disease.

Recall that readers naturally stress the end of a sentence, so when you end on a concept that has already been introduced, you waste a valuable opportunity to drive a point home. I think the more important element of this sentence is the "association." If you ended on this note, the readers would be better able to understand that the important point of this statement is that coronary heart disease (a leading cause of death in NYC) is related to increased trans fat intake.

I have implemented this suggestion in the revision.

> With scientific studies, researchers demonstrate that heart disease poses a higher risk for individuals who have a higher trans fat intake.

Because I have ended the sentence in this way, readers come away from this sentence with the strong impression that trans fat intake is a serious problem.

In this second example, you have frontloaded your sentence with a long and grammatically complex subject before ending on a simple note.

> Even in the most conservative estimates, based on replacing trans fat primarily by saturated fat - an unlikely outcome given the widespread trend to healthier fats by food producers - a significant although smaller reduction in coronary heart disease events is still expected.

You have placed the grammatically and technically complex information at the beginning of the sentence and the grammatically simple information (is still expected) at the end. The reader, then, must put in a great deal of effort at the beginning of the sentence and probably has to go back and reread it after they know what is in the predicate.

Instead, you should try to begin your sentence with a simpler subject so you can get to the point more quickly. I have done so in the revision.

> Researchers believe that heart disease can be significantly reduced even if trans fat is replaced primarily by saturated fat, which is an unlikely outcome given the widespread trend to healthier fats by food producers.

I have revised this sentence to put the more grammatically complex information at the end of the sentence. Now, readers can set up their expectations before diving into the more complex ideas, which will facilitate their understanding of the text.

In this last example, you have buried the important information (reducing heart disease events and how that can be accomplished) in the middle of the sentence.

> Scientific studies which examine the change in cholesterol levels when trans fat is replaced with currently available heart healthy alternatives conservatively estimate a reduction of 6% in coronary heart disease events such as heart attacks.

The reader is already familiar with the idea of reducing coronary heart disease so you have wasted your opportunity to impress them with new and interesting information. The novel information is the concept of replacing trans fat with available heart healthy alternatives. In the revision, I have emphasized this information by placing it at the end.

> Based on evidence from scientific studies, researchers conservatively estimate that coronary heart disease events, such as heart attacks, can be reduced by 6% if we replace trans fat with currently available heart healthy alternatives, because in the studies they examined how replacing trans fat with currently available heart healthy alternatives will change cholesterol levels.

Now, readers come away from this sentence knowing that something can be done to combat heart disease and also what that is. They set up their expectations at the beginning when they learn that researchers estimate a reduction in heart disease events, and then they stress how researchers can achieve that reduction.

## Conclusion:

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to work on this project. I admire the Department for trying to eliminate trans fat, a cause of so many health risks, and I admire you for attempting to alert people to the public hearing during which the Department will discuss their proposed amendment.

To explain the importance of the Department's proposed amendment, you offered your readers a plethora of research studies and successful legislation in other countries. Many writers struggle to accommodate technical or complex research to a non-expert audience (it is not an easy task) and I think you experienced difficulty in distilling some of the technical and complex information because you lacked a principled approach. I hope in this document I have explained some of those principles well enough that you can now implement them in your future work. Based on my analysis, if you make sure you start your sentences with familiar information and end them with the grammatically or technically complex information, you will make great strides towards creating a text that is easily accessible to a lay audience.

To illustrate a more principled approach to discussing the content, I have attached my partial revision of your text.

Thank you again for giving me the opportunity to work on this document. I know you have plenty of options for technical writers and I appreciate that you chose me.

Sincerely,
Natasha Saidikowski