

## Elements of Effective Writing

- Effective writing is based on the style of writing.
- Style is nothing but the way we write.
- If our style of writing is good, our writing will be good; if it's not good, our writing will not be good.
- Elements or Features of Style
  - Choice of words and phrases
  - Construction of sentences
  - Development of paragraphs
  - Presentation of the total information.
- Everybody's style of writing depends on these features or elements.
- They are also called building blocks of effective writing.
- If your *choice* of words and phrases is *good*, if *construction* of sentences is good, *development* of paragraph is good, *presentation* of the total information is good, style will be good; and if your style is good, your writing will be good or effective.

### EFFECTIVE WRITING ELEMENT / BUILDING BLOCK 1: Choice of Words and Phrases

- **Guidelines**

1. ***Use words that are low in connotative meaning.***

- He has failed to pass the test.
- He has achieved a score of 20%.

#### Understand and explain

- Words behave differently in different contexts and situations. *p. 249*
- The meanings of words overlap. *p. 249*
- The careful selection of words is important. *p. 249*

2. ***Precision***

- Use a specific word instead of a general term and a concrete instead of an abstract word.

<u>General</u>	<u>Specific</u>
He reads a particular newspaper daily.	He reads Gulf News daily.
Congratulations on your recent honor.	Congratulations on being named employee of the month.

### 3. **Conciseness** :. Make your writing concise

She was manager who was courteous to others.	She was a courteous manager.
It is difficult to make an approximation of how much money it would cost.	It is difficult to estimate its cost.

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- Pay special attention to modifiers, elaborate prepositions and conjunctions.
- Do not use contractions like (isn't, aren't, don't, etc.) or abbreviations ( ok, ad, auto, dept, etc ).
- Use strong words instead of weak phrases with adjectives.

Wealthy business person	Tycoon
Business prosperity	Boom

### 4. **Plainness**: Plain words are usually short and familiar.

- Avoid unfamiliar words. confirm
  - Leaving her business partner to consummate the deal, she boarded a flight for New York.
  - Ascertain - find out
  - Ramification - branch, subdivision
  - Ameliorate - improve
- Use short words instead of long words.
  - Discontinue stop
  - Demonstrate show
  - Commence begin
  - Aggregate total
  - Terminate end

### 5. **Cliché**: Avoid cliché ( hackneyed / overworked terms).

- Please send your answer at your earliest convenience. (by Friday, March 29)
- At an early date soon/specify the date
- At this time now
- In accordance with your wishes as you wish

#### Understand and explain

- What is a cliché ? Why are the clichés so often used in writings? Why should they be avoided in reports.

### 6. **Jargon** (language full of technical or special words) to be used carefully.

- Annual premium – annual payment
- Maturity date – final payment date

### Understand and Explain

- Why has Jargon become a derogatory term?
- 7. **Foreign words** should be used carefully.
  - Infra dig – below dignity
  - Vide supra – see above
- 8. **Avoid biased language that might offend the audience/reader.**
  - Gender Bias
    - Mankind            humanity
    - Man-made        artificial
    - Salesman        sales person/ sales representative
  - Racial and Ethnic Bias
    - Anand Desai, Indian General Manager of Jacky's Electronics,.....

### EFFECTIVE WRITING ELEMENT / BUILDING BLOCK 2: Construction and Length of Sentences

#### 1. **State ideas using positive language.**

Don't forget to submit your time and expense report by noon on Friday.  
Remember to submit.....

#### 2. **Use of active and passive voice**

##### I. Use of active for positive ideas

- i. The job was completed ahead of time by Russel.  
Russel completed the job ahead of schedule.
- ii. The bid proposal was proofread carefully.  
Russel proofread the proposal carefully.

##### II. Use of passive voice for negative ideas

- i. Russel did not proofread this bid proposal carefully.  
The bid proposal was not proofread carefully.
- ii. Russel completed the job two months behind schedule.  
The job was completed two months behind schedule.

#### 3. **If a sentence has several conjunctions ( more than three), see whether you can achieve greater clarity by splitting it into two or more smaller sentences.**

e.g. We can see from the above diagram that though the average number of customers per day is small, the turnover is the maximum because at other restaurants the main items of sale are tea, coffee and snacks whereas at this restaurant meals are also available.

##### Revised sentence

The above diagram shows that the turnover of this restaurant is the maximum, although the average number of customers is small. The reason for this is that others sell only tea, coffee and snacks whereas at this restaurant meals are also available.

#### 4. **Try to keep sentences short.**

- Average sentence length is 20 words or fewer.
- The maximum length of a sentence, ranging from 15 words to 35 words, has been recommended on the basis of several studies.

- But to be interesting your writing should contain both longer and shorter sentences. Surveys and studies show that a mere length of sentences does not make a mere piece of writing effective or ineffective.

5. **For emphasis place an idea in a simple sentence.**

- Nicole took a job in insurance, but she really preferred a job in accounting.  
Nicole took a job in insurance.

6. **Remove any words which do not perform a function.**

e.g. He has prepared this report in a not too technical style which should be of a simple enough nature to be understood by the average layman in the street.

- He has prepared this report in a style simple enough to be understood by the layman.

**Other examples:**

- Basic fundamentals
- Repeated again
- Returned back
- True fact
- Make a mention of
- Few in number
- Adequate enough

**Avoid circumlocution**

- Due to the fact that (because)
- Despite the fact that (though)
- For that reason (because)
- At a later date (later on)

7. **Normally sentences in the report should have both a subject and a predicate.**

- The following sentences have no place in a report.
  - 'What?'
  - 'If so, then?'
  - 'Oh?'

8. **To emphasize a word or an idea, position it first or last in a sentence, clause or paragraph.**

Less Emphatic	More Emphatic
The project was <u>successful</u> because of your efforts; without them <u>failure</u> would have been the result.	The project was a <u>success</u> ; without your efforts it would have been a <u>failure</u> .

9. **Express parallel ideas in parallel form.**

Jeff enjoys hunting for rabbits, socializing with friends, and to read the comics.

10. **Avoid long sequences of noun.**

Window sash installation company will give us an estimate on Friday.

The company that installs window sashes will give us an estimate on Friday.

11. **To avoid repetition and monotony, vary the construction and length of your sentences.**

12. **Sentences**

- **Definition**
- **Types – structure, form and function**
  - **On the basis of structure**
    - **Simple** (used in reports) *(Give an example)*
    - **Compound** (used in reports) *(Give an example)*
    - **Complex** *(Give an example)*
      - **Compound-Complex Sentence**
      - A compound-complex sentence contains coordinate and subordinate clauses:
        - When the door opened, a fox slipped through a hole in the floor and the chickens gave a cluck of relief.
        - a fox slipped through a hole in the floor – *main clause*
        - and the chickens gave a cluck of relief. – *coordinate clause*
        - When the door opened – *subordinate clause*
        - 'and' – *coordinating conjunction*
        - 'when' – *subordinating conjunction*
  - **On the basis of form**
    - **Statements** (used in reports) *(Give an example)*
    - **Commands** *(Give an example)*
    - **Requests** *(Give an example)*
    - **Questions** *(Give an example)*
    - **Exclamation** *(Give an example)*
  - **On the basis of function**
    - **Illocutionary** – e.g. Good Morning? How do you do? *(give another example)*
    - **Emotive** *(give an example)*
    - **Expository** *(give an example) (used in reports)*
    - **Descriptive** *(give an example) (used in reports)*
    - **Narrative** *(give an example) (used in reports)*