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**Exe 1: Plain Language**

**“Simple can be more difficult than complex”**

**Steve Jobs**

**Plain Language: Being Clear and Concise**

**Your goal as a technical writer is to communicate specialized information clearly and concisely, without padding, inflated language, or awkward, bulky, passive sentences. Apply Plain Language principles: assist readers to easily grasp complex information, locate your main ideas, follow your recommendations, and know who’s doing what.**

**Keep it short and simple**

**Plain Language employs the basic structure of spoken English, the active voice: Subject / Verb / Object. To write strong, clear sentences, keep subject and verb together, and place them at the beginning (or near the beginning) of your sentence. This “front loads” the sentence, allowing the main topic or point to come first, and once readers know the topic, they can better understand what follows**

**TIP: Review my slides on Plain Language (Wk 2; also under Resources “Book”), plus Plain Language links under Wk 2**

**Once you’ve done that, copy + paste the sentences on the next page to your own WORD doc, then revise the sentences, applying Plain Language principles**

**Remember: the goal of Plain Language is to avoid wordiness: you must *still retain all the information* in the original sentences!**

**When done, provide a word count for your revised sentences**

**If need be, start by identifying the most important “actor” in each of the sentences: UNDERLINE the grammatical subject or “doer” of the sentence. Then identify what the actor’s doing by CIRCLING the verb (main action of the sentence)**

**The first number (in parentheses below) gives the original number of words in each sentence; the second is the approximate number of words to aim for when revising; think of it as a guideline. So long as you’re in the general vicinity of the second number, you should be doing fine!**

1. It is advised that the meter reading should be recorded hourly by your technician. (14 words/ aim for ~6 words)
2. The Report is going to be done by the new firm. (11/ ~7)
3. Care should be taken when handling dynamite (8/ ~3)
4. The meeting is going to be chaired by the person who is the Chief Director of Jet Propulsion Laboratories. (19/ 9)
5. There was a collision of two particles at Hillside and Shelbourne. (12/ 7)
6. This question will be considered by us in the very near future. (13/6 wds)
7. The regulation of the flow rate is done by pumps and flow meters (14/ 7)
8. We had a discussion of the issue in question. (10/4)
9. The implementation of the new software will be done by our team. (13/7)
10. After the problems are corrected by yourself, summarize what actions had to be taken. (15/ 9)
11. A full assessment of the University’s computing infrastructure must occur before further expenditures are undertaken.
12. Our procedure for disposal is in conformity with federal standards. (10/ 6)
13. Please conduct an analysis and make an evaluation of our new information storage system. (12/7)
14. There is an accumulation of salts caused by the usage of chemical fertilizer products that can lead to negative repercussions on the growth of plants. (26/ 14)
15. A knowledge of proper web style is the duty of all the writers of the content of websites. (19/10)
16. The training gives you the opportunity to increase your skills and abilities in using Excel. (16/10)
17. The calculation of new figures for the updated software design must be undertaken by us in preparation for the Budgeting Committee. (24/12)
18. The production of accurate statistics is important for the Committee in their assessment of our Project Management policy. (19/12)
19. There is an important flaw in the design of our new software that must be remedied. (18/ 10)
20. The response of the normal ear to sounds is in the audio-frequency between 20-20,000 Hz.
21. At this point in time, I basically do not have access to that specific piece of information. (16/ 8)
22. It is our recommended opinion that a new computer should be purchased by your company. (16/ 10)
23. There are a number of companies that are now trying to upgrade the communications skills of their engineers. (19/ 12)
24. An analysis of the data will be made once all the results are in. (15/ 10)
25. The training gives you the opportunity to increase your skills and abilities in using Excel. (16/10)
26. We are currently in the situation of completing our investigation of all aspects of the software approval process.
27. In spite of the fact that the approval of the project was delayed, we are of the opinion that we can finish the coding by the 1st of March. (30/ 16)
28. It is to be anticipated that in the not too distant future there will be changes of a dramatic magnitude occurring in the employment environment. (26/10)

**Eliminate the awkward “is . . .” phrasing (and “there is” empty subjects!) in the sentences below. Provide a clear subject and replace weak *is* verbs with strong action verbs. AVOID the following:**

* **. . . is when**
* **. . . is where**
* **. . . is because**
* **. . . is in**

1. Ozone pollution **is when** there is an increase in the concentration of ozone in the ambient air. (18/12)
2. The reason major metropolitan areas of Toronto have experienced a steady decline in ozone levels over the past 20 years **is because** of the production of reformulated gasoline and better automobile emission controls. (34/25)
3. Acid rain usually forms high in the clouds which **is where** there are sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides that can react with water, oxygen, and oxidants. (27/20)

Finally, aim to reduce the following phrases to a single word:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| At this point in time |  | Subsequent to |  |
| In close proximity to |  | In some cases |  |
| Due to the fact that |  | A large number of |  |