



Top Tips for Writing Well

1

USE ACTIVE VOICE

Look for passive verbs (is, are, was, were). Replace with an action verb and add a subject, if appropriate.

Passive: A new generator **was installed**.

Active: The **licensee installed** a new generator.

subject ↑ ↑ action verb

MINIMIZE ACRONYMS

Use nicknames instead:

- the committee instead of ACMUI
 - North Anna instead of NAPS
- No back-to-back acronyms.

2

USE PARALLEL VERB FORMS IN LISTS

Parallel: Write clearly, consistently, and precisely.

Not Parallel: Write clearly, be consistent, and with precision.

3

USE CONSISTENT TERMS

If you call it a report, stick to report. Do not switch to paper, study, or analysis.

4

5

USE SIMPLE, DIRECT, PLAIN LANGUAGE

Instead of **in the event of**, say **if**.

Instead of **utilize**, say **use**.

Check out [this list](#) of complex words and their plain language substitutes.

USE SHORT SENTENCES

A rule of thumb is three lines or more may be too long.

6

7

ONE IDEA=ONE SENTENCE

Split up long sentences packed with too many ideas. Also do the opposite. Look for repetitive sentences, combine, and delete.

USE TOPIC SENTENCES

The topic sentence should state the key message of the paragraph. Bottom line up front.

8

9

USE TRANSITIONAL WORDS TO TELL A STORY

Firstly, secondly, also, however, instead, nevertheless, furthermore, for example, specifically, finally, in conclusion.

For more guidance and examples, use the [NRC Editorial Style Guide](#) and the [Federal Plain Language Guidelines](#).

For more information, contact:

Alexa Sieracki
alexasieracki@nrc.gov

Caroline Hsu
caroline.hsu@nrc.gov