

How to Put Words on Paper

Your biggest challenge as a writer is figuring out, “from the mass of things you might possibly mention, precisely what your points are—and then stating them, cogently, with adequate reasoning and support.” (*Legal Writing in Plain English*, Bryan A. Garner. Chicago: University of Chicago Press © 2001, p. 3)

Tips

- Determine the main point of each report, section, and paragraph and write to that.
- Highlight the key issues and conclusions before you begin writing.
- Provide a context before writing the details. A topic sentence works well for this.
- Be sure your topic sentence has at least one of the following to connect the new paragraph to the preceding one:
 - ✓ Pointing words: this, that, these, those, the
 - ✓ Echo links: words or phrases in which a previously mentioned idea comes back
 - ✓ Explicit connectives: further, also, therefore, additionally, and the like
- Provide only the details that are necessary to understand the issue.

Use the 4-Step System*

1. **Creator/Client** – Generate ideas and key points.
2. **Architect** – Develop a sound, logical, and appealing structure.
3. **Carpenter** – Build your ideas and key points into a whole (a draft) that can stand on its own, with strong and sound foundations and connections.
4. **Inspector** – Check and revise the draft to make sure the sentences are well written and everything is as it should be.

*Adapted from Dr. Betty Flowers, University of Texas, in *Legal Writing in Plain English*, p. 5

Edit Yourself

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shorten | <input type="checkbox"/> Make sure nothing is left out |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sharpen and clarify | <input type="checkbox"/> Review and correct tone |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Simplify | <input type="checkbox"/> Improve appearance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Check for accuracy and precision | <input type="checkbox"/> Examine everything from the readers' point of view |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Improve order and logic | |

(*Writing That Works*, Kenneth Roman and Joel Raphaelson. New York: Quill/Harper Collins © 2000, p. 177)

Find Out What Your Supervisor Prefers

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