

Write concisely—retain only what is essential and relevant

Overview

1. Use language that is
 - a. Familiar & direct
 - b. Forceful: precise, active verbs; concrete nouns; vivid adjectives & adverbs
2. Eliminate everything that is not essential for the chosen audience, context & purpose

Use

Familiar, direct language

<i>ascertain</i>	find out	<i>operational</i>	working
<i>conceptualize</i>	see	<i>reciprocate</i>	return
<i>encompass</i>	include	<i>terminate</i>	end
<i>monitor</i>	check	<i>utilize</i>	use

Descriptive, active verbs

- ▶ The salesman will ~~contact~~/ *telephone* you next Friday.
- ▶ The rebels ~~wanted~~/*requested/demanded* a hearing with the Queen.
- ▶ The newspaper was ~~affected~~/*crippled/demoralized* by the strike.

Concrete nouns

- ▶ a change in our budget vs a 10% reduction in our budget
- ▶ tomorrow afternoon on Surrey campus vs tomorrow (date) 3:30 pm in room D142
- ▶ a source said vs Art Charbonneau, Minister of Education said

Vivid adjectives & adverbs

- ▶ *The report was on time* vs Ted Hughes report on the APEC incident was delivered to the Justice Minister on September 25, 1999 at 4 p.m.
- ▶ *The new computers are faster than the old units* vs The proposed 450 Mhz Pentium III sorts and queries database material 8 times faster than our current workstations.

Eliminate

- ▶ jargon, clichés & buzz words, slang, repetitive & redundant words & expressions.
- ▶ wordy phrases, expletives, wordy negatives, excessive prepositions, long lead-ins, needless adverbs.
- ▶ outdated expressions

Clichés—expressions exhausted by overuse

below the belt	easier said than done	first and foremost
nose to the grindstone	make a bundle	stand your ground
better than new	true to form	exceptions to the rule
last but not least	pass with flying colors	beyond a shadow of a doubt

Expletives

- ▶ ~~There are~~ three vice-presidents ~~who~~ report directly to the president
- ▶ ~~It was~~ the federal government ~~that~~ protected the worker's health.

Needless repetition

- ▶ *Employees* will be able to elect an additional six *employees* to serve with the four previously elected

employees who currently comprise the *employee's* board of directors. To ensure representation, swing-shift *employees* will be electing one swing-shift *employee* as their sole representative.

- ▶ The deregulation of the natural gas industry *has* caused a change in *the price of* gas.

Buzz words—attempt to impress the reader

dysfunction	productionwise/profitwise	parameter
commonality	prioritize	configuration
impact on	state of the art	subsystem
interrelationships	unilateral	logistical

Redundancy—meaning already elsewhere

absolutely essential	final outcome	few in number
advance warning	mutual cooperation	repeat again
basic fundamentals	consensus of opinion	reason why
true facts		

Wordy phrases

afford an opportunity (allow)	due to the fact that (because)	in the amount of (for)
are of the opinion that (believe)	until such time as (until)	at the present time (now)
in the event that (if)	feel free to (please)	in the near future (soon)

Wordy negatives

- ▶ James was ~~not happy~~ / *unhappy* with his bonus.
- ▶ Dr. Marchant ~~did not agree~~ / *disagreed* with the report.
- ▶ Although he ~~did not have a~~ / *had no* parking permit, he parked.

Excessive prepositions

- ▶ Datatech approached the merger ~~in a careful manner~~ / *carefully*.
- ▶ The merger will ~~in all probability~~ / *probably* be effected.
- ▶ We have taken this action ~~in a very few cases~~ **vs** We have *seldom* taken this action.

Long lead-ins

- ▶ ~~I am sending you this announcement to let you know~~ that the office will be closed Monday.
- ▶ ~~You will be interested to learn that~~ you may now use the automatic teller at our Vancouver branch.

Needless adverbs

- ▶ We ~~actually~~ did not ~~really~~ give his plan a ~~very~~ fair trial.
- ▶ Professor Chiu offered an ~~extremely~~ fine course that his students ~~definitely~~ appreciated.
- ▶ E.g. — very, definitely, quite, completely, extremely, really, actually, somewhat & rather.

Outdated expressions

- ◆ are in receipt of – *have received*
- ◆ enclosed please find – *enclosed*
- ◆ as per your request – *at your request*
- ◆ thanking you in advance – *thank you*
- ◆ attached hereto – *attached*
- ◆ pursuant to your request – *at your request*
- ◆ the aforementioned – *mentioned before*.