



# Effective Writing Skills

# Effective writing Skills

- ▶ Put the reader first
- ▶ Use simple words and short sentences
- ▶ Use jargon only when necessary
- ▶ Write with verbs and nouns
- ▶ Format to improve readability

# Effective writing Skills

- ▶ Key #1: Put the reader first
  - ▶ Communication = understanding
  - ▶ Write to EXpress not Impress
  - ▶ Use words readers can picture
  - ▶ Tie in to the reader's experience
  - ▶ WIIFM – What's in it for me

# Effective writing Skills

- ▶ Key #2: Use simple words and short sentences

# Example 1

- ▶ Per our conversation, I am enclosing herewith a remittance of \$25 for the balance due on my account. (18 words)
- ▶ As we discussed, here is the \$25 remaining on my account. (11 words)
- ▶ Here is the \$25 remaining on my account. (8 words)

## Example 2

- ▶ As pertaining to the question of whether or not to construct a new storage facility, corporate management will ascertain the appropriateness of such an issue in the near future.
- ▶ Management will decide next week whether to build a new storage facility.

# Tip

- ▶ **Avoid wordy prepositional phrases**
  - ▶ In the amount of (for)
  - ▶ In order to (to)
  - ▶ Due to the fact that (because)
  - ▶ In the event that (if)
  - ▶ During the time that (when, while)

# Effective writing Skills

- ▶ Key #3: Use jargon only when necessary
  - ▶ What is jargon?



## Example 3

- ▶ The new FMIS system from Global provides VOR/DME nav redundancy, as well as enhanced GPS capability.
- ▶ Global's new flight management system provides several ways to navigate your airplane, including the latest in satellite navigation.

## Example 4

- ▶ While the new ST7000 provides extensive memory and is extremely user compatible, it lacks the requisite capacity for calculating at a high rate of speed.
- ▶ Our computer system is easy to use and has enough memory, but it is too slow.

## Example 5

- ▶ Demand-side capacity combined with transmission wheeling contracts and local generation resources will be able to meet local demand and spinning reserve requirements for the next five years.
- ▶ SMUD will be able to save and produce enough power to meet local needs for the next five years.

# Effective writing Skills

- ▶ Key #4: Write with verbs and nouns
  - ▶ Use the active voice
  - ▶ When it is okay to use passive voice

# Example 6

- ▶ The company (S) sells (V) insurance (O).
- ▶ Not: Insurance is sold by the company.
- ▶ The construction crew repaired the road.
- ▶ Not: The road was repaired by the construction company.
- ▶ Tests showed the new material did not wear well.
- ▶ Not: When tests were run, it was discovered that good wear is not exhibited by the new material.

## Example 7

### ► Choose the right verb and the right noun

- Mr. Johnson ran quickly across the four-lane street, almost falling down when he stepped in a large hole in the concrete. (22 words)
- Mr. Johnson sprinted across the boulevard, stumbling when he stepped in a pothole. (13 words)

# Effective writing Skills

- ▶ Key #5: Format document to improve readability
  - ▶ Use lists, bullets, charts, tables, indents, italics, bolds, headings and subheadings
  - ▶ The 100-word rule

# Plan, organize, write

- ▶ Before you begin
  - ▶ Who is the audience (“My audience is \_\_\_\_\_.”)
  - ▶ Purpose of the message (“My purpose is \_\_\_\_\_.”)
  - ▶ How will the reader use the information (“So that the reader will \_\_\_\_\_.”)



# Plan, organize, write

- ▶ As you begin
  - ▶ Assemble all useful information
  - ▶ Determine what's important
  - ▶ Choose what to leave *out*
  - ▶ Group information logically

# Plan, organize, write

- ▶ Four ways to organize
  - ▶ Division
  - ▶ Compare/contrast
  - ▶ Cause/effect
  - ▶ Problem-analysis solution

# Division

- ▶ Start with main idea, then discuss the parts
- ▶ Example:
  - ▶ ACME Corporation faces four problems that threaten its competitiveness:
    - ▶ Outdated marketing plan
    - ▶ Poor service record
    - ▶ High prices
    - ▶ Low Morale

# Compare/Contrast

- ▶ Use familiar to explain unfamiliar
- ▶ Put the conclusion up front
- ▶ Example:
  - ▶ If we expand in the West we will face the same challenges as we did in expanding to the South:
    - ▶ Lack of identity
    - ▶ Poor distribution
    - ▶ Short p-term cash flow problem
    - ▶ Untrained labor force

# Problem-Analysis-Solution

- ▶ Find a straightforward way to offer recommendations
- ▶ Example:
  - ▶ The shipping dock's inability to ship product fast enough results from a inefficient tracking system. The solution is to:
    - ▶ Invest in a new computer system
    - ▶ Retrain staff
    - ▶ Inform customers of realistic shipping times
    - ▶ Budget for overtime to meet peak demand

# Cause/Effect

- ▶ Presents a clear-way analysis
- ▶ A-B; A-B-C-D; ABCD-E
- ▶ Example:
  - ▶ Reorganizing the marketing department will cause two benefits and one problem:
    - ▶ Improved accountability
    - ▶ Better communication
    - ▶ Problem – poorer service to industrial customers

# Plan, organize, write

- ▶ Develop an outline
- ▶ Write
  - ▶ Write the easiest part first
  - ▶ Develop major sections one at a time
  - ▶ Introduction for main ideas
  - ▶ Main point in first paragraph
  - ▶ Turn off your internal editor

# Plan, organize, write

- ▶ 90% of writing is re-writing and editing
- ▶ Let the document cool
- ▶ Run a Fog test
- ▶ Aim to cut first draft by at least 10%