Worried that your sentences sound choppy? Want to stay true to the complexities of your subject without overwhelming and confusing readers? Try these tips for creating sentence-level clarity and flow from George Copen’s and Judith Swan’s “The Science of Scientific Writing.”

1. Follow the grammatical subject as soon as possible with its verb.

   **Confusing:** Research regarding the benefits of almond yogurt, even though the benefits of almond milk have been documented, is lacking.

   **Better:** While the benefits of almond milk have been documented, research regarding the benefits of almond yogurt is lacking.

2. Place the “new information” you want to highlight in the **stress position** (usually at the end of a sentence) and place “old information” (material already stated in the previous sentence) in the **topic position** (at the start of the sentence) to clearly show the new sentence’s link to the previous sentences and to contextualize and spotlight the new information now being introduced.

   **Confusing:** Research regarding the benefits of almond yogurt is lacking even though the benefits of almond milk have been documented. Almond yogurt ….

   **Better:** While the benefits of almond milk have been documented, research regarding the benefits of almond yogurt is lacking. Almond yogurt …

3. Place the person or thing whose “story” a sentence is telling—the sentence’s **true subject**—at the beginning of the sentence, in the topic position.

   **Confusing:** A promising alternative to animal-derived dairy products is offered by the almond.

   **Better:** The almond offers a promising alternative to animal-derived dairy products.

4. When possible, favor active verbs over “to be” verbs.

   **Wordy:** The focus of this study will be on the health benefits of almond yogurt for lactose-intolerant individuals.

   **Better:** This study will focus on the benefits of almond yogurt for lactose-intolerant individuals.