

Efficient Lists & Descriptive Headings

Make key details leap out at the reader

Start with a basic outline

1. **SMART** the process—audience perspective
2. Brainstorm & list data in point form
3. Group & prioritize related ideas
4. Create sub-groups if necessary
5. Create a basic heading for each group
6. Sequence the groups logically for audience

Sort data for lists, paragraphs and headings

- ▶ Use headings (and subheadings) to break up your message into its main sections, allowing the reader to deal with each major idea separately...and later go back to each with ease.
- ▶ Use lists to emphasize concise, precise details in logical groupings: numbers to indicate priority or sequence; bullets to indicate simple relationship. Remember that a list leaps out at the reader visually, so make certain you want those details emphasized. *Always introduce a list!*

E.g. An effective proposal must

1. describe the problem
 2. provide a solution
 3. explain the costs
 4. outline a schedule to implement the solution
 5. provide proof that the writer is qualified
- ▶ Use paragraphs (with effective topic sentences) to introduce, explain and argue material that requires more than straightforward reporting.

Make the headings & subheadings descriptively precise & concise

An effective, descriptive heading performs the same function as a well written topic sentence: it reveals both the content and purpose of what follows. The reader knows what is coming and why before he/she begins to read the details; no time is wasted *discovering* what the section is about. He/she can glance over the document and see immediately what it's about, and how the writer views the information.

Basic	Descriptive
Costs	Significant Savings Possible / Stock Market Plunges 25% / \$599 Pentium 4 PCs
Time	6 Month Startup Phase / iMac Delayed 6 Months / 16 th Head Coach in 20 years
Problem	O-Rings Failed on Launch / Absenteeism Up 30% / Uncontrolled Inventory

Make headings & lists parallel

- ▶ Items in a list, and headings of the same level, must have the same grammatical structure:

Not Parallel	Parallel List	Parallel Headings
A part time job can develop <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ your decision-making skills ▪ a sense of responsibility ▪ and you feel more self-confident and independent 	A part time job can develop <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ decision-making skills ▪ responsibility ▪ self-confidence and independence 	Part-time Job Skills Training <u>Make Decisions</u> <u>Take Responsibility</u> <u>Establish self-confidence and independence</u>