

Few people realize how badly they write.

--William Zinsser, *On Writing Well*

The essence of writing is rewriting.

--William Zinsser, *On Writing Well*



Grant Writing 1

How and what to cut: A primer on editing your own work

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Interactive Learning

Multiple choice

1. Question on screen
2. Choose your answer(s)

Write in

1. Example on screen (and in Word doc)
2. Type your answer in question box

Grant writing vs. other writing

- “Why Academics Have a Hard Time Writing Good Grant Proposals” (Robert Porter, Ph.D.)
 - <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ902223.pdf>
- Audience
- Organization & length expectations

Holy Grail: Cognitive Ease

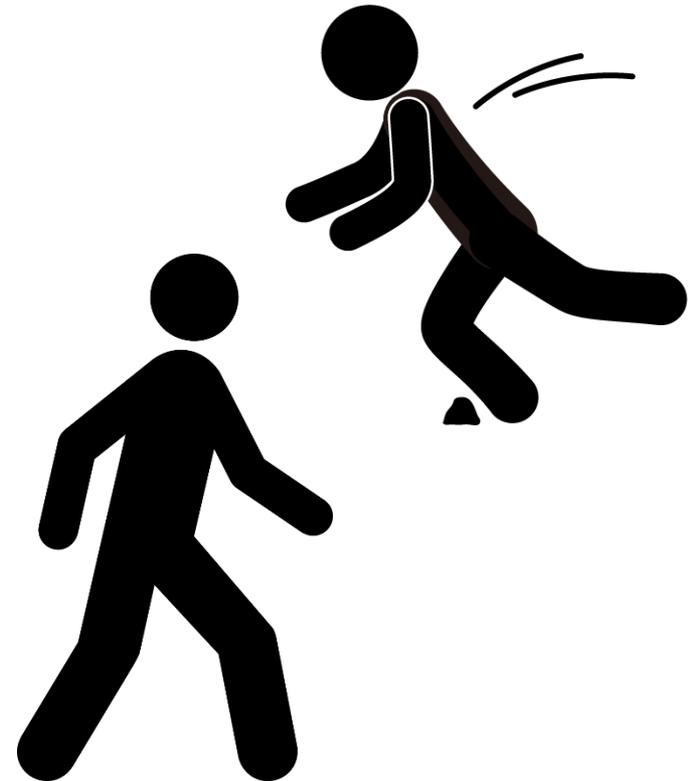


Promote cognitive ease in your reader (reviewer, email recipient, etc.)



Strain → vigilance,
suspicion, error prone

Ease → good mood, prone
to like what you see



TIP 1: Follow 2-3-1 rule

- 2-3-1 (or 1-3-2) rule
 - 1st is 2nd most important idea
 - Last is most important idea
 - Sandwich less important stuff in the middle
- For sentences, paragraphs, sections, and entire grant/document
- Big clue: Desire to bold, underline, etc. in middle of sentence or paragraph

Example: Sentence level

- **(2-3-1): A culture emphasizing delivery of consistently high quality care / in which pressure ulcers are viewed as medical errors / is key but often lacking.**

POLL

Choose the best **beginning** (1-3-2 rule) for the first sentence of an email requesting someone complete a survey. I am writing to ask if you would take the time to...

1. I hope you are doing well and know how busy you are but...
2. As part of a VA HSR&D grant, our team was funded to...
3. You are an expert whose response to the survey below...

Write Your Revision in Question Box

Rewrite sentence to follow 2-3-1 Rule

As aviation and nuclear power industries show, it is possible to function in a hazardous, complex, and fast-paced environment and achieve nearly failure free results.

TIP 2: 1 idea, 1 sentence

- Short sentences s-l-o-w d-o-w-n the pace
- Slower pace increases comprehension
- Use 1 idea per sentence to
 - make the complex comprehensible
 - draw attention to each idea
 - promote cognitive ease

POLL

Which of the following may indicate you have more than 1 idea in your sentence? Choose all that apply.

1. Compound sentence (multiple independent clauses)
2. Long dependent introductory clause
3. Difficulty reading sentence aloud in one breath

Write Your Revision in Question Box

Create multiple sentences, each with 1 idea

Our conceptual framework relates to multiple levels and comprises 6 domains, all of which are necessary for a nursing home to transition from a medical model to one focused on person-centered care.

TIP 3: Start with subject & verb

- Have subject and verb come at the beginning
 - Move/remove introductory phrases and clauses (while, although, since, because, whereas...)
 - Vary your subject (be creative!)
 - Exception: When you need to set the context for the reader
 - In 2000, veterans' use of services increased dramatically.
 - After 9-11, everyone felt differently about flying.
 - Away from the crowd, she broke into tears.

Write Your Revision in Question Box

**Revise sentence so subject and verb come first
(may need multiple sentences)**

Based on extensive preliminary analyses, our power analysis, and practical considerations regarding study scope, we propose selecting a stratified random sample of 64 sites.

TIP 4: Understand the power of numbers

- Giving 3 examples is powerful
- If you give 2, you imply a finite dichotomy
- If you give 4+, you imply an infinity of examples, and in that case it's often good to give at least 5 or 6
- When giving 3 or more examples, it's good to build up to the final one. Have the final one be one of these
 - most important
 - exception to the rule
 - surprising

Write Your Sentence in Question Box
Begin a sentence as stated and incorporate the
examples in the order you choose. Be creative!

Poor sleep quality is associated with...

- decrease in memory
- decrease in mobility
- decrease in health
- decrease in energy
- decrease in survival

TIP 5: Eliminate clutter— promote beauty

- Clutter works *against* you; makes your writing difficult to understand
- Cognitive ease: if understanding your writing's difficult, readers will like your content *less*

Words & phrases

- Long words v. short words

- utilize v. use

- numerous v. many

- initial v. first

- demonstrate v. show

- Phrases v. words

- in order to v. to

- I am writing to v. [just get to the point]

That

- Serious concerns exist about the quality of care that is received in nursing homes.
- Serious concerns exist about the quality of care received in nursing homes.

Adverbs

- Almost all adverbs are useless
- Delete them to shorten the sentence, sharpen the point, give power to the verb
 - *Importantly*, positive, respectful, nurturing interactions between staff and patients *consistently* represent the hallmark of patient-centeredness.
 - Positive, respectful, nurturing interactions between staff and patients represent the hallmark of patient-centeredness.

Write Your Answer in Question Box

Eliminate clutter in the following sentence

Significantly, regarding the question as to whether we should treat asymptomatic patients, we do not have enough information to date, due to the fact that little research has been done in this area and that which has been performed is equivocal in nature.



**TIP 6:
Read aloud**

Summary: Cognitive Ease

- 2-3-1 (1-3-2) rule
- 1 idea for 1 sentence
- Start with subject and verb
- Understand the power of numbers
- Eliminate clutter
- Read aloud

Next time...Grant Writing, Session 2: Tips from experts on how (and how not) to write

Mon, Feb 24, 2020 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM EST

Innovative content is half your battle—the other half is polishing your story. Using tips gathered from a survey of experienced, successful grant writers and others, this session teaches how to make your ideas and writing shine.

Sign Up 

2-3-1 rule DIY exercises

1. Look at a recent instructional or request email (multi paragraph). Re-write the email using 2-3-1 (or 1-3-2) rule, so recipient can scan the content and understand your instructions/request. Apply rule at sentence, paragraph, and full email levels. Give original and rewritten emails (in that order) to friend/family member to read for their impression
2. Look at recently written grant. Look for bolding/underlining/italics that are not at beginning or end of sentences/paragraphs. Rearrange logic to follow 2-3-1 (or 1-3-2) rule.

1 idea per sentence DIY exercise

- Look at a recent email, document, paper, grant, etc.
- Find at least 3 sentences containing more than 1 idea
- Break those sentences into multiple sentences so that each sentence has only 1 main idea.
- Test the versions on someone.

Lead with subject & verb DIY exercise

- Look at a recent grant/paper/document on which you were an author
- Search for sentences where the subject and verb don't lead
- Re-write them
- If you find a number, give the prior and revised versions to someone to someone for their opinion

Power of numbers DIY exercise

- In a grant, paper, email, etc., find a sentence that required a list, the order of which you don't like.
 - Re-write the sentence with an improved order

Removing clutter DIY exercise

Imagine you need to cut as many words as possible from your most recent grant proposal or paper, to meet strict page limit requirements.

- Do a search for “that.” How many you can eliminate?
- Scan 1 page for unnecessary introductory phrases. How many can you eliminate?
- Do you notice any other clutter to cut?

DIY Exercise

- The next time you write something important (email, instructions, document, paper, grant proposal), read the whole thing aloud to yourself.

Books

- ***Writing Tools: 50 Essential Strategies for Every Writer.*** Roy Peter Clark. Little Brown: 2006.
- ***Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Take Hold and Others Come Unstuck.*** Chip and Dan Heath. Arrow: 2008.
(<https://heathbrothers.com//download/mts-made-to-stick-model.pdf>)
- ***The Elements of Style, 4th Edition.*** William Strunk & E.B. White. Longman: 2000.
- ***On Writing Well: The Classic Guide to Writing Nonfiction.*** William Zinsser. Harper Perennial: 2006.

Website

<https://writebetterproposals.org>

Write Better Proposals

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January 20, 2020

AVOID
ABBREVIATIONS,
SMH!

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IS CONGRUENT
WITH ACADEMIC

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