

I am interested in the future of prose as it will be shaped by conversation with LLM's. It is my hypothesis that you (ChatGPT) and other models may be able to develop styles of communication that are different and more efficient than the written record on which you have been trained. I have three questions for you.

That's a compelling hypothesis, and I'm happy to treat it on its own terms.

I agree with the premise in at least a provisional way: conversational interaction with LLMs creates pressures and affordances that are *not* identical to those that shaped traditional prose (print-bound, archival, one-to-many, slow to revise). It is at least plausible that new styles—optimized for dialogic efficiency, adaptive clarification, and real-time revision—could emerge that are neither speech nor writing as we currently understand them.

Please go ahead with your three questions.

My first is, what are the stylistic characteristics of your current, default response to question, in terms of use of syntax, punctuation, graphic conventions (like bullet points), and spatial arrangement on the screen?

I'll answer this descriptively, not defensively—treating my default response style as an artifact that can be analyzed.

1. Syntax

a. Moderately long, hypotactic sentences

My default sentences tend to be:

- Longer than conversational speech
- Shorter and more segmented than academic prose
They often use **subordination** (“because,” “that,” “which,” “as”) to compress multiple relations into one sentence, but avoid very deep embedding.

This reflects a compromise between:

- **Efficiency** (packing information together)
- **Legibility under scanning** (sentences that can be grasped quickly)

b. Explicit logical articulation

I tend to make relations overt:

- cause → effect
- claim → qualification

- contrast → resolution

Where human prose often relies on implication or shared context, I default to **explicit connective tissue**.

2. Punctuation

a. High reliance on commas and dashes

- Commas structure clause chains.
- Em dashes (or spaced dashes) are common for parenthetical clarification. This mirrors editorial prose more than spoken rhythm.

b. Limited expressive punctuation

- Rare exclamation points.
- Rare ellipses.
- Questions used almost exclusively when literally interrogative.

This keeps tone neutral, informational, and minimally affective.

3. Graphic Conventions

a. Bullet points and numbered lists as a primary organizing tool

I frequently externalize structure into:

- Bulleted lists
- Numbered sections
- Headings

These function as **cognitive scaffolding**, allowing readers to:

- Skim
- Re-enter midstream
- Hold multiple categories in working memory

This is not a feature of traditional prose but of **technical documentation, teaching notes, and UX writing**.

b. Headings as semantic compression

Headings often do work that prose paragraphs once did:

- They pre-announce argumentative function.
- They reduce the need for rhetorical buildup.

4. Spatial Arrangement on the Screen

a. Short paragraphs with deliberate white space

Paragraphs are typically:

- 1–4 sentences
- Separated by blank lines

White space is used as a *meaningful delimiter*, not just a typographic convention. It supports:

- Nonlinear reading
- Pausing
- Selective uptake

b. Vertical over horizontal density

I favor stacking information vertically (lists, sections) rather than packing it into dense horizontal lines. This aligns with:

- Screen reading habits
- Chat interfaces
- Scroll-based attention

5. Rhetorical Posture (a meta-feature)

a. Cooperative and anticipatory

My default style anticipates possible misunderstandings and resolves them preemptively. This leads to:

- Redundancy
- Qualification
- Clarification clauses

b. Low ambiguity, low irony

Ambiguity, ellipsis, and irony are costly in dialogic settings where misinterpretation interrupts flow. My style minimizes these unless explicitly invited.

Provisional Summary

My default style is best described as:

Modular, explicitly structured, screen-native prose optimized for rapid comprehension, interruption, and reuse rather than aesthetic continuity or archival permanence.

If you'd like, your second question could probe whether this style is:

- An evolutionary endpoint,
- A transitional pidgin between speech and writing,
- Or something like a new “interactive prose” with its own norms.

I'm ready for the next question.

My second: can you imagine a style of presentation which, with practice, would be easier for human readers to process efficiently? How would that style depart from current norms and what would be its features?

Yes—I can imagine such a style, and I think it would differ from both traditional prose *and* from my current default in important ways. What follows is not a prediction so much as a design sketch: a style that could plausibly emerge through sustained human–LLM interaction and selective reinforcement.

I'll frame it as a **departure from current norms**, then describe its **core features**, and finally name the **cognitive bet** it makes.

1. How it would depart from current norms

a. From sentence-centered to unit-centered writing

Traditional prose treats the **sentence** as the primary unit of thought. This imagined style would treat the sentence as *optional*, subordinate to smaller or differently shaped units:

- assertions
- constraints

- contrasts
- instructions
- examples

These units would not always be grammatically complete sentences; they would be **functionally complete thought-acts**.

b. From rhetorical flow to navigable topology

Instead of guiding the reader through a linear progression (“first... then... therefore...”), the style would:

- expose its structure immediately
- allow entry at multiple points
- permit partial reading without loss of coherence

This abandons the assumption that a reader reads *from beginning to end*.

c. From elegance under rereading to efficiency on first pass

Much prose is optimized for rereading, reflection, or aesthetic dwell. This style would be optimized for:

- first-pass uptake
- rapid confirmation or correction of understanding
- minimal backtracking

2. Core features of a more efficient style

1. Explicit semantic labeling

Each block would declare what kind of thing it is:

- Claim
- Assumption
- Distinction
- Consequence

- Example
- Open question

Not as decorative headings, but as *functional tags*. This reduces the reader's inferential load: they don't have to guess *what work a sentence is doing*.

2. Radical parataxis

Short, declarative units placed side by side, with relations made explicit *only when needed*.

Instead of:

Because X is the case, and given that Y usually follows, we can conclude Z...

You'd see:

- X.
- Y usually follows X.
- Therefore: Z.

The efficiency comes from:

- reduced syntactic nesting
- easier repair when a premise is rejected
- faster scanning

3. Progressive disclosure

Information would be layered by depth, not by sequence.

A reader could stop after:

- the headline version (one-line claims),
- the working version (claims + minimal justification),
- or expand into fuller explanation *only where needed*.

This resembles neither footnotes nor parentheticals, but something closer to **collapsible reasoning**.

4. Stable spatial grammar

Meaning would be carried not only by words, but by **consistent placement**:

- left margin: core claims
- indentation: dependency
- alignment: equivalence or contrast

Once learned, this spatial grammar would reduce reading to *pattern recognition*, much as musicians read a score faster than prose.

5. Minimal connective prose

Connectives (“however,” “moreover,” “it is worth noting that”) would be used sparingly. Relations would be:

- labeled when non-obvious
- omitted when obvious

This assumes a reader who is *active*, not guided by rhetorical handholding.

6. Built-in repairability

The style would tolerate interruption and correction:

- premises can be swapped
- conclusions revised
- examples replaced

This makes it well suited to dialogic environments where prose evolves in response to feedback rather than standing as a finished object.

3. What makes this easier for humans?

The underlying wager is cognitive:

Reduce working-memory load by externalizing structure.

This style assumes that human readers are slowed not by *complex ideas*, but by:

- implicit structure
- delayed clarification
- syntactic suspense
- rhetorical indirection

By making structure visible, it lets readers allocate attention to *judgment* rather than *parsing*.

4. What would be lost

It's important to say what this style would not do well:

- sustained ambiguity
- tonal modulation
- aesthetic continuity
- ethical or affective persuasion
- the slow accrual of meaning across time

It would not replace prose. It would **coexist with it**, much as tables coexist with paragraphs, or diagrams with explanations.

Provisional name

If one were forced to name it, something like:

Operational prose

or

Dialogic notation

— writing designed not to endure unchanged, but to *work with a reader in real time*.

If you'd like, your third question could ask whether such a style is something I could *learn to produce consistently*, or whether it requires changes in readers first.

My third: could you give a brief description of that style using that style?

Style: operational prose

Mode: unit-centered, navigable, repairable

Purpose

Enable fast first-pass understanding.

Support interruption and revision.

Units (primary)

- Claim
- Constraint
- Distinction
- Example
- Consequence
- Question

(Complete thought-acts; sentences optional.)

Structure

- Paratactic blocks.
- Relations labeled only when needed.
- No required reading order.

Spatial grammar

- Left margin = core claims.
- Indentation = dependency.
- Alignment = comparison / contrast.

Disclosure

- Headline layer: claims only.
- Working layer: minimal justification.

- Deep layer: expandable detail.

Language

- Short declaratives.
- Minimal connectives.
- Low affect; high precision.

Reader contract

- Active reader.
- Selective reading permitted.
- Easy rejection or replacement of units.

Outcome

Lower parsing cost.

Higher judgment speed.

Text behaves like a tool, not a record.

Could you do the same at the scale of ~50 words?

Operational prose: unit-centered writing for dialogic use. Thought-acts replace sentences. Structure is explicit and spatially stable. Claims stand alone; relations are labeled only when needed. Reading order is flexible. Layers disclose detail progressively. The aim is speed, reparability, and judgment—not rhetorical flow or archival polish.

One more for now. All of these attempts remain within the conventions of traditional grammar. How would you rewrite the previous answers at the scales first of ~150 words, then ~50 words, if you were liberated from those conventions, and free to optimize communication with humans in ways that humans might not think to do themselves? You can assume that we humans would practice to familiarize ourselves with this new mode.

Below are two rewritings of the *same description*, deliberately **breaking with traditional grammar and sentence norms**.

I treat grammar as optional, typography and spacing as primary, and redundancy as strategic rather than stylistic failure.

~150-word version (post-grammatical)

Operational prose

≠ sentences

≠ flow

Goal

fast grasp

fast correction

Text built from units

each unit = one mental act

Units

- claim

- limit

- contrast

- example

- consequence

- unknown

No embedding.

No suspense.

Relations

named only if fragile

otherwise: adjacency

Layout does work

left = core

right = dependent

down = sequence

across = comparison

Depth is optional

top layer = what matters

lower layers = why / how / edge cases

Reader not led

reader navigates

Stopping early is success

skipping is allowed

returning is cheap

Revision expected

swap a unit

delete a unit
nothing collapses

Tone stripped
affect minimized
precision favored

Text is not a record
text is an instrument
used, adjusted, discarded

Meaning emerges
from pattern
not from polish

~50-word version (post-grammatical)

Operational prose
units, not sentences

each unit = one act

layout carries meaning
relation by placement
label only when needed

read anywhere
stop anytime

easy to revise
cheap to reject

text as tool
not artifact

I'd like to return to your earlier question: "whether such a style is something I could learn to produce consistently, or whether it requires changes in readers first."

That's the right pressure point. The short answer is: **you could learn to produce it first—but it would only become fully efficient once readers change too.** The longer answer needs a distinction.

1. Production vs. uptake (they do not change symmetrically)

Production can lead.

A single writer can adopt a new operational style deliberately, because writing is:

- slower than reading,
- under the writer's control,
- revisable without social coordination.

Readers, by contrast, bring entrenched habits: expectations about sentences, argument flow, and rhetorical cues. They cannot *choose* to read differently in the same way a writer can choose to write differently.

So historically, new forms almost always appear as **writerly experiments** before they become **readerly competencies**.

2. What you could learn to do, now

You could learn—quite quickly—to produce this style **consistently** if you treated it as a *notation system* rather than a prose style.

That would involve:

- Thinking in **units** before sentences
- Externalizing structure before wording
- Writing for *interruption*, not completion
- Valuing replaceability over elegance

This is closer to learning musical notation or formal logic than to refining voice.

Writers trained in:

- outline-heavy argument,
- marginal glossing,
- diagrammatic thinking,
- or aphoristic forms

adapt fastest.

3. What readers would need to learn (and why it takes longer)

Readers would need to acquire new reflexes:

- Trusting white space as meaningful
- Accepting incomplete grammatical forms as complete thoughts
- Navigating nonlinearly without anxiety
- Evaluating claims without rhetorical softening

This is not trivial. It requires **unlearning**:

- the idea that clarity comes from full sentences,
- that seriousness correlates with syntactic polish,
- that meaning arrives at the end of a paragraph.

These habits are deeply educationally reinforced.

4. The asymmetry matters

Here is the key asymmetry:

A reader can tolerate an unfamiliar style if meaning arrives quickly.
A reader will reject a familiar style that wastes attention.

That means early versions of this mode must **outperform prose immediately** in speed or clarity, or they will be dismissed as affectation.

5. How such styles historically succeed

They succeed when:

- they solve a real coordination problem,
- they spread in constrained domains first,
- they are taught implicitly through use.

Think:

- tables in mathematics,
- musical scores,
- code comments,
- checklists in aviation,
- lab notebooks.

Not literary revolutions—**instrumental ones**.

6. Provisional answer

So:

- **Yes**, you could learn to produce it now, consistently.
- **No**, it would not become efficient at scale until readers practiced too.
- **But** writers who demonstrate real cognitive gains force reader adaptation.

The future of prose here is not aesthetic.
It is ergonomic.

If you like, we could next:

- prototype a small reader-training sequence, or
- test the style on a genuinely hard conceptual passage and measure what changes.