

## Constructing effective sentences

Presumably, the main idea here is the fact “ $\tau$  scales linearly with  $l$ ,” not the fact that Figure 5a shows this dependency. The sentence is thus suboptimal: as a rule, place the main idea in the main clause rather than in a subordinate one. Refer to the figure in a subordinate clause or just in parentheses.

main clause  
subordinate clause  
(but main idea)

Figure 5a shows that the translocation time  $\tau$  scales linearly with polymer length  $l$ .



The translocation time  $\tau$  scales linearly with polymer length  $l$  (Figure 5a).

Start by stating your main idea as a single clause—presumably here, “the samples studied were within the quasi-ballistic regime.” Then add complementary ideas while keeping your initial clause as the main clause: thus, express such ideas in a subordinate clause or perhaps not as a clause at all.

The estimated mean free path in these systems was  $l \geq 2.5 \mu\text{m}$ , which establishes that the samples studied were well within the quasi-ballistic regime.

subordinate clause of the subordinate clause



With a mean free path estimated at  $l \geq 2.5 \mu\text{m}$ , the samples studied were well within the quasi-ballistic regime.

A main clause with the structure “it is ... that” can often be replaced by a single adverb (or sometimes be erased altogether), as follows:

It is clear that → Clearly,  
It is evident that → Evidently,  
It is remarkable that → Remarkably,  
It is possibly that → Possibly,  
It is a surprise that → Surprisingly,

Clearly,  
It is clear that the properties and hazards of materials for a given size domain can often not be generalized across length scales.

If something is worth mentioning, you should certainly mention it, but there is no need to point out that it is worth doing so: just do it. By relegating your idea to a subordinate clause, you weaken it and you make the sentence needlessly complex by adding a level in the hierarchy (“... that when ...”).

It is worth mentioning that when the tested allele frequency is very low, the test can be slightly conservative.



When the tested allele frequency is very low, the test can be slightly conservative.

This reasonable-length sentence counts four subordinate clauses at three levels of subordination (four levels with the main clause): it is needlessly complex. Erasing “It is important to note that” helps reduce the complexity somewhat.

It is important to note that if autophagy is involved in the process of lysis, it will enable a complete mapping of these pathways because the mechanisms for the molecular regulation of autophagy are well described, which is not the case with lysis.



Additional strategies are to split the sentence in two independent sentences and to rewrite clauses in alternative ways (for example, writing here “unlike those of lysis,” which no longer forms a clause).

If autophagy is involved in the process of lysis, it will enable a complete mapping of these pathways. Indeed, the mechanisms for the molecular regulation of autophagy are well described, unlike those of lysis.

When reporting your observations, focus on what happened rather than on the fact you observed it. Thus, avoid main clauses such as “it was observed that” and express actions with verbs, not with nouns: instead of saying that *oscillations* (noun) did not occur, state that the signal did not *oscillate* (verb).

However, in clear contrast to the observations at lower excitation, no oscillations of the diffraction signal occurred. Instead, it was observed that after reaching the maximum the diffraction signal decreased monotonically and reached a quasi-stationary level of 40% in approximately 10 ps.



In clear contrast to what it did at lower excitation, the diffraction signal did not oscillate: after reaching the maximum, it decreased monotonically and reached a quasi-stationary level of 40% in approximately 10 ps.