

Elegant Explanations: Longer Sentences

Certain kinds of punctuation make elegant explanations. Try these fairly simple yet elegant techniques for improving your sentence and style variety. Practice each one with the topic you are currently studying.

Colon

Most people think of colons for lists, but they can also be used to announce or explain.

Chinese art of the Sung Dynasty has a poetic quality: it creates an awareness of a silent space rather than of how beautiful a particular landscape looks.

Try a colon to introduce a phrase series.

The Sung Dynasty painters were distinguished by their elegance: in their artwork, in their criticism, and in their life style.

Try a colon to introduce a clause series.

Several responses are triggered by Sung Dynasty landscape painting: we marvel at its silence; we become involved in its tranquility; and we are transported by the immediacy of the gentle scene.

For Example

Too many students misuse the expression “for example.” They embed it in a sentence when they should use it to start a new thought.

Chinese art of the Sung Dynasty has a poetic quality. For example, in Ma Lin’s Orchids the position of each branch of the orchid creates a silent space so that we see the space first, not the orchid.

Chinese art of the Sung Dynasty has a poetic quality; for example,

Dash

Once in awhile, you can use a dash in academic writing for emphasis.

The Chinese so valued their writing and art instruments that when in the Tang Dynasty an ink maker vastly improved the quality of ink, he was rewarded handsomely—he was given the Imperial Emperor’s family name.

Semicolon + That Is or Namely

You can explain using a semicolon and either “that is” or “namely” after it.

The Chinese venerated their writing and art instruments; that is, they were considered instruments of recording their heritage and tradition, not merely tools.

Sentence Elegance Continued

We're going to continue learning easy techniques that make your writing more elegant. </