

CHAPTER 7:

Step 5 (Draft)

This chapter covers:

- Drafting: Basic Philosophy
- Drafting Effective Paragraphs
- Drafting Effective Sentences
- Overcoming Writer's Block

After completing the prewriting process, you've got what you need to produce a first-rate communication product. Congratulations! You're ready to write your first draft! In this chapter we'll take a "top-down" approach to writing a draft. We'll start with the big picture: a three-part structure consisting of the introduction, the body and the conclusion. Next, we'll describe how to write effective paragraphs within the body. Finally, we'll dig down deeper into the sentences, phrases and words that make up the paragraphs of your draft.

Drafting: Basic Philosophy

Keep a few things in mind as you start the drafting process. A draft is not the finished product, and each sentence does not have to be polished and perfect. Your focus should be to get your ideas on paper. Don't obsess about grammar, punctuation, spelling and word choice at this point—that comes later. You don't have to fix every mistake as you see it—you can catch these during the editing process.

It's helpful to keep an eye on your outline when drafting your masterpiece, especially when you're writing something longer than a page or two. By periodically checking your outline, you are less likely to lose focus and include irrelevant information.

Have you ever sat down to start your first draft and found yourself just staring at the blank computer screen or paper? If you suffer from writer's block, we'll cover strategies for overcoming this fairly common problem at the end of this chapter.

Three Part Structure: An Introduction, Body and Conclusion

What is your draft going to look like? Is it going to be one huge paragraph? In most cases, you'll organize your draft in a three-part structure—introduction, body and conclusion.

- The **introduction** must capture your audience's attention, establish rapport and announce your purpose.
- The **body** must be an effective sequence of ideas that flows logically in a series of paragraphs.
- The **conclusion** must summarize the main points stated in the body and close smoothly.

Let's take a closer look at this structure. We'll examine these parts out of order—first, the introduction, then the conclusion and lastly the body where we'll spend most of our time.

Drafting the Introduction

The *introduction* sets the stage and tone for your message. Although the content and length of your introduction may vary with the writing template, the introduction should, at a minimum, clearly state your purpose (“bottom line”) and the direction you plan to take the audience.

A typical introduction has three components: *stage setting remarks*, a *purpose statement* and an *overview*.

- *Stage-setting remarks* set the tone of the communication, capture the audience's attention and encourage them to read further. Stage-setting remarks are *optional*, so you can omit them in very short messages or in messages where you don't want to waste words.
- The *purpose statement* is the one sentence you'd keep if you had only one. It specifically states your purpose, thesis or main point. For some examples and more details, refer back to chapter 3.
- The *overview* is like a good roadmap—it clearly presents your main points, previews your paragraph sequence and ties your main points to your purpose.

Stage-Setting Remarks: Use them properly!

Stage-setting remarks are optional. Though they add polish to an introduction, your reader has to be able to pick which sentences are “setting the stage” and which sentence is the “bottom line.”

If you’ve received feedback that readers are sometimes confused about the purpose of your writing, get to the point quickly and don’t overdo stage-setting remarks. Too many preliminaries can backfire and actually confuse the reader.

Keep the BLUF (bottom line up front) acronym in mind as you write.

Here’s an example of a short introduction that contains all three components:

Communication is essential to mission accomplishment, and all Air Force personnel should be able to write effectively. (*Stage-Setting Remarks*) This handbook provides general guidelines and specific formats for use in both staff environments and Professional Military Education schools. (*Purpose Statement*) It begins with an overarching philosophy on military communication, then describes processes and techniques to improve writing and speaking products, and summarizes the most common formats used in Air Force communication. (*Overview*)

Even though readers read the introduction first, you don’t have to write it first. If the introduction doesn’t come easily or naturally, you can work on another part of the communication and then return to it. Some writers backpedal and don’t want to work on the introduction until the rest of the communication is written. Others insist it guides them in shaping the content or body of their message. Regardless of when you write the introduction, make sure that it captures your purpose and make sure it prepares your audience for what is to come.

Here’s the bottom line on your introduction: It must be an appropriate length for your specific communication and it should contain a clear statement of your purpose and direction.

Drafting the Conclusion

The *conclusion* is the last and often neglected part of a well-arranged communication. Sometimes inexperienced writers stop writing as soon as they finish discussing their last main idea. That’s not an effective conclusion. The conclusion is your last chance to summarize your communication and give your audience a sense of closure.

An effective conclusion often summarizes the overall theme and main points discussed in the body. If you have a simple, straightforward purpose, you might want to emphasize it by restating it in slightly different words in the conclusion. If you have a complicated purpose or a long, involved communication, you’ll probably need to emphasize your main ideas and state your proposals or recommendations.

For effective endings, restate the main ideas or observations or emphasize the main thrusts of arguments. Under no circumstances apologize for real or perceived inadequacies or inject weak

afterthoughts. Conclude your communication with positive statements based on your preceding discussion. In general, avoid bringing up new ideas in the conclusion; these belong in the body of your communication.

Your introduction and conclusion should balance each other without being identical. To check this, read your introduction and then immediately read your conclusion to determine if your conclusion flows logically from your introduction and whether it fulfills your purpose. An effective conclusion leaves you with a sense you're justified in ending your communication. You're ready to call it a day only when you assure your audience you've accomplished the purpose stated in your introduction.

Introductions and conclusions: How long?

The length of your introduction and conclusion will be proportional to the length of your overall writing assignment. On a one-page assignment, they may be very short, while lengthy staff studies or publications may contain introductions and conclusions that are several paragraphs long. Introductions and conclusions to books are often an entire chapter!

Remember that introductions and conclusions are designed to help your readers; use good judgment in determining the appropriate length for your assignment.

Recall our sample introduction; here's a short conclusion derived from that introduction and the body (which we don't have right now):

As Air Force personnel, we can't accomplish our mission without effective communication. Hopefully, this handbook has provided you with some practical tools to improve your communication skills, specifically speaking and writing. Keep it handy and refer to it often as you prepare and review a variety of spoken and written products throughout your career.

Even without the "body" available, you can see how the introduction and conclusion complement each other.

Drafting the Body

The *body* of your communication is the heart of your message. It includes your main ideas about your subject and supporting details under each main idea.

The body typically consists of several paragraphs. The total number of paragraphs (and overall length of the body) will depend on your purpose and subject. As a general rule, write a separate paragraph for each main idea—you might confuse your reader if you have two or more main ideas in a single paragraph. In a longer communication, you may find it necessary to use more than one paragraph to cover one main point or idea.

So much for a quick review of introductions, conclusions and bodies, let's now dig down a little deeper into the paragraphs that make up the body of your communication.

Drafting Effective Paragraphs

Paragraphs Should Contain One Main Point

Paragraphs are the primary vehicles to develop ideas in your writing. They serve three purposes:

1. To group related ideas into single units of thought.
2. To separate one unit of thought from another unit.
3. To alert your readers you're shifting to another phase of your subject.

An effective paragraph is a functional unit with clusters of ideas built around a single main point or idea and linked with other clusters preceding and following it. It's not an arbitrary collection designed for physical convenience. It performs a definite, planned function—it presents a single major idea or point, describes an event, or creates an impression.

Most staff writing depends on relatively short paragraphs of three to seven sentences. If you follow this practice, you'll be more likely to develop clear, easy-to-read paragraphs. The length of each paragraph will vary because some main points need more supporting details than others.

In general, the flow of your paragraphs will follow the organizational pattern or format you selected in Step 4: "Organizing and Outlining" (chapter 6). That is, you build your paragraphs to meet the structural requirements of your overall communication. But you can use analogy, examples, definition, and comparison and contrast to develop single paragraphs within your overall pattern. The guiding principle is to develop one main idea or point in each paragraph.

Topic Sentences: Capturing the Main Point of Each Paragraph

In staff writing, it's helpful to start off each paragraph with a *topic sentence* that captures the subject or controlling idea of the paragraph. The topic sentence prepares the reader for the rest of the paragraph and provides a point of focus for support, details, facts, figures and examples.

If your readers are confused, check your topic sentences!

A *topic sentence* announces your intent for a single paragraph in the same way a *purpose statement* announces your intent for the entire writing assignment. Most readers are better able to understand how ideas relate to each other if they know what's coming.

If you've received feedback that readers have trouble understanding the "flow" of your writing, check your topic sentences. Does one exist for each paragraph? Can you find it? Do they start off the paragraph? Do they tie back to your purpose statement?

In the body, don't make your reader search for the topic sentences of your paragraphs. (As stated earlier, the rules are different for introductions and conclusions.) Since the topic sentence is the subject and main idea of the paragraph, the best place for it is up front—the first sentence. This helps with clarity and makes things convenient for your readers. Many people need only general information about the content of certain letters, reports and directives. Scanning topic

sentences at the beginning of paragraphs for the most important ideas saves a lot of time. If your readers need more details, they can always read beyond your topic sentences.

Once you've written a topic sentence, the rest of the paragraph should fall neatly in place. Other sentences between the topic sentence and the last sentence must be closely related to expand, emphasize and support the topic sentence. In some paragraphs, the last sentence is used to summarize key points, clinch the main idea in the reader's mind, or serve as a transition to the next topic sentence. (We'll talk more about transitions in the next section.) Eliminate any "extra" sentences that don't perform one of these functions.

Though most writers will draft an entire paragraph at a time, **an alternate drafting strategy is to first write all the topic sentences in your body.** Once the topic sentences are completed, go back and write the rest of the paragraphs, one at a time. Drafting the topic sentences first requires the writer to stay focused on the "big picture" and can help produce a clear and well-organized draft. This technique can be very useful for longer writing assignments and is recommended for writers who struggle to organize their writing.

Here's the bottom line on body paragraphs: Each paragraph should have one main point or idea captured in a topic sentence, preferably at the beginning of the paragraph. Use supporting ideas to prove, clarify, illustrate and develop your main point. Your objective is to help your readers see your paragraphs as integrated units rather than mere collections of sentences.

Transitions: Bridges between Different Ideas

One way to make sure your paragraphs flow together, both internally and externally, is by using transitions in the form of words, phrases and sentences. *Internal transitions* improve the flow of sentences within a paragraph while *external transitions* link separate paragraphs together within the body of your communication.

Internal Transitions

Internal transitions are one or more related words that show the relationship between ideas *within a paragraph*. Woven skillfully into your writing, internal transitions help your reader follow your line of thought. Some internal transitions show a relationship between two ideas inside a single sentence: "**First** go home, and **then** clean your room."

Other internal transitions show a relationship between two or more sentences within a single paragraph such as this example: "Our plan for Saturday afternoon involves both business and pleasure. **First**, all the kids will come home at noon, and we'll eat lunch. **Next**, we'll get the house cleaned—the whole mess. **Finally**, we'll go out for ice cream and a movie."

Take a look at the next page for a bulletin board of transitional words and phrases that provide the ideal logic links between your key points and the mind of the reader. In most cases, favor the short, spoken ones over the long, bookish ones. For example, use *but* more than *however*, *so* more than *therefore*, and *also* more than *in addition*. Remember, different transitions require different punctuation. If you're uncertain about the rules, check out Appendix 1. For example, you can use "so" in place of "therefore" for a much easier to read sentence, as shown below:

"The movie was too long; therefore, we left after three hours."
"The movie was too long, so we left after three hours."

Transition “Bulletin Board”

<i>To Contrast Ideas</i>	<i>To Show Time</i>	<i>To Relate Thoughts</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • but • yet • nevertheless • however • still • conversely • on the one hand • instead of • neither of these • (to) (on) the contrary • rather than • no matter what • much less as • in contrast • otherwise • on the other hand • in the (first) (second) place • nor • according to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • immediately • presently • nearly a ___ later • meantime • meanwhile • afterward • next • as of today • this year, however • a little later • then last year • next week • tomorrow • as of now • finally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • indeed • anyway, anyhow • elsewhere • nearby • above all • even these • beyond • in other words • for instance • of course • in short • in sum • yet • in reality • that is • by consequence • notwithstanding • nonetheless • as a general rule • understandably • traditionally • the reason, of course • the lesson here is • from all information • at best • naturally • in the broader sense • to this end • in fact
<i>To Compare Ideas</i>	<i>To Show Results</i>	<i>To Add Ideas</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • like • just as • similar • this 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • therefore • as a result • thus • consequently • hence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • first, second, next, last, etc. • in addition • additionally • moreover • furthermore • another • besides • clear, too, is • the answer does not only lie • to all that • more than anything else • here are some ... facts • now, of course, there are • now however

There are many ways to bridge gaps in thought and move the reader from one idea to another. One classic transitional approach involves repetition of key words at the beginning of individual sentences. This is especially popular in formal or ceremonial writing or speaking. Notice how the writer of the following paragraph repeated *simplicity*, *incisiveness* and *focus* to make points clear:

The effective presentation of concepts depends on simplicity, incisiveness and focus. Simplicity is necessary under time constraints when there's insufficient time for complicated relationships. Incisiveness fixes an idea in the listener's mind, appeals to common sense and facilitates understanding. Focus limits the subject to essentials, promoting the presenter's objectives.

Internal transitions, in the form of one or more related words, are key to a well-written paragraph because they guide the reader between related ideas. But how do we move from paragraph to paragraph? We need *external transitions* to knit together their main points.

External Transitions

External transitions are typically sentences or paragraphs that guide the reader **between separate paragraphs** and **major sections** of your communication.

Transitional paragraphs are usually reserved for long papers, books and reports that contain major sections or chapters. They are used to summarize one section and lead the reader to the next section, or they introduce the next section and tie it to the preceding section. Transitional paragraphs are not commonly used in staff writing, but are often seen in books and academic essays.

The short paragraph immediately above this section (“Internal transitions, in the form of one or more related words...”) is an example of a transitional paragraph. As you can see, it sums up the previous section on internal transitions and then introduces the new section on external transitions.

Let's look closer at transitional sentences, which you'll probably use more frequently than transitional paragraphs. A transitional sentence is often used to bridge main points in two separate paragraphs (though not every new paragraph requires an external transition). There are three options of a transitional sentence bridging paragraph 1 and paragraph 2:

- Option 1: It can be a stand-alone sentence at the end of paragraph 1.
- Option 2: It can be a stand-alone sentence at the beginning of paragraph 2 (In this case, paragraph 2's topic sentence is the second sentence in the paragraph).
- Option 3: It can be merged with the topic sentence of paragraph 2 (In this case, the “transitional” part of the sentence is a separate clause at the beginning of the sentence).

Let's look at a situation where a transitional sentence is appropriate. Suppose we have two paragraphs: Paragraph 1 describes parking problems; paragraph 2 describes potential solutions to the parking problems. Here's an example of a stand-alone transitional sentence for these paragraphs:

Fortunately, we can solve these parking problems if we offer our people some incentives to use car pools. (*transitional sentence*)

If this sentence were at the end of paragraph 1 (option 1), paragraph 2 would start with a topic sentence written something like this:

We can offer our personnel three incentives to participate in car pools: preferred parking spaces, guaranteed duty hours and distant parking for nonparticipants. (*topic sentence*)

If our transitional sentence were at the beginning of paragraph 2 (option 2), then our topic sentence would be the second sentence in paragraph 2, like this:

Fortunately, we can solve these parking problems if we offer our people some incentives to use carpools. (*transitional sentence*) **We can offer them three incentives: preferred parking spaces, guaranteed duty hours, and distant parking for nonparticipants.** (*topic sentence*)

Now let's look at our third option where we merge the transition with the topic sentence of paragraph 2. In this case, we have one sentence instead of two, like this:

Fortunately, we can solve these parking problems (*transitional clause*) **by offering our people three incentives to participate in car pools: preferred parking spaces, guaranteed duty hours and distant parking for nonparticipants** (*topic of paragraph 2*).

Whether used at the end or beginning of a paragraph, transitional sentences can make your writing smoother and make your reader happier!

Headings as Transitions

Another effective way to transition from one major area to another, especially in a longer report, is to use *headings*. They allow your reader to follow along easily, even at a glance. Headings are also helpful when topics vary widely. Be informative: headings focus readers from broad topics to more detailed topics. Avoid relying on headings that use one or two vague words but do not use more words than are needed. Here are a couple examples.

For: Procedures; Try: *How to Complete AF Form XXXX*

For: Contractors; Try: *How Much Contractors May Charge*

Now that you have a good idea of how to draft “the big picture” part of your communication—your introduction, conclusion and paragraphs in the body—it's time to dig a little deeper. It's time to look at building effective sentences within your paragraphs.

Drafting Effective Sentences

To draft clear and concise sentences, choose clear and concise words and phrases to make up your sentences. In this section, we'll cover some of the most important considerations when writing effective sentences: active voice, smothered verbs, parallel construction, misplaced modifiers, using the right word for the job and avoiding wordy words and phrases. Let's get started with probably the most common pitfall to clear and concise sentences—not writing actively.

Write Actively: Doers Before Verbs

Is your active voice all bottled up? Active voice shows the subject as the actor. For example: *The girl sang a song.* By using mostly active voice, your writing is clear, concise and alive—it reaches out to the reader and gets to the point quickly with fewer words. Unfortunately, many writers overuse passive voice. Passive voice shows the subject as receiver of the action. For example: *A song was sung by her.* Besides lengthening and twisting sentences, passive verbs often muddy them. Whereas active sentences must have doers, passive ones are complete without them. When you overuse passive voice and reverse the natural subject-verb-object pattern, your writing becomes lifeless.

- Your support is appreciated ...
- Requisitions should be submitted ...
- The IG team will be appointed ...
- It is requested that you submit ...

The actor (or doer) in the sentence is either obscure, absent altogether or just lying there. Who appreciates? Who should requisition? Who appoints? Why not write ...

- I appreciate your support ...
- Submit your requisitions ...
- Colonel Hall will appoint the IG team ...
- Please submit ...

The Symptoms of Passive Voice and Three Cures

How can you diagnose passive voice? You don't have to be a grammarian to recognize passive voice. First, find the verb by asking yourself, "What's happening in this sentence?" Then find the actor by asking, "Who's doing it?" If the actor comes after the verb, it's passive voice. Also, watch for these forms of the verb *to be* (*am, is, are, was, were, be, being, been*) and a main verb usually ending in *-ed* or *-en*. Let's look at a few examples and then try the cures, below.

Passive: The mouse *was eaten* by the cat.

Active: The *cat ate* the mouse.

Passive: Livelier sentences will be written by you.

Active: You will write livelier sentences.

Passive: Water is drunk by everybody.

Active: Everybody drinks water.

1. Put the Actor (Doer) Before the Verb.

This: The *handlers* must have broken the part.

Not: The part must have been broken by the *handlers*.

2. Drop Part of the Verb.

This: The results *are* in the attachment.

Not: The results *are listed* in the attachment.

3. Change the Verb.

This: The replacement has not *arrived* yet.

Not: The replacement has not *been received* yet.

Though most writers overuse passive voice, sometimes it's appropriate. Clear and forceful language may be inappropriate in diplomacy or in political negotiations. Passive voice is also used to soften bad news, or when the doer or actor of the action is unknown, unimportant, obvious or better left unnamed. Here are a few examples:

The part was shipped on 1 June. (The *doer* is unimportant.)

Presidents are elected every four years. (The *doer* is obvious.)

Christmas has been scheduled as a workday. (The *doer* is better left unnamed.)

The bottom line: Passive voice is wordy, indirect, unclear and reverses the natural order of English. Active voice is clear and concise. Using verbs correctly—actively—is key to writing clear, concise and interesting sentences. Activate your writing!

Smothered Verbs

Make your verbs do the work for you. Weak writing relies on general verbs that take extra words to complete their meaning. Don't use a general verb (make) plus extra words (a choice) when you can use one specific verb (choose).

Wordy: The IG team held a meeting to give consideration to the printing issue.

Better: The IG team met to consider the printing issue.

Wordy: They made the decision to give their approval.

Better: They decided to approve it.

Here's another tip on verbs—watch out for words ending in *-ion* and *-ment*—these are verbs turned into nouns. Change these nouns to verbs: your sentences will be shorter and livelier.

Wordy: Use that format *for the preparation of* your command history.

Better: Use that format *to prepare* your command history.

Wordy: *The settlement of* travel claims involves *the examination of* orders.

Better: *Settling* travel claims involves *examining* orders.

We've spent a lot of time looking at verbs because they're the most important words in your sentences. **The bottom line:** keep verbs active, lively, specific, concise and out in front, not hidden. Another potential stumbling block for readers is "unparallelism."

Parallel Construction (Parallelism)

Use a consistent pattern when making a list. If your sentence contains a series of items separated by commas, keep the grammatical construction similar—if two of three items start with a verb, make the third item start with a verb. Violations occur when writers mix things and actions, statements and questions, and active and passive instructions. The trick is to be consistent. Make ideas of equal importance look equal.

Needs work: The functions of a military staff are to *advise* the commander, *transmit* instructions and *implementation* of decisions. [Advise and transmit are verbs, while implementation is a noun.]

Acceptable: The functions of a military staff are to *advise* the commander, *transmit* instructions and *implement* decisions. [Parallel ideas are now written in the same grammatical form.]

Needs work: The security policeman told us *to observe the speed limit* and *we should dim our lights*. [Parallel ideas are not written in the same grammatical form.]

Acceptable: The security policeman told us *to observe the speed limit* and *to dim our lights*.

Needs work: Universal military values include that we should act with integrity, dedication to duty, the belief that freedom is worth dying for and service before self.

Acceptable: Universal military values include commitment to integrity, dedication to duty, service before self, and the belief that freedom is worth dying for.

If one of the items in a list can't be written in the same grammatical structure, place it at the end of the sentence. In the previous example, "the belief that freedom is worth dying for" does not match the three-word construction of the other items, but its placement helps the sentence's readability. Active voice, strong verbs and parallelism can help make your sentences clear and concise. Now, let's look at some more things you can do to write effective sentences—using the right word for the job.

Use the Right Word for the Job

Without generalizations and abstractions, and lots of them, we would drown in detail. We sum up vast amounts of experience when we speak of dedication, programs, hardware and lines of authority. But such abstract language isn't likely to evoke the same experiences in each reader's mind. Lazy writing overuses vague terms such as *immense dedication*, *enhanced programs*, *viable hardware* and *responsive lines of authority*. It especially weakens job descriptions and performance evaluations, etc.

Be Concrete

Do not write "The commander will give guidance," or "The equipment must meet specs." Your reader might wonder what kind of guidance or what kind of specs? Neither you nor your readers can tackle the problem until you are specific. Be as definite as the situation permits. Include only the ideas your reader needs and then give those ideas no more words than they deserve.

Use the Right Word for the Job			
<u>For</u>	<u>Try</u>	<u>For</u>	<u>Try</u>
commanders	MAJCOM commanders	Ford	Focus
headache	migraine	emotion	love
car, vehicle	Ford	plane	F-22
smartphone	iPhone 4	socialize	mingle, meet

Know Various Shades of Meaning.

Use different words to express various shades of meaning. The writer with an adequate vocabulary writes about the *aroma* of a cigar, the *fragrance* of a flower, the *scent* of perfume or the *odor* of gas instead of the *smell* of all these things.

Judge the Jargon

The aim of all communication is to make a personal contact in the simplest possible way, and the simplest way is to use familiar, everyday words. Above all, it must be adapted to specific circumstances with a minimum of jargon. Jargon consists of “shorthand” words, phrases or abbreviations that are peculiar to a relatively small group of people. *DEROS* (Date Eligible to Return from Overseas) and *AWOL* (Absent Without Leave) are examples of military jargon. Every profession has it. *NPO* which means Nil Per Os (nothing by mouth) and contusion (bruise) are examples of medical jargon. Writers often use jargon in their sentences to fill space and impress the naive. Unfortunately, overuse of jargon can backfire on you by actually confusing your reader. **CAUTION!** Before you use jargon, make sure you have carefully assessed the audience and use terms that will be familiar to them. Keep it simple with everyday words and phrases, or at least explain any jargon you must use. If you use an abbreviation, spell it out the first time it appears. If it appears only twice or infrequently, spell out the term every time and avoid the abbreviation entirely. For more on abbreviations see Appendix 1.

Clichés

Clichés are expressions that have lost their impact because they have been overused. Strive for originality in your choice of words and phrases. The list of clichés below is not exhaustive. You just may not find your favorite here.

<i>Clichés</i>		
acid test	add insult to injury	armed to the teeth
as a matter of fact	at a loss for words	banker’s hours
battle royal	beat a hasty retreat	beauty and the beast
benefit of the doubt	better late than never	bewildering variety
beyond the shadow of a doubt	bite the dust	blazing inferno
blessed event	blessing in disguise	blissful ignorance
brave as a lion	break of day	bright and early
bull in a china shop	burn one’s bridges	burn the midnight oil
burning issue	bury the hatchet	busy as a bee
by the same token	calm before the storm	cherished belief
clear the decks	club-wielding police	colorful scene
conspicuous by its absence	cool as a cucumber	coveted award
crack of dawn	crack troops	cutting edge
dramatic new move	dread disease	dream come true
drop in the bucket	easier said than done	fame and fortune
feast or famine	fickle fortune	food for thought
from the face of the earth	gentle hint	glaring omission
glutton for punishment	gory details	grief stricken
grim reaper	hammer out (an agreement)	hand in glove
happy couple	hard as a rock	head over heels in love
heart of gold	heavily armed troops	honest as the day is long
hook, line and sinker	hungry as wolves	in short supply
in this day and age	intensive investigation	iron out (problems)
irony of fate	it goes without saying	Lady Luck
lash out	last but not least	last-ditch stand
leaps and bounds	leave no stone unturned	lend a helping hand

<i>Clichés</i>		
light at the end of the tunnel	lightning speed	limp into port
lock, stock and barrel	long arm of the law	man in the street
marvels of science	matrimonial bliss (knot)	meager pension
miraculous escape	moment of truth	more than meets the eye
Mother Nature	move into high gear	never a dull moment
Old Man Winter	on more than one occasion	paint a grim picture
pay the supreme penalty	picture of health	pillar of (the church, society)
pinpoint the cause	police dragnet	pool of blood
posh resort	powder keg	predawn darkness
prestigious law firm	proud heritage	proud parents
pursuit of excellence	quick as a flash	radiant bride
red faces, red-faced	reign supreme	reins of government
round of applause	rushed to the scene	sadder but wiser
scantily clad	scintilla of evidence	scurried to shelter
selling like hotcakes	sharp as a razor	sings like a bird
spearheading the campaign	spirited debate	spotlessly clean
sprawling base, facility	spreading like wildfire	steaming jungle
stick out like a sore thumb	storm of protest	stranger than fiction
supreme sacrifice	surprise move	sweep under the rug
sweet harmony	sweetness and light	tempest in a teapot
tender mercies	terror stricken	tip of the iceberg
to no avail	too numerous to mention	tower of strength
tragic death	trail of death and destruction	true colors
vanish in thin air	walking encyclopedia	wave of the future
wealth of information	whirlwind campaign	wouldn't touch that with a 10-foot pole

Easily Confused Words

Many writers and speakers frequently confuse the meaning of some words. Here's a small list of some easily confused words. Be on the lookout for others.

<i>Easily Confused Words</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • accept: verb, receive • except: verb or preposition, omitting or leaving out 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exceptional: out of the ordinary • exceptionable: objectionable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advice: noun, counsel given, an opinion • advise: verb, to give counsel or advice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • farther: expresses distance • further: expresses degree
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • affect: verb, to influence or feign • effect: noun, result; verb, to bring about 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fewer: refers to numbers; countable items • less: refers to mass; items can't be counted
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • aggravate: make worse or intensify • annoy: disturb or irritate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • formally: in a formal manner • formerly: in the past
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all ready: everyone is prepared • already: adverb, by specific time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hanged: to execute; criminals are hanged • hung: suspended or nailed up; pictures are hung

<i>Easily Confused Words</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all together: collectively or in a group • altogether: wholly or entirely 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • healthy: possessing health • healthful: conducive to health • wholesome: healthful as applied to food or climate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • alright: not acceptable spelling • all right: satisfactory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • imply: to hint at or suggest • infer: to draw a conclusion based on evidence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • allusion: indirect reference • delusion: false belief • illusion: a false impression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • incredible: unbelievable, improbable • incredulous: skeptical, doubting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • alumni: men graduates or group of men and women graduates • alumnae: women graduates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • instance: example • instant: moment of time • incident: event or an occurrence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • among: used when more than two alternatives • between: used when only two alternatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ingenious: clever or resourceful • ingenuous: innocently frank or candid
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • amount: quantity that can't be counted or measured in units • number: quantity counted and measured in units 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • later: after the usual time • latter: to designate the second of two things mentioned
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • anxious: worry or fearfulness • eager: keen desire 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lay: to place • lie: to recline; to stretch out
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • apt: suitable, quick to learn, natural tendency • liable: legally responsible • likely: refers to the probable, probability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • likely: a favorable probability • liable: legally responsible • apt: a natural fitness or tendency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • as: a subordinate conjunction • like: a preposition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lose: a verb • loose: primarily an adjective
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • avocation: hobby • vocation: customary employment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • luxuriant: abundant growth • luxurious: pertains to luxury
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • beside: preposition, next to or near • besides: adverb, in addition; preposition, addition to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • may be: a modal verb • maybe: perhaps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bi-: occurring every two (units of time) • semi-: occurring twice (during the time period) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • moneys: currency • monies: amount of money
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bring: action toward the speaker • take: action away from the speaker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • morale: refers to a spirit or a mood • moral: refers to right conduct
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can: ability • may: permission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • persecute: to afflict or harass • prosecute: to pursue until finished or to bring legal action against a defendant

<i>Easily Confused Words</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • capital: city or money • capitol: a building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • practical: useful, sensible • practicable: feasible; a person cannot be practicable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • censor: examine in order to forbid if objectionable • censure: condemn or to reprimand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • principal: adjective, foremost; noun, main person • principle: noun, precept or idea
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • compliment: praise • complement: supplies a lack; it completes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • raise: to lift or cause to be lifted • rise: to move to a higher position
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • compose: to constitute • comprise: to include or consist of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • respectively: in the order given • respectfully: full of respect
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consul: foreign representative • council: a group • counsel: advice, to give advice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • set: to put or to place • sit: to occupy a seat
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contemptible: base, worthless, despicable • contemptuous: expressing contempt or disdain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shape: condition of being • condition: state, situation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continually: closely recurrent intervals • continuously: without pause or break 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sometime: at some unspecified time • some time: a period of time • sometimes: now and then
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • credible: believable • creditable: deserving credit or honor • credulous: ready to believe anything 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • specie: coin • species: a kind or variety
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • disinterested: impartial or objective • uninterested: indifferent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stationary: in a fixed place • stationery: writing paper, envelopes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eligible: qualified to be chosen • illegible: unable to read 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • than: conjunction of comparison • then: adverb, at that time
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • emigrate: to leave a country to settle in another • immigrate: to enter a country to settle there 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • their: third person plural pronoun, possessive • there: adverb or interjection • they're: contraction of they are
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eminent: noted or renowned • imminent: impending 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • verbal: applies to that which is communicated in words, spoken or written • oral: applies only to that which is spoken
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enervating: weakening • invigorating: stimulating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • who: refers to people • which: refers to things
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure: guarantee • insure: obtain insurance for 	

Doubleheaders

The Word by Rene J. Cappon details how to avoid writing a project’s *importance and significance* when importance will do. Even a person’s *success and achievement* is okay with just success. Pairs of words with similar meanings add bulk. Although *test and evaluate* are different, the differences may not be important for all audiences. When you’re tempted to use two words, try one to say it all. Thomas Jefferson said: “The most valuable of all talents is that of never using *two* words when *one* will do.”

<i>Doubleheaders</i>		
aid and abet	each and every	ready and willing
beck and call	fair and just	right and proper
betwixt and between	few and far between	safe and sound
bits and pieces	irrelevant and immaterial	shy and withdrawn
blunt and brutal	nervous and distraught	smooth and silky
bound and determined	nook and cranny	success and achievement
clear and simple	null and void	sum and substance
confused and bewildered	part and parcel	test and evaluate
disgraced and dishonored	pick and choose	various and sundry

Repetitive Redundancy

Not every noun needs an adjective. Not every adjective needs an adverb. Not every writer has gotten the message. Keep your pencil from adding modifiers to those nouns that need no additional voltage. *Serious* danger, *stern* warning, *deadly* poison, *grave* crisis are examples; the nouns operate better without the modifiers.

<i>Repetitive Redundancy</i>		
absolutely conclusive	advance planning	agricultural crops
anthracite coal	ascend upward	assemble together
awkward dilemma	basic fundamental	big in size
bisect in two	blend together	both alike
capitol building	chief protagonist; leading protagonist; or main protagonist	close proximity
coalesce together	collaborate together or jointly	complete monopoly
completely full	completely unanimous	congregate together
connect together	consensus of opinion	continue to persist
courthouse building	current or present incumbent	descend downward
divisive quarrel	doctorate degree	end result
exact counterpart	entirely absent	erupt violently
first beginning	fellow colleague	few in number
from whence	founder and sink	free gift
gather together	fuse together	future plan
habitual custom	general public	grateful thanks
individual person	hired mercenary	hoist up
join together	invited guest	irreducible minimum

<i>Repetitive Redundancy</i>		
lonely hermit	knots per hour	large in size
mutual cooperation	meaningless gibberish	merge together
new record	necessary need	new innovation
old antique	new recruit	old adage
original founder	opening gambit	organic life
past history	original prototype	passing fad
personal opinion	patently obvious	personal friend
protrude out	pointed barb	present incumbent
recoil back	real fact	recall back
shuttle back and forth	recur again or repeatedly	short in length or height
small in size	single unit	skirt around
temporary reprieve	tall in height	two twins
universal panacea	true facts	ultimate outcome
vitaly necessary	violent explosion	visible to the eye

Wordy Words and Phrases vs. Simpler Words and Phrases

Many people use certain wordy words and needless phrases, such as phrases introduced by prepositions like *at, on, for, in, to* and *by*. They don't add substance; they weaken the message by cluttering the words that carry meaning. So prune the deadwood. The longer it takes to say something, the weaker you come across.

The use of simpler words and phrases in your communications may help convey your meaning; however, there are times when more formal or complex words and phrases convey the intended meaning best and are appropriate. For example, contractions are generally not used in formal policy letters or directions intended for a wide audience, such as an entire squadron, group, wing, or higher, or in academic work. This ensures clarity over simplicity. Your situation will dictate which is best to use; when appropriate, use simpler words and phrases.

<i>INSTEAD OF</i>	<i>TRY</i>
a great deal of	much
a minimum of	at least
a number of	some, many, few
a period of (2 days)	for
abandon	give up
abet	help, assist, aid
abeyance (hold in)	delay, postpone, wait
abridge	shorten, condense
abrogate	do away with, abolish, cancel, revoke
accelerate	speed up, hasten
accept	take, receive
accommodate	make fit, make room for, allow for
accompany	go with
accomplish	carry out, do, complete
accomplish (a form)	fill out, complete, fill in, prepare
according to	per
accordingly	so, then, therefore
accrue	add, gain
accumulate	gather, amass, collect
accurate	correct, exact, right
achieve	do, make
achieve the maximum	get the most from, excel
acquire	get, gain, earn, win

<i>INSTEAD OF</i>	<i>TRY</i>
activate	start, drive, put into action, turn on
active consideration	consider
activities	actions
actual	real, true
actual emergency	emergency
actual facts	facts
actuate	induce, move, drive, impel
additional	added, more, other, further
address	speech, speak of, speak to, deal with
adequate	enough, plenty
adjacent to	next to
advanced plans	plans
advantageous	helpful, useful, beneficial, good
adverse to	against, opposed to
advise	recommend, tell, inform
advised (keep me)	informed (or "inform me")
affirmative	agree, assent to, say "yes"
affix	put, stick, attach, place, add
affix a signature	sign
afford an opportunity	allow, let, permit
after the conclusion of	after
agency	office
aggregate	all, total, sum, combined, whole, entire

<i>INSTEAD OF</i>	<i>TRY</i>
aircraft	military plane
all of	all
allegation	charge, claim, assertion
alleviate	ease, relieve, lessen
allotment	share, portion
along the lines of	like, similar to
alter, alteration	change
alternative	choice, option, substitute
amalgamate	merge, combine, unite, mix
ambient	surrounding
ameliorate	better, improve
annually	yearly
antedate	precede
anticipate	expect, foresee
antipathy	dislike, distaste
antithesis	opposite, contrast
anxiety	fear
apparent	clear, plain, visible
apparently	seemingly, clearly
appear	seem
appellation	name
append	add, attach
applicable	which applies, proper, correct, suitable
application	use (noun)
appreciable	many
appreciate	value
apprise	tell, inform
appropriate	proper, right, apt, pertinent, fit
approximately	about, nearly, almost
are desirous of	want to
are in receipt of	received
as a matter of fact	in fact
as a means of	to
as a result of	because
as against	against
as and when	as, when (not both)
as at present advised	as advised
as of (this date)	by (today), today
as prescribed by	under, per
as to whether	whether, if
ascertain	find out, learn, make sure
assert	claim, declare
assimilate	absorb, digest, join, include
assist, assistance	aid, help
at a later date	later
at a much greater rate	faster, more quickly
at all times	always
at an early date	soon
at present	now, currently, presently
at such time	when
at the present time	currently, at present, now
at the time of	when
at this juncture (time)	now
at your earliest convenience (formal)	as soon as you can (informal, more direct)
attached herewith is	here is
attached please find	here is, attached is, enclosed is
attain	reach, gain, achieve
attempt	try
attempts to	tries
attention is invited to	note, see
attired	dressed
augment	add, increase, extend, enlarge, raise
authored	wrote
authoritative	valid, official

<i>INSTEAD OF</i>	<i>TRY</i>
authority	sanction, control, guidance
authorize	allow, let, permit, empower, prescribe
autonomous	independent
avail yourself of	use
availability	presence, use
based on the fact that	because
be acquainted with	know
be cognizant of	know
be of assistance to	assist, help, aid
befall	happen, occur
behest	request, order
behoove	(avoid) proper, helpful, beneficial
benefit	help
bestow	give
betterment	improvement
biannual	twice a year
biennial	once in 2 years
bilateral	two sided
bona fide	real, genuine, sincere
brief (duration)	short, quick
brook (tolerate)	allow
burgeoning	increasing, growing
by means of	by, with
by virtue of	because, by, under
came to an end	ended
capability	ability
capable	able
care should be taken	be careful, take care
category	class, group
characteristic	trait (noun), typical of (adjective)
characterize	describe, portray
circuitous	roundabout
classify	arrange
close proximity	close, near
cognizant of	aware of, know, understand, comprehend
coincidentally	at the same time
collaboration	(see "cooperation")
colloquy	discussion, talk
combine	join
combined	joint
comes into conflict	conflicts
commence	begin, start
commensurate	equal to, to agree with
commensurate with	corresponding, according, equal to
communicate verbally	talk, discuss, say, tell
compensate, compensation	pay
comply (with)	follow, carry out, meet, satisfy
component	part
comprehend	grasp, take in, understand
comprehensive	all-inclusive, thorough
comprise	form, include, make up, contain
comprised of	made up of, consists of
concerning	about, on
conclude	close, end, think, figure, decide
conclusion	end
concur	agree, approve
condition	state, event, facts
conduct (verb)	carry out, manage, direct, lead
confront	face, meet, oppose
conjecture	guess
connection	link, tie
connotation	meaning
consensus of opinion	agreement, verdict, general, view

<i>INSTEAD OF</i>	<i>TRY</i>
consequently	so, therefore
consider	look at, think about, regard
considerable (amount)	large, great
consolidate	combine, join, merge
constitutes	is, forms, makes up
construct	build, make
consult	ask
consummate	finish, complete
contained in	in
containing	has, that have, etc.
contains	has
contemporaneously	at the same time
contiguous	next to, near, touching
continue	keep on
contractual agreement	agreement, contract
contribute	give
cooperate together	cooperate, help
cooperation	jointly, with
coordination	staff action, relate, agree, conform
couched	phrased, worded
course of time	time
criteria (plural)	standards, rules, yardsticks
criterion (singular)	standard, norm
currently	now (or leave out)
de-emphasize	play down
decelerate	slow down, reduce speed
deem	think, judge, hold, believe
deficiency	defect, shortage, lack
definitely	final
delegate authority	empower, assign
delineate	draw, describe, portray, outline
delinquent	late
demeanor	manner, conduct
demise	death
demonstrate	prove, show, explain
depart	leave
depict	describe, show
deprivation	loss
deprive	take away, remove, withhold
derive	receive, take
derogatory	damaging, slighting
descend	go down
designate	appoint, name, pick, assign, select
desire	wish, want
detailed	more, full
deteriorate	run down, grow worse
determination	ruling
determine	decide, figure, find
detrimental	harmful
develop	grow, make, take place
dialogue, dialog	talk, discussion
dichotomy	split, separation
difficult	hard
dimension	size
diminish	drop, lessen, reduce, decrease
disadvantage	drawback, handicap
disallow	reject, deny, refuse
disclose	show, reveal, make known
discontinue	drop, stop, end
disseminate	issue, send, pass out, spread, announce
distribute	spread, share, allot
divulge	make known, reveal
donate	give
downward adjustment	decrease
due in large measure	because, due to

<i>INSTEAD OF</i>	<i>TRY</i>
due to the fact that	because of, hence, since, due to
duplicate	copy
duration	time, period
during such time	while
during the periods	when
when	
echelon	level, grade, rank
edifice	building
educator	teacher, trainer
effect (verb)	make, cause, bring about
effect an improvement	improve
effectuate	carry out, put into effect
elaborate (on)	expand on, develop
elapsed (time has)	passed
elect	choose, pick
elementary	simple, basic
elevated	height, altitude
elicit	draw out, bring out, prompt, cause
eliminate	cut, drop, end, remove, omit, delete
elimination	removal, discarding, omission
elucidate	explain, clarify
emanates	emits, comes from, gives out
emphasize	stress, point out
employ	use
enable	let
encompass in	include, enclose
encounter	meet, find, meeting
encourage	urge, promote, favor, persuade
end product	result, product, outcome
end result	end, result, outcome
endeavor	try, effort, action
enhance	increase, raise, heighten, improve
ensue	follow, result
ensure	make sure, see that
enumerate	count, list
envisage	picture, view, have in mind, regard
equally as	as
equanimity	poise, balance
equitable	fair, just
equivalent	equal
eradicate	wipe out, remove, destroy, erase
erroneous	wrong, mistaken
especially	chiefly
essential	basic, necessary, vital, important
establish	set up, prove, show, make, set, fix
estimate	conclude, appraise, judge
evaluate	check, rate, test, measure, analyze, price
evaluation	rating
eventuate	result
every effort will be made	(I/you/we/they) will try
everybody, everyone	each, all
evidence	fact
evidenced	showed
evident	clear, plain, obvious
evince	show, display, express
evolution	change, growth
exacerbate	to make more severe, worse, or bitter
examination	checkup, test, check, search, questioning
examine	check, look at or into, test, study, inspect
exceed	go beyond, surpass
exceedingly	notable, extremely, very
excessive	too much, too many

<i>INSTEAD OF</i>	<i>TRY</i>
execute	sign, perform, do act
exercise (authority)	use
exhaustive	thorough, complete
exhibit	show, display
exigency	urgent demand, urgent need, emergency
exorbitant	too much, abnormal
expedite	hurry, rush, speed up, fast, quick, hasten
expeditious	fast, quick, prompt, speedy; exercise care, watch out, take care, use care
expend	pay out, spend, use
expendable	used up, consumed, replaceable
expenditure	(see "expense")
expense	cost, fee, price, loss, charges
experience indicates	experience shows, learned
experiment	test, try, trial
expertise	expert opinion, skill, knowledge
explain	show, tell
expostulate	demand, discuss, object
extant	existing, current
extend	spread, stretch
extensive	large, wide
extenuating	qualifying, justifying
external	outer
extinguish	quench, put out
fabricate	construct, make, build, invent
facilitate	ease, help along, make easy, further, aid
factor	reason, cause
failed to	did not
familiarity	knowledge
familiarize	inform, learn, teach
fatuous numskull	jerk
feasible	possible, can be done, workable, practical
females	women
final	last
finalize	complete, finish, conclude, end
firstly	first
foe	enemy
for example	such as
for the purpose of	for, to
for the reason that	because, since
for this reason	so
for your information	(usually not needed)
forfeit	give up, lose
formulate	make, devise, repair
forthcoming	coming, future, approaching
forthwith	at once, right away
fortuitous	by chance, lucky, fortunate
forward	send
fragment	piece, part
frequently	often
fullest possible extent	as much as possible, fully
function	act, role, work
fundamental	basic, main, primary
furnish	give, send, provide, supply
furthermore	besides, also
future date	sometime, later
gained from	obtained, learned, source
gainsay	deny, dispute, contradict
generate	produce
germane	relevant, fitting, related
give consideration to	consider
give encouragement to	encourage, urge (see "encourage")
give feedback	respond
give instructions to	instruct, direct

<i>INSTEAD OF</i>	<i>TRY</i>
give rise to	raise, cause, bring about
goes without saying	(unnecessary)
govern	rule
habituate	accustom, make use to, adapt, adjust
has the ability	can
has the capability	can
has the capability of	is capable of, can, is able to
have the need for	need
have to	must, need to
held a meeting	met
henceforth	until now
hereby	by this
herein	here (often unnecessary)
heretofore	until now
hiatus	gap, lapse
higher degree of	more
hitherto	up to now, until now
hold in abeyance	suspend, delay, wait
homogeneity	unity, agreement, consensus
hopefully	I hope
however	but
identical	same
identification	name, designation
identify	find, name, show, point out, recognize
if and when	if, when (not both)
ilk	sort, kind
illustrate	show, make clear
immediately	at once, now, promptly, quickly
imminent	near
impact	affect (verb), effect (noun)
impacted	affected, changed, hit
impediment	block, barrier
imperative	urgent
impetus	drive, power, force
implement	carry out, do, follow, complete, fulfill
implication	impact meaning, effect
important	major, greater, main
impugn	assail, attack, criticize
impulse	drive, push, thrust
in a manner similar to	like, in the same way, as
in a number of cases	some, often, at times
in a position to	can
in a satisfactory manner	satisfactorily
in a situation in which	when
in accordance with	by, under, per, according to (AFI XX-XXX, commander's order, law)
in addition to	also, besides, too, plus
in an effort to	to, so that, so
in case of	if
in close proximity	near, nearby, close
in compliance with the	as directed, as requested, request
in conjunction with	with, together
in connection with	in, with, on, about
in favor of	for
in its entirety	all of it
in lieu of	instead of, in place of
in order that	for, so, so that
in order to	to
in process of preparation	being prepared
in recent past	lately
in reference to	regarding, about, on, concerning
in regard to	about, concerning, on
in relation to	about, concerning, on
in respect to	regarding, about, concerning, on

<i>INSTEAD OF</i>	<i>TRY</i>
in sufficient time	early or soon enough, ahead of time
in the amount of	for, of
in the course of	during, in, when
in the event of	if
in the event that	if, in case
in the immediate future	soon
in the majority of instances	most cases or most times
in the matter of	in, on
in the nature of	like
in the near future	soon
in the negative	no, denied, disapproved
in the neighborhood	about, around
in the time of	during
in the vicinity of	near, around
in view of	since
in view of the above	so, since, therefore
in view of the fact	because, as
in this day and age	today, nowadays
in this instance	here (often necessary)
in-depth	(avoid if possible) thorough, complete
inaccurate	wrong, incorrect
inadvertently	accidentally, mistakenly
inasmuch as	since, because
inaugurate	start, begin, open
inception	start, beginning
incident to	pertaining, connected with
incidental	related, by chance
incombustible	fireproof, (it) will not burn
incorporate	blend, join, merge, include, combine, add
increase	rise, grow, enlarge, add to
increment	increase, gain, amount
incumbent upon	must
indebtedness	debt
indefinite	vague, uncertain
indeterminate	vague, uncertain
indicate	show, write down, call for, point out
indication	sign, evidence
individual (noun)	person, member
individually	each, one at a time, singly
ineffectual	futile, useless, ineffective
inexpensive	cheap, low-priced
infinite	endless
inflammable	(it) burns, flammable, burnable
inherent	basic, natural
inimical	hostile, unfriendly, opposed
initial (adjective)	first
initially	first, at first
initiate	start, begin, act
innate	basic, native, inborn
innuendo	hint
input (provide)	data, thoughts, advise, respond
insignificant	slight, trivial, unimportant
insofar as	since, for, because
inasmuch as	since
instance	case, example
instantaneously	instantly, at once, suddenly
institute (verb)	set up, start
integrate	combine
interface	connect, talk, coordinate, join, work together, merge, joint, point of contact, frontier, junction, common boundary
interpose no objection	do not object
interpose objections to	disapprove, disagree, object, non-concur

<i>INSTEAD OF</i>	<i>TRY</i>
interpret	grasp, explain, understand
interrogate	question
investigate	examine, study
irrespective	regardless
is dependent upon	depends on
is in receipt of	receives, got
is responsible for obtaining	obtains
is responsible for selection	selects
is symptomatic of	shows
it is	(leave out)
it is essential	must
it is important to note	note
it is obvious that	clearly, obviously
it is possible that	may, possibly
it is recommended	I, we recommend
it is requested	please, request
jeopardize	endanger
jurisdictional authority	control
justification	grounds, reasons
justify	prove
juxtaposition (in)	alongside, next to
knowledge	experienced, well-trained
legislation	law
limitations	limits
limited number	few
locate	find
location	place, scene, site
magnitude	size, extent
maintain (maintenance)	keep, support (upkeep)
majority	greatest, longest, most
make a decision	decide
make a reply	reply
make a request	request, ask for
make a statement	state
make an adjustment	adjust, resolve
make every effort	try
make provisions for	provide, do
mandatory	must, required
manifest (to be)	clear, plain
manufacture	make, build
materialize	appear, take form
materially	greatly
maximal	highest, greatest
maximize	increase
maximum	most, greatest
meets with approval	is approved
mention	refer to
metamorphosis	change
minimal	least, lowest, smallest
minimize	decrease, lessen, reduce
minimum	least, lowest, small
mitigate	lessen, ease
mode	way, style
modify	change, moderate, qualify
monitor	check, watch, oversee, regulate
multitudinous	populous, large (crowd)
more specifically	for example
most unique	unique
negligible	small, trifling
neophyte	new, novice
nevertheless	however, even so, but
nebulous	vague
necessitate	cause, need, make, require, cause to be

<i>INSTEAD OF</i>	<i>TRY</i>
not infrequently	often
not later than	by, before
not often	seldom
notwithstanding the fact	although, nonetheless, nevertheless
notification	announcement, report, warning
notify	let know, tell
numerous	many, most
objective	aim, goal
obligate, obligatory	bind, compel
observe	see
obtain	get
obviate	prevent, remove, rule out
obvious	plain, clear
of great importance	important
of large dimensions	large, big, enormous
of late	lately
of no avail	useless, no use
of the opinion (to be)	to believe, think
often times	often
on account of	because
on behalf of	by, for, representing
on the basis of	based on
on the grounds that	because
on the part of	for
operate	run, work
operation	action, performance
operational	working
optimize	improve, strengthen
optimum	greatest, most favorable, best
option	choice, way
opus	work
organization	makeup, work site
orifice	hole, vent, mouth
originate	start, create, begin
outlook	view
outstanding (debt)	unpaid, unresolved
over the signature of	signed by
overlook	view, sight
parameters	limits, factors, boundaries
paramount	superior, supreme, principal, chief
partake	share, take part in
participate	take part
particularize	(avoid using) details, specifies, itemize
patently	evidently
peculiar to	unusual
penitentiary	prison
per annum	each year, a year
perform	do, act, produce, complete, finish
period of time	period, time
periodic	cyclic, recurring
periphery	confines, limits, perimeter
permit	let
pernicious	deadly, harmful
personnel	people, staff
pertaining to	about, of, on
pertinent	to the point
peruse	read, study
phenomenon	fact, event
pictured	shown, imagined
place	put
plaudits	praise, applause, approval
plethora	excess, too much
point in time	time, now, then
point of view	(usually unnecessary)

<i>INSTEAD OF</i>	<i>TRY</i>
portend	predict, mean
portent	sign, omen
portion	part, share, lot
position	place
positively	(often unnecessary)
possess	have, own
posterior	end, rear
postpone	put off, delay
postulate (verb)	claim, assert, suggest
posture (on an issue)	view, position, attitude
potential (adjective)	possible
practicable	possible, workable
practically (done)	almost, nearly
precept	order, command, principle, rule of action
precipitate (adjective)	rash, sudden, hasty, abrupt
preclude	prevent, shut out
predicament	fix, dilemma
predicated on	based on
predominant	dominant, main, chief
predominantly	mainly, chiefly, mostly
preeminent	chief, outstanding, foremost, first
preliminary to	before
premier	first, leading
preparatory to	before
prepared	ready
preponderantly	mainly, chiefly
presently	now, soon
preserve	keep
prevail upon	persuade
prevalent	widespread
primary	first, chief
prime	best
prior to	before
previous to	before
previously	before
probability	chance, likelihood
problematical	doubtful
procedures	rules, ways
prioritize	rank, order, organized
preventative	preventive
previous	earlier, past
proceed	do, go on, try
procure	get, gain
proficiency	skill, ability
profound	deep
programmed	planned
prohibit	prevent, forbid
project (ed) (verb)	planned
promulgate	announce, issue, set forth
proportion	share, part, size, amount
proposal	plan, offer
prototype	first or original, model, pattern
provide	give, say, supply, furnish
provide for	care for
provided that	if
provides guidance for	guides
provisions (of a law)	terms
proximity	nearness, distance
purchase	buy
purport	claim, mean
pursuant to	comply with, in, under, per, according to
purvey	supply, provide, sell
purview	range, scope

<i>INSTEAD OF</i>	<i>TRY</i>
quantify	count, measure, state the amount
rationale	reason
reach a decision	decide
reason for	why
reason is because	because
recapitulate	sum up, summarize, report
recipient	receiver
recommend	propose, suggest, advance
recommendation	advice, thought, counsel, opinion
reduce	cut
referred to as	called, named
reflect	show, say
regarding	about, of, on
regardless	in spite of, no matter
reimbursement	payment, repayment
reiterate	repeat
related with	on, about
relating to	about, on
relative to	on, about, for
relocation	move
remain	stay
remainder	the rest, what remains
remedy	cure
remittance	payment
remove	take away, take off, move
remuneration	pay, payment
render	give, make, report
repeat again	repeat, do again
replete	full, filled
represent	stand for, depict
reproduce, reproduction	copy
request	ask, please
require	must, need, call for
requirement	need
requisite	needed
reside	live
retain	keep
return	go back
review	check, go over
rudiments	first steps, basics
salient	main, important
salutary	good, healthy
sans	without
satisfactory	fine, good, good enough
saturate	soak, fill
scant	little, only
scrupulous	careful
scrutinize	study carefully, look into
segment	part
seldom ever	seldom
selection	choice
serves to	acts, helps, works
significance	meaning, point, importance
significant	main, great, major, marked,
signify	mean, show (verb)
similar to	like
sine qua non	essential
situated	placed, located, work assignment, state
small in size	small
so as to	to
solicit	ask for
solitary	lone, single
somewhat	(usually padding)
specifications	terms, details, conditions

<i>INSTEAD OF</i>	<i>TRY</i>
specify	list
square in shape	square
state (verb)	say
statutory	legal
still remains	remains
stimulate	stir, arouse
stipend	salary, payment, fee
strict accuracy	accuracy
subordinate (verb)	to lower, subdue
subordinate commands	their commands
subsequent to	after, later, next
submit	offer, give, send
substantial	large, real, strong, much, solid
substantiate	prove, support
substitute (verb)	replace
succor	help, aid
succumb	die, yield
such	similar, like
such as	like, that is
sufficient	enough, ample
subsequently	after, later, then, next
stringent	tight, strict
subject	the, this, your
subject to examination	check, examine, verify
sufficiently in advance	early enough
sum total	sum, total
superfluous	extra, too much, useless
supervise	manage
supposition	belief, thought, idea
surmise	think, guess, suppose
susceptible to	open to, subject to
symptom	sign
synthesis	merging, combining
synthesize	put together, group, assemble
tabulation	table
take action	act
take appropriate action	please
take necessary action	act
take necessary steps	do
technicality	detail, fine point
technique	way, method
tender (verb)	offer, give
tentative	uncertain
terminate	end, stop
terrible disaster	disaster
that	(leave out)
that aforesaid	(usually unnecessary) given or said above
the fact that	(usually unnecessary) that
the following	this, these
the foregoing	these, those, (something) above
the fullest degree possible	fully, as much as possible
the provisions of	(leave out)
the question as to whether	whether
the undersigned desires	I want
the use of	(leave out)
thence	from there
therapy	treatment
there are	(leave out)
there is	(leave out)
thereafter	after that, afterwards, then
thereby	by that, by it
therefore	so
therein	in (usually unnecessary)

<i>INSTEAD OF</i>	<i>TRY</i>
thereof	of, its, their
thereon	on (usually unnecessary)
thereto	to that, to it
thereupon	at once
thirdly	third
this office	us, we
this point in time	now
thither	there
through the use of	by, with
thus	so
thwart	frustrate, block, stop, hinder
time period or time frame	time, period, span
timely basis	promptly, fast, quickly
to be aware of	know
to effectively direct	to direct
to the extent that	as far as, so much that
transcend	go beyond
transformation	change
transmit	send
transparent	clear
transpire	happen, occur
transport	carry, move
transverse	crosswise
trauma	shock
true facts	facts
type	(leave out)
ultimate	final, end
ultimately	in the end, finally
under advisement	(avoid) being considered
under separate cover	(usually necessary)
underprivileged	poor, deprived
understand	know
unintentionally	by mistake, mistakenly, accidentally
until such time as	until, when
upgrade	improve
upon	on
upward adjustment	raise, increase
usage	use
utilize, utilization	use, employ
validate	confirm
value	cost, worth
variation	change
velocity	speed
vend	sell
verbatim	word for word, exact
veritable	(padding—usually unnecessary)

<i>INSTEAD OF</i>	<i>TRY</i>
very	(usually unnecessary)
very far	distant, remote
very hot	torrid, scorching, fiery
very large	enormous, immense, huge, spacious, vast
very last	last
very least	least
very near	adjacent, close
very pretty	gorgeous, beautiful
very quiet	still, silent
very small	tiny, puny
very strong	powerful, potent, forceful
very stupid	dense, moronic, idiotic, stupid
very weak	exhausted, frail, flimsy, inadequate
via	in, on, though, by way of
viable	workable, capable of growing
vicinity of	close, near
vicissitudes	ups and downs, changes, difficulties
vie	compete
virtually	almost
visualize	see, imagine, picture
vitiate	weaken, spoil, impair, debase
voluminous	bulky, large
warrant	call for, permit
whence	from where
whenever	when, each time
whereas	since, while
whereby	by which
wherein	in which, where
wherever	where
wherewithal	means
whether or not	whether, if
will be effected	will be done
will make use of	will use
with a view to	to, for
with due regard for, or to	for, to
with reference to	on, about
with regard to	about, on, regarding, concerning
with the exception of	except, except for, but
with the purpose of	to
with the result that	so
within the purview of	under
withstand	stand, resist
witnessed	saw

We've been looking a lot at how to use the right word for the job to write clear and concise sentences. Before we leave this section on effective sentence writing, there are two more areas we need to cover that have an impact on readability—sentence length and using questions.

Sentence Length

The purpose of words on paper is to transfer thoughts in the simplest manner with the greatest clarity. You should avoid long, complicated sentences over 20 words (average is 17 words). Break up long, stuffy sentences by making short sentences of dependent clauses or by using lists. Short sentences increase the pace; long ones usually retard it. The key is to vary your pattern since constant use of either form can be monotonous.

Using Questions

Use questions now and then to call attention to what you want. You're actually reaching out to your reader when a sentence ends with a question mark. In a longer communication, a question can definitely be a welcome change.

Overcoming Writer's Block

Earlier we mentioned writer's block. If you occasionally suffer from writer's block, you're not alone—writer's block can affect even experienced writers. First, a definition: writer's block is a temporary inability to get words on paper (or on the computer). Like many other problems, it has a life cycle—denial, despair, acceptance and recovery. Recognizing this cycle and the causes of writer's block (fear of failure, fear of rejection, fear of success, fear of offending and fear of running out of ideas) are the first steps to overcoming it.

In most cases we just need a gentle nudge to get us back on track. In her book *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Creative Writing*, Laurie E. Rozakis provides several suggestions on how to overcome writer's block. Here are some of her ideas, as well as some of our own:

- Brainstorm or “free write” to get your creative juices flowing. Spill your brains and don't worry about punctuation—just get it down. Stay close to your outline; don't revise or polish. If your outline is comprehensive, you may only need to string the ideas together with brief transitions. If your outline is a series of key words in a logical pattern, you'll have to fill in the larger blanks.
- Start wherever you want. Write the introduction last as many writers do. The key here is to just start writing. Try starting with the part that's easiest to write.
- On a similar note, try writing just the topic sentences for each paragraph. Once you do this, the other support sentences will start really flowing.
- Avoid procrastination. Waiting until the last minute just increases your “blockage”!
- Forget about page length, word count or other constraint. Work these when you edit.
- Tell your ideas to a friend.
- Briefly do some mindless activity—but only briefly!
- Try changing your writing mode (computer to hand-written and vice versa).
- Use visual aids. This can help ignite your ideas and thoughts. Then, you can write them.
- Develop rituals or routines to get in the mood for writing.
- If you work in a noisy area, try using earplugs to cut down on noise and distractions.

SUMMARY: Congratulations! The most difficult task is over—you've successfully written the first draft. Take a break and step back from your draft. When you come back, you'll be ready to revise and edit it. Perhaps more significantly, you've overcome writer's block if you have a draft. Writer's block is temporary and curable: there are lots of ways to overcome it. Hopefully, the tips here will help you. Always remember—writing should be fun, not frightening!