



Technical Communication Fundamentals

Chapter 11: Style in Technical Writing

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Style in Technical Writing

- Overview of Style
- Writing Clear Sentences
- Being Concise
- Being Accurate in Wording
- Using the Active Voice
- Using Nonsexist Language
- Plain English and Simplified English

Overview of Style

- Definition of Style
 - The features of one's writing that show its individuality – separating it from the writing of others and shaping it to fit the needs of particular situations

Overview of Style

- Importance of Tone
 - Expression of an attitude in your writing
 - Casual
 - Objective
 - Persuasive
 - Enthusiastic
 - Serious
 - Authoritative
 - Friendly

Writing Clear Sentences

- Sentence Terms

- The most important sentence parts are the...

- Subject

- the person doing the action or the thing being discussed

- Verb

- the action or state of being

Writing Clear Sentences

■ Sentence Terms

■ Four main types of sentences

- A simple sentence contains one main clause
- A compound sentence contains two or more clauses connected by conjunctions
- A complex sentence includes one main clause and at least one dependent clause
- A compound-complex sentence contains at least two main clauses and at least one dependent clause

Clause – Subject, Verb, Noun

- I threw my dog's ball in the pool; she was too scared of the water to go get it.
- I threw my dog's ball in the pool, but she was too scared of the water to go get it.
- I threw my dog's ball in the pool, she was too scared of the water to go get it.

Coordinating Conjunctions

- F – FOR
- A – AND
- N – NOR
- B – BUT
- O – OR
- Y - YET
- S - SO

Writing Clear Sentences

- Guidelines for Sentence Style
 - Place the Main Point Near the Beginning
 - Focus on One Main Clause in Each Sentence
 - Vary Sentence Length but Seek an Average Length of 15 – 20 words

Being Concise

- Put Actions in Verbs
- Shorten Wordy Phrases
- Replace Long Words with Short Ones
- Leave Out Clichés
- Make Writing More Direct by Reading It Aloud
- Avoid “There Are,” “It is,” and Similar Constructions
- Cut Out Extra Words

Being Concise

Example 1: Preparing the client's final bill involves ~~the checking of all~~
^{project} invoices for ~~the project~~.

Example 2: The report examined what the M-Global project manager
considered ~~to be~~ a technically acceptable risk.

Example 3: During ~~the course of~~ its field work, the M-Global team will ~~be~~
~~engaged in the process of reviewing~~ all ~~of the notes that have~~
~~been~~ accumulated in previous studies.

Example 4: ~~Because of his position as~~ head of ~~the~~ ^{M-Global} public relations group, ~~at~~
M-Global, he planned such that ~~he~~ would be able to attend the
meeting.

Being Accurate in Wording

- Distinguish Facts from Opinions
- Include Obvious Qualifying Statements When Needed
- Use Absolute Words Carefully

Using the Active Voice

- What Active and Passive Mean?
- When Should Actives and Passives Be Used?

Using the Active Voice

- What Active and Passive Mean?
 - Active-Voice
 - Emphasizes the person (or thing) performing the action
 - Passive-Voice
 - Emphasizes the recipient of the action itself

Using the Active Voice

- Use the active-voice when you want to...
 - Emphasize who is responsible for an action
 - Stress the name of a company, whether yours or the reader's
 - Rewrite a top-heavy sentence so that the person or thing doing the action is up front
 - Pare down the verbiage in your writing

Using the Active Voice

- Use the passive-voice when you want to...
 - Emphasize the receiver of the action or the action itself rather than the person performing the action
 - Avoid egocentric tones that result from repetitious use of “I,” “we,” and the name of your company
 - Break the monotony of writing that relies too heavily on active-voice sentences

Using Nonsexist Language

- Sexism and Language
 - The use of wording, especially masculine pronouns like “he” or “him,” to represent positions or individuals who could be either men or women

Using Nonsexist Language

- Techniques for Nonsexist Language
 - Avoid Personal Pronouns Altogether
 - Use Plural Pronouns Instead of Singular
 - Alternate Masculine and Feminine Pronouns
 - Use Forms Like “He or She,” “Hers or His,” and “Him or Her”
 - Shift to Second-Person Pronouns
 - Be Especially Careful of Titles and Letter Salutations

Plain English and Simplified English

- Plain English

- Recommended for United States government documents

- General guidelines:

- <http://www.plainlanguage.gov>

- Audience awareness

- Good document design

- Effective use of headings

- Clear organization

Plain English and Simplified English

- Plain English
 - Style recommendations
 - Use active voice
 - Put actions in strong verbs
 - Use *you* to speak directly to the reader
 - Use short sentences
 - Use concrete words
 - Use simple and compound sentences

Plain English and Simplified English

- Plain English
 - Style recommendations
 - Use subject-verb structure
 - Make sure that modifiers are clear
 - Use parallel structure for parallel ideas
 - Avoid wordiness

Plain English and Simplified English

- Simplified English
 - Designed for a global audience
 - English is a second language
 - Translating from English into other languages
 - Information sources
 - <http://www.asd-ste100.org>
 - <http://www.userlab.com/SE.html>

Plain English and Simplified English

- Simplified English recommends simplified sentence structure and limited vocabulary
 - Use only approved words
 - Use one word for each meaning
 - Use only one meaning for each word
 - Use active voice
 - Use strong verbs
 - Use articles or demonstrative adjectives
 - Avoid strings of more than three nouns
 - Use short sentences