

Write Now!

**Want to Make Your Writing
More Accessible?**
Put Some People in Your Sentences



The Author Series from Praeclarus Press



Some of the best writing advice I ever received was to put some people in my sentences. When sentences have no people, they become windy and abstract. Adding people to your sentences is a great way to make your writing more accessible and real. Here's an example of how to change a sentence with a lot of abstractions to one that is clear. First, the "before" version.

Most researchers have focused on the role of parenting practices as a central feature of family

influences in crime.

This sentence is not horrible, but it is pretty wordy. The authors start out well with "most researchers" instead of "Research has shown," a more typical academic construction. The problem is that it's still vague. Let's make it more concrete.

Researchers have considered parenting practices as the prime family influence in crime.

This is a little better, but it is still abstract. The next question an editor would ask is what do the authors mean by "parenting practices"? From context, I think it is safe to assume that the authors don't mean all parenting practices. What they probably mean is "harsh" parenting, which could range from yelling to physical abuse.

"Crime" is also abstract. Who's going to commit the crime? From context, the authors probably mean the children. So it will be less abstract if we say so. The authors have implied directionality; that harsh parenting *increases* crime. Again, it's probably better to just say so.

Researchers have found that harsh parenting, particularly when chronic, increases the likelihood that children will grow up to commit crimes.

Although this round of edits added to the word count, in the long run it will probably save words since the authors have clearly stated what they are interested in. Because of that, they won't have to add extra sentences to bolster this sentence.

Adding people to your writing is one thing you can do to dramatically improve its readability. It may also help you think through more precisely what you are trying to say. Try it. I think you will be pleased with the results.

Kathleen Kendall-Tackett, Ph.D., IBCLC, FAPA is owner and Editor-in-Chief of Praeclarus Press. For more information, go to www.PraeclarusPress.com.

