

From *Economical Writing* by Deirdre McCloskey

Summary of important points for writing in economics

Introductory Workshop on Writing in Economics

St. Xavier's College, Mumbai

- 1. Write simple, direct sentences whenever possible.** Absolutely no one is impressed by a sentence they cannot understand. The quality of your economic logic is what counts, not big words or complicated sentences.
- 2. Rewrite and edit your first draft—and your second one, too.** Easy writing makes difficult reading. Revise your words if you want others to read them.
- 3. If it's possible to cut out a word (or sentence), cut it out.** Cut material no matter how brilliant you consider it, if it does not advance the topic of your paper.
- 4. Make sure that every sentence has the three required parts: subject, verb, and object.** When possible, place the main idea (emphasis) of each sentence at its end.
- 5. Avoid excessive introduction and summary, over-elaboration, or restatement of wellknown ideas.** Once you have stated in direct terms what you intend to do in your paper, do it. Many of the things that people write do not move the discussion along to its ultimate objective, but merely take up space.
- 6. Use active verbs rather than passive ones to add life to your writing.** Delete the word “is” whenever possible and rewrite the sentence using an active verb.
- 7. Be concrete—give examples rather than discussing things in vague terms.** Discuss the supply and demand for gasoline, rather than the supply and demand for good X.
- 8. Do not use a lot of different words to express the same idea just for the sake of variety.** It is far better to repeat a word than to use synonyms and confuse your reader. Repetition of important terms adds cohesion to your writing.
- 9. Minimize use of doublets.** Doublets are two words that mean essentially the same thing, used alongside each other in a sentence. Using the same ideas or phrases when a single or solitary one would do is a certain and sure-fire way of writing an unreadable and confusing report. Pick the best word and use it; do not say everything twice.
- 10. Avoid excessive use of This, That, These and Those.** In most cases “the” will do nicely. Instead of saying “this,” try repeating the word it represents instead.