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# Technical Writing Style Pt.2

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# **Paragraph Strategies**



# **Avoid Clarity Errors**

Choppy  
Sentences,

Wordiness  
And  
Redundancy

Strings Of  
Nouns

# **Proper Paragraph Organization**

Start With Topic  
Sentence

Arranging  
Sentences By  
Level

Repeating Terms  
In A New/Old  
Sequence,

Placing Key  
Terms In The  
Dominant  
Position,

Indicating Class  
Or Membership,

Using  
Transitions

# Maintaining Coherence

Put only one idea  
in each sentence

Stay away from  
examples that  
require readers to  
understand  
metaphors

Consider your  
word choice

Use consistent  
vocabulary

Write words in full  
instead of using  
contractions,

Use -ing and -ed  
forms carefully



# **Using Appropriate Tone**

# Commonly Used Tones



Forceful

Passive

Impersonal

Personal

# **Forceful Tone:**

- The writer is in control of the situation or
- The situation is positive.
- Appropriate when addressing subordinates or
- When the goal is to express confidence.



# Forceful vs Passive Tone:

## For maintaining responsible position

- Use the active voice.
- Use the subject–verb–object structure.
- Do not use “weasel words” (possibly, maybe, perhaps).
- Use imperatives.
- Clearly indicate that you are the responsible agent.

## For diffusing problematic situations

- Avoid imperatives.
- Use the passive voice.
- Use “weasel words” (very, several people, quite, fairly).
- Use longer sentences.
- Do not explicitly take responsibility.

# Sample Analysis

The proposal to implement laptops in our department has not been accepted because of a number of very difficult issues. To our surprise several people have indicated that the ergonomic benefits of the screens are not seen as not quite offsetting the potential disruption that will be caused by the migration of files to the new machines. The large footprint of the docking station has also been suggested as a possible problem for our employees due to their fairly restricted desk space. Because the need for action on computer replacement is necessary, a meeting will be scheduled next week to discuss this.

# Personal Tone

- Implies that reader and writer are equal.
- Appropriate for expressing respect for the reader or
- For delivering a negative message when both parties are equal

# Sample Analysis

Ted, thanks for the laptop suggestion, but we can't do it this cycle. The steering committee understands the ergonomic issue you raise, but they are very concerned about the disruption that migrating all those files will cause. In addition, they feel that we need to work out the entire issue of footprint—the model you suggested would cause a number of problems with current desk configurations. I know that this is a disappointment. Could we get together soon to discuss this?

# Personal Tone

Use the active voice.

Use first names.

Use personal pronouns.

Use short sentences.

Use contractions.

Direct questions at the reader

# Impersonal tone

- Implies that the writer is not important or
- That the situation is neutral.
- Use this tone when you want to downplay personalities in the situation

# Impersonal Tone Sample

A decision to provide each employee with a laptop has been made. Laptops will reduce the eye fatigue that some employees have experienced, and the laptops will increase data flow. Ted Baxter will chair the implementation committee. Donna Silver and Robert Sirabian will assist. The committee will hold its initial meeting on Monday, October 10, at 3:00 p.m. in Room 111.

# Impersonal Tone



- Do not use names, especially first names.

- Do not use personal pronouns.

- Use the passive voice.

- Use longer sentences





## Reference:

Riordan, D. (2012). Technical Communication Style in *Technical Report Writing Today*. Cengage Advantage Books. p.88-105