**The *Paramedic Method* for Editing Your Prose**

**Adapted from Richard Lanham**

This method is designed to give your writing more punch, more power, more persuasion. It’s designed to make your prose more exciting to read. You’ll eliminate boring, sluggish sentences and unnecessary wordiness. Here are the steps:

1. *Circle the prepositions (of, in, about, for, onto, into)*
2. *Draw a box around the "is" verb forms*
3. *Ask, "Where's the action?" and “Who is kicking whom?” Move the actor into the subject.*
4. *Change the "kicking action" into a simple verb*
5. *Eliminate any unnecessary slow wind-ups*

**Step #1: Circle the prepositions.** Prepositional phrases often create wordiness and some s-l-o-w reading. (around, at, by, for, from, in, of, on, over, outside, through, since, under, up, with, etc.)

**Step #2: Draw a box around the “to be” verbs.** This is a good way to catch passive voice construction that detracts from exciting, active prose. (am, is, are, was, were, etc.)

**Step #3: Ask yourself, “Where’s the action?” and “Who is kicking whom?”** Figure out who is actually performing the action in this sentence. Who or what is the main subject of that sentence? Revise the sentence to clearly show the actor in charge.

**Step #4: Change the action into a simple verb.** Now that you know who is doing the action (who is doing the kicking!), revise the sentence to give that actor a simple action verb.

**Step #5: Eliminate the slow wind-upsat the beginning of sentences.** “I believe that…” and “In my opinion,…” These kinds of beginnings aren’t necessary and they slow down the reader. Instead, jump right into the sentence.



**Example**: Currently there ***is*** a project that ***is*** being done **to** help students **in** after school programs **to** further their learning and have educational resources made available **to** them.

🡪 Who is doing the action? Who is kicking whom? *“A project” is the actor.*

🡪 What is the action? Helping, furthering, and making.

**Revised sentence**: Currently, a project is helping students in after school programs by furthering their learning and making resources available to them.

**Example:** The point I wish **to** make ***is*** that the employees working **at** this company ***are*** **in** need **of** a much better manager **of** their money.

🡪 Who is kicking whom? *Employees* are the main actors.

🡪 What is the action (the kicking)? Employees need.

🡪 Slow windup? *The point I wish to make is that…*

**Revised sentence:** This company’s employees need a much better money manager.

**Example from my own essay:** Critical regionalism became widely theorized **in** the 1980s **by** several architectural theorists as a means of realizing, embodying, and building **upon** a community’s political consciousness **through** local spaces.

 🡪 Who is kicking whom? Who is the actor? *Architectural theorists*.

 🡪 What is the action/kicking? *Theorizing*. (Redundant)

**Revised sentence:** In the 1980s, several architectural theorists developed critical regionalism as a way of realizing, embodying, and building upon a community’s political consciousness in local spaces.

**Your turn:** It is widely known that the engineers at Sandia Labs have become active participants in the Search and Rescue operations in most years.

**Revised sentence:**

**\* Find three sentences that need this kind of revision in your own writing. \***