The Writer Should Consider
- What are the needs the readers?
- What information is essential?
- How can the information be organized and expressed clearly?

Objective
- Incorporate principles of clear writing in your documents or written work.
- Recognize bias and practice writing unbiased materials.

Style
- Style is your manner of writing
- Style is determined by your audience
- The genre of the document also shapes the style and level of formality

Plain Style
- Short, commonly used words
- Concise, simple sentences
- Second-person “you” style
- A friendly, rather than impersonal, tone
- Dominant style in technical prose

Complex Style
- Technical vocabulary
- Complex or compound-complex sentence structure
- Long sentences describing complex concepts
- A distant, more impersonal tone
**Action Verbs**

- Good writers use action verbs
- Action verbs make your writing more direct and forceful

**Voice**

- **Active**
  - Places the actor in the subject position
  - Example: The chemist analyzed the samples in less than three hours.
- **Passive**
  - Weaken the impact of the verb
  - Can be useful when appropriate
  - Example: The samples were analyzed in less than three hours

**Example**

- **Instead of:**
  - Citizenship cannot be renounced merely by making a personal declaration to this effect.
- **Use:**
  - An individual cannot renounce citizenship merely by making a personal declaration.

**Don’t Change Verbs to Nouns**

- Nouns created from verbs are hard to understand and give an impersonal tone.
- When you write a noun that is derived from a verb, try to turn it back into a verb.

**Avoid Noun Chains**

- Chain nouns are strings of two or more nouns used to name one thing. These words can be difficult to understand.
- Noun chains lack connecting words, such as of, for, about, in and the possessive’s, which would clarify how nouns relate to each other.
Example

- **Instead of:**
  - World population is increasing faster than world food production.

- **Use:**
  - The world's population is increasing faster than its food production.

Jargon

- Refers to the specialized vocabulary of a trade, profession, hobby, or science.
- Avoid jargon unless you are certain that your audience is familiar with the specific terms.

Avoid Using Jargon

- Avoid trendy, fashionable expressions such as:
  - Level the playing field
  - Downtime
  - Touch base
  - In this day and age
  - Stick to your guns

Define Technical Words

- Whenever possible, define or explain words.
- Every occupation and interest group has special terms.
- If you must use a technical word, define it and/or give an example in the text.
- Always reference your definition!

Explain Technical Words

- Instead of (text example):
  - Economic espionage may be defined as the illegal or clandestine acquisition of critical Canadian economic information and technology by foreign governments or their surrogates.

Explain Technical Words

- Use in Definition of Terms:
  - Economic espionage: when foreign governments or their agents illegally obtaining critical Canadian economic and technological secrets (Joiner & Stuart, 2001, p. 16).
Eliminate Unnecessary Words

- Instead of:
  - with regard to
  - by means of
  - in the event that
  - until such time
  - during such time
  - in respect of
  - in view of the fact
- Use:
  - about
  - by
  - if
  - until
  - while
  - for
  - because

Eliminate Unnecessary Words

- Instead of:
  - on the part of
  - subsequent to
  - under the provisions of
  - with a view to
  - it would appear that
  - it is probable that
- Use:
  - by
  - after
  - under
  - to
  - apparently
  - probably

Choose Words Consistently

- Be consistent in your descriptions. Avoid using two or more names for the same thing.
- Do not be afraid to repeat the same word or the same idea if it is important.

Use Acronyms Carefully

- Acronyms represent words.
- Remember that some readers may not understand your acronym.
- Put the acronym in a bracket () following the proper name the first time used in the text. Then, you can use the acronym in the remaining text.

Use Acronyms Carefully

- Some acronyms like NASA or RAM may be so well known that they need no explanation.
- But, when in doubt, spell it out.
  - “National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)...” Then, “NASA officials stated…”
  - “Random-Access Memory (RAM)...” Then, “RAM is…”

Try these!

- In the following examples, identify the words that you think would create problems for readers and then rewrite the sentence.
  - Prior to completing the application the applicants should determine if their qualifications meet the requirements of the program.
Clear and Simple Sentences

- Don't overload sentences.
- Use active sentences.
- Keep sentences short and simple (10 to 12 words).
- Avoid ambiguity in your sentences.
- Emphasize the positive.
- Avoid double negatives.

Keep it Short

- Readers can only take in so much new information at one time.
- Some people recommend that sentences should average 15 words and that no sentence should be longer than 25 words.
  - This is not a hard and fast rule. Readers can understand longer sentences if they are well constructed and use familiar terms.
  - A variety of sentence lengths make your writing most interesting.

Example

- **Instead of:**
  - This policy does not appear to be well understood by line management in the region, even though this group has primary responsibility for implementing the policy.
- **Use:**
  - The regional managers who are most responsible for carrying out this policy do not seem to understand it well.

Link Your Ideas

- Don't shorten sentences by leaving out words such as *that*, *which*, and *who*.
- Use these words to link the ideas in a sentence and make the meaning clearer for your reader.

Example

- **Instead of:**
  - The driver of the truck passing by told the officer in the cruiser the car he saw hit the little girl in the intersection was red.
- **Use:**
  - The truck driver told the officer in the cruiser that as he was passing by, he saw a red car hit the little girl in the intersection.

Avoid Ambiguity

- When a pronoun is used there should be no doubt as to which noun it represents.
- **Instead of:**
  - Michelle researched and wrote the speech herself, which everyone thought was impressive.
- **Use:**
  - Everyone was impressed with the speech that Michelle researched and wrote herself.
Adverbs and Adverbial Phrases

- Adverbs and adverbial phrases also need to be placed properly to avoid confusion. If improperly placed, the adverbs **only**, **even**, **both**, **merely**, **just**, **also**, **mainly**, **in particular** and **at least** can cause confusion.

Example

- **Instead of:** Supervisors and staff are required to both participate in orientation sessions and department seminars.
- **Use:** Supervisors and staff are required to participate both in orientation and in department seminars.

Emphasize the Positive

- Positive sentences are inviting and encourage people to read on.
- Negative sentences can seem bossy or hostile.
- They can cause your readers to mistrust your words and often discourage people from reading more.

Example

- **Instead of:** If you fail to pass the examination, you will not qualify for admission.
- **Use:** You must pass the examination to qualify for admission.

Avoid Double Negatives

- **Instead of:**
  - He was not absent.
  - The procedure will not be ineffective.
  - It was never illegitimate.
- **Use:**
  - He was present.
  - The procedure will be effective.
  - It was always legitimate.

Avoid Unnecessary Preambles

- Unnecessary preambles can weaken or hide the point they introduce.
- **Examples:**
  - It is important to add that...
  - It may be recalled that...
  - In this regard it is of significance that...
  - It is interesting to note that...
Try This

- Review the following sentences. Identify the problem or issue regarding clear and effective sentences. Then, rewrite the sentence.
  - Illiterate adults are not able to read most work written for adults. Most illiterate adults are, however, adult thinkers. Nevertheless, they are often unable to carry out democratic tasks like voting. They are, however, fully capable of making decisions required for such tasks.

Use Transitions

- A transition is a word, phrase, sentence or paragraph that shows the relationship between two or more parts of your writing.
- They help your writing move smoothly from idea-to-idea, sentence-to-sentence, section-to-section.
- Transitions help the reader understand the relationships that are familiar to you.

Use Transitions

- If you find that you have one or two favorite transition words, you may be trying to compensate for poorly organized text. Use transition words when you need them, but avoid overusing them.

Web sites for Transitions

- http://writingcenter.tamu.edu/content/view/92/54/
- http://www.csun.edu/~hflrc006/transit.html

Use Parallel Constructions

- Whenever a paragraph includes a series of similar items, make sure that all the items are in the same form.
- Describe each item using similarly constructed phrases.
  - For example, use the same tense for all verbs that describe listed items.

Example

- Instead of: Going on vacation?
  - inform a neighbor about your departure...
  - your neighbor should pick up your newspapers...
  - small valuables should be stored...
  - use clock timers that activate lights...
  - before leaving, ensure all entries are secured...

- Use: Going on vacation?
  - inform a neighbor of your departure
  - have your neighbor pick up newspapers
  - store small valuables
  - use clock timers that activate lights
  - secure all entries before leaving
Improve Paragraph Level Writing

- Limit yourself to one major topic per paragraph
- Develop your topic using an appropriate paragraph pattern
- Control the flow
- Provide adequate details

Writing on One Topic

- Focus each paragraph on one key idea or topic
- Use an outline to help determine your key ideas
- Develop the paragraph topic
  - Have an appropriate pattern or order
  - We will talk more about this in organizing information

Achieving an Effective Flow

- Sentences flow smoothly from first to last
- Follow principles of cohesion and coherence
  - Cohesion – including information both new and old in each sentence
  - Coherence – using transitional words and phrases, repeating key words, and repeating key ideas

Providing Adequate Details

- Provide enough detail without confusing your readers by vagueness or providing information your readers do not need
- Depends on the purpose of your writing
- Also consider your audience when determining the level of detail

SUMMARY

2. Prefer the simple to the complex.
3. Prefer the familiar word.
4. Avoid unnecessary words.
5. Put action in your verbs.

SUMMARY

6. Do not write like you talk when creating technical materials.
7. Use terms your reader can picture.
8. Tie in with your reader's experience.
9. Make full use of variety.
10. Write to express, not to impress.
Evaluation

- Quiz
- All written assignments
- Final Examination