

Writing/Editing Tips:

- Beware of the passive voicing of verbs. The passive voicing of verbs creates counterintuitive phrases and clauses. This voicing reverses the natural sequence of events in time. ie. “The 2002 earthquake’s devastation was allowed to occur through the shoddy construction practices of the boomtown era of the late 19th century.” Note that the end of the sentence refers to a time more than 100 years before the event the sentence first addresses. Active voicing mirrors the natural sequence of events in time, ie. “The shoddy construction practices of the late 19th century set the stage for the devastation of the 2002 earthquake.”
- In passive voice phrases and sentences the result precedes the cause and the actor is often absent from the scene of the action. For example: “The demonstrators were restrained.” This sort of phraseology gives a very inadequate picture of what occurred. Sometimes people do this on purpose, to hide what happened.
- Don’t make statements by reference to the negative. “Joe is not what you’d call a raving heterosexual.” Vs. (Joe is gay).
- Every word has to pull its weight – it has to contribute to your presentation, clarification, and support of your thesis. Eliminate any word that does not contribute.
- Don’t use noun phrases instead of verbs. Verbs have energy. Nouns are inert. This sort of phraseology will suck energy right out of the text:
 - give consideration to (consider)
 - make an assumption of (assume)
 - perform an analysis of (analyze)
 - take action on (act)
- Don’t use phrases when a word will do:
 - at this point in time (now)
 - due to the fact that (because)
 - with regard to (about)
 - it is probable that (probably)
 - as a matter of fact (actually)
- Keep Your Sentence Average Length Low. Sentence length is crucial to good writing. Almost everything written by good writers has an average sentence length of between 15 and 20 words. This doesn’t mean writing every sentence the same length. Good writers naturally vary the length and rhythm of their sentences—longer sentences balanced with shorter ones—but they keep their average sentence length well below 20 words.
- Use Simple Words Rather Than Complex Ones. Many writers have difficulty keeping their message simple and clear. Instead of using everyday words they use complex or unfamiliar words. Simple, everyday words will help you get your message across. Too often we use words such as additional, indicate, initiate and proliferate for extra, show, start and spread. I particular avoid Jargon, slang, and Technical Terms.
- Many adjectives and most adverbs are redundant or unnecessary. Ask yourself, what does this modifier contribute? If the word is not adding value, then eliminate.
- Don’t hesitate to break a long, overly complex sentence into component sentences.

- Avoid qualifying words and phrases. “The author here seems to say that he generally supports gay rights.”(The author supports gay rights.) It is better to overstate your case than to state it with such hesitation. If your assessment is wrong, your critics will correct you. Qualifiers are the enemies of clarity.
- Edit Wordy Phrases, Padding is the enemy of good writing. Unnecessary words and phrases clutter up sentences and obscure meaning. By comparison, economy of words is the mark of good writing. You have to learn to make every word count in technical documents. You must edit ruthlessly, cutting any word. Set yourself a target of cutting 10 to 20 percent of the words in your document. Look for wordy phrases such as these in your writing and replace them with a single word or cut them out completely:
 - at a later date vs later
 - at the present time vs now
 - for the purpose of vs for
 - have no alternative but vs must
 - in addition to vs besides, as well as, also
 - in order to vs to
 - in relation to vs about, in, with, towards, to