

Part Two
Presented by:
Miriam Vincent
Plain Language
Action & Information
Network

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Using Pronouns

Pronouns:

- **Speak directly to readers**
- **Make your writing relevant to readers**
- **Require less translation from your readers**
- **Eliminate words**

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Using Pronouns

- Use “we” to refer to your agency
- Use “you” for the reader
- If you are using Q&A format, use “I” in the questions and “you” in the text

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Let's Do an Exercise

Once the candidate's goals are established, one or more potential employers are identified. A preliminary proposal for presentation to the employer is developed. The proposal is presented to an employer who agrees to negotiate an individualized job that meets the employment needs of the applicant and real business needs of the employer.

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With Pronouns...

- **Once we establish your goals, we identify one or more potential employers. We prepare a preliminary proposal to present to an employer who agrees to negotiate a job that meets both his and your employment needs.**

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Saving You Words

Once the candidate's goals are established, one or more potential employers are identified. A preliminary proposal for presentation to the employer is developed. The proposal is presented to an employer who agrees to negotiate an individualized job that meets the employment needs of the applicant and real business needs of the employer.
52 words

Once we establish your goals, we identify one or more potential employers. We prepare a preliminary proposal to present to an employer who agrees to negotiate a job that meets both his and your employment needs.
37 words

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Use Active, Not Passive Voice

- Active voice is more clear, concise and direct
- Passive is a characteristic of bureaucratese
- “Mistakes were made.”

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Identifying Passive Voice

- The person doing the action usually follows the verb.
Example: Arlene was promoted by her boss.
- The verb has two parts:
The verb “to be” plus the past participle of another verb.
Example: The house will be leased by Fred.

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Why Avoid Passive Voice

Passive voice

- Can disguise who does what:

The memo was written yesterday.

Active voice

- Makes it clear who does what:

The Director wrote the memo yesterday.

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Why Avoid Passive Voice

Passive Voice

Is wordy:

The application must be completed by the applicant and received by the financial office at the time designated by that office.

Active Voice

Is concise:

We must receive your completed application by the deadline that we establish.

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Why Avoid Passive Voice

Passive Voice

Is awkward:

Consultation from respondents was obtained to determine the estimated burden.

Active Voice

Is natural:

We consulted with respondents to determine the estimated burden.

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Passive to Active Voice Exercise

1. Excess and/or unauthorized expenses, delays, or luxury accommodations and services will not be reimbursed by the company, but will be borne by the employee.
2. Your application has been denied by the Department of State.
3. The submission you filed will be reviewed by the judges.

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Possible Answers

- 1. The company will not reimburse you for**
 - unauthorized expenses,**
 - delays, or**
 - luxury accommodations and services.**
- 2. The Department of State has denied your application.**
- 3. The judges will review your submission.**

Passive to Active Voice Exercise

- 1. Excess and/or unauthorized expenses, delays, or luxury accommodations and services will not be reimbursed by the company, but will be borne by the employee.**
- 2. Your application has been denied by the Department of State.**
- 3. The submission you filed will be reviewed by the judges.**

Avoid Hidden Verbs

Hidden verbs are verbs disguised as nouns. They are generally longer than their true verb forms.

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Hidden Verbs

- **Conduct an analysis**
- **Analyze**
- **Present a report**
- **Report**
- **Do an assessment**
- **Assess**
- **Provide assistance**
- **Help**
- **Came to the conclusion of**
- **Concluded**

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Use Consistent Terms

- Avoid “*Shall.*” It is ambiguous and is not used in everyday speech
- Use “*must*” for an obligation
- Use “*must not*” for a prohibition
- Use “*may*” for a discretionary action
- Use “*should*” for a recommendation

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Don't Sound So Bureaucratic

- Limit jargon and acronyms
- Contractions aren't bad
- Use everyday words

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DOJ Office of Debt Collection Management has advised agencies that for referrals which will be assigned to SAUSAs, they are to send the NCIF a "copy" of the CCLR so the NCIF can enter the claim. In such cases we ask you to indicate on the CCLR that the claim is assigned to a Special Assistant U. S. Attorney.

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Limiting Acronyms and Abbreviations

- **Use “we” for the agency**
- **Don’t use acronyms or abbreviations for infrequent phrases**
- **Try another style (the Council)**



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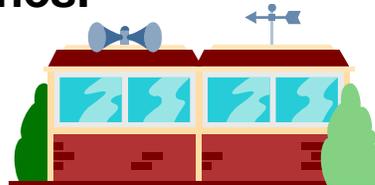
Use Everyday Words

- anticipate
- attempt
- commence
- demonstrate
- implement
- in the event that
- submit
- terminate
- expect
- try
- begin, start
- show, prove
- start
- if
- send, give
- end, cancel

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Simpler Is Better

- Lithodial fragments ought not to be projected by the inhabitants of vitreous abodes.
- People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones.



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Simpler Is Better

- **A perissodactyl ungulate may be propelled toward a body of aqueous fluid, but such ungulate cannot be compelled or forcibly induced to imbibe such fluid.**
- **You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink.**



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Place Words Carefully

- **Keep subjects and objects close to their verbs.**
- **Put conditionals such as "only" or "always" next to words they modify.**
- **Don't misplace modifiers.**
- **Put exceptions and long conditions after the main clause, not before or in the middle.**

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Does Word Placement Make a Difference?

- Yesterday a mad dog bit five men and women in the south end.
- This section applies to appeals of orders involving the reporting and payment of royalties or other payments due under Federal oil and gas leases pending on the date this rule becomes effective.
- This rule proposes the Spring/Summer subsistence harvest regulations in Alaska for migratory birds that expire on August 31, 2003.

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Use Lists



Lists

- Make it easy for the reader to identify all items or steps in a process,
- Add blank space for easy reading, and
- Help the reader see the structure of your document.

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But Don't Make Lists Too Long

- **Research suggests that seven items are the maximum that work well in a list.**
- **Longer lists are hard to navigate.**

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How Does This Read?

Disability discrimination occurs when an employer treats a qualified employee or applicant with a disability unfavorably because he or she has a disability. Disability discrimination also occurs when an employer treats an employee or applicant less favorably because they have a history of a disability such as cancer that is controlled or in remission.

Disability discrimination might also occur when an employer treats an employee or applicant unfavorably because that individual is believed to have a physical or mental impairment that only lasts six months or less. Note that this physical impairment might be very minor and even may not exist at all.

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How About ...

Disability discrimination occurs when an employer treats a qualified employee or applicant with a disability unfavorably because the person:

- has a disability
- has a history of a disability, like cancer, that is controlled or in remission
- is believed to have a physical or mental impairment that only lasts six months or less

Remember: an impairment might be very minor or may not exist at all.

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Why Use Tables?



Tables

- Save words
- Make it easy to locate specific provisions
- Make it easy to take in complex material at a glance
- Make your logic and structure clear

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Sending Expense Forms

We must receive your completed expense form on or before the 15th day of the second month following the month you are reporting if you do not submit your form electronically, or the 25th day of the second month following the month you are reporting if you submit your form electronically.

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When must I send my completed expense form?

<i>If you send your form:</i>	<i>Then we must receive it by:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Electronically,	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The 25th day of the second...
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Paper or fax,	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The 15th day of the second...

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