

SMPS

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Basics of Business Writing

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SMPS Atlanta Boot Camp

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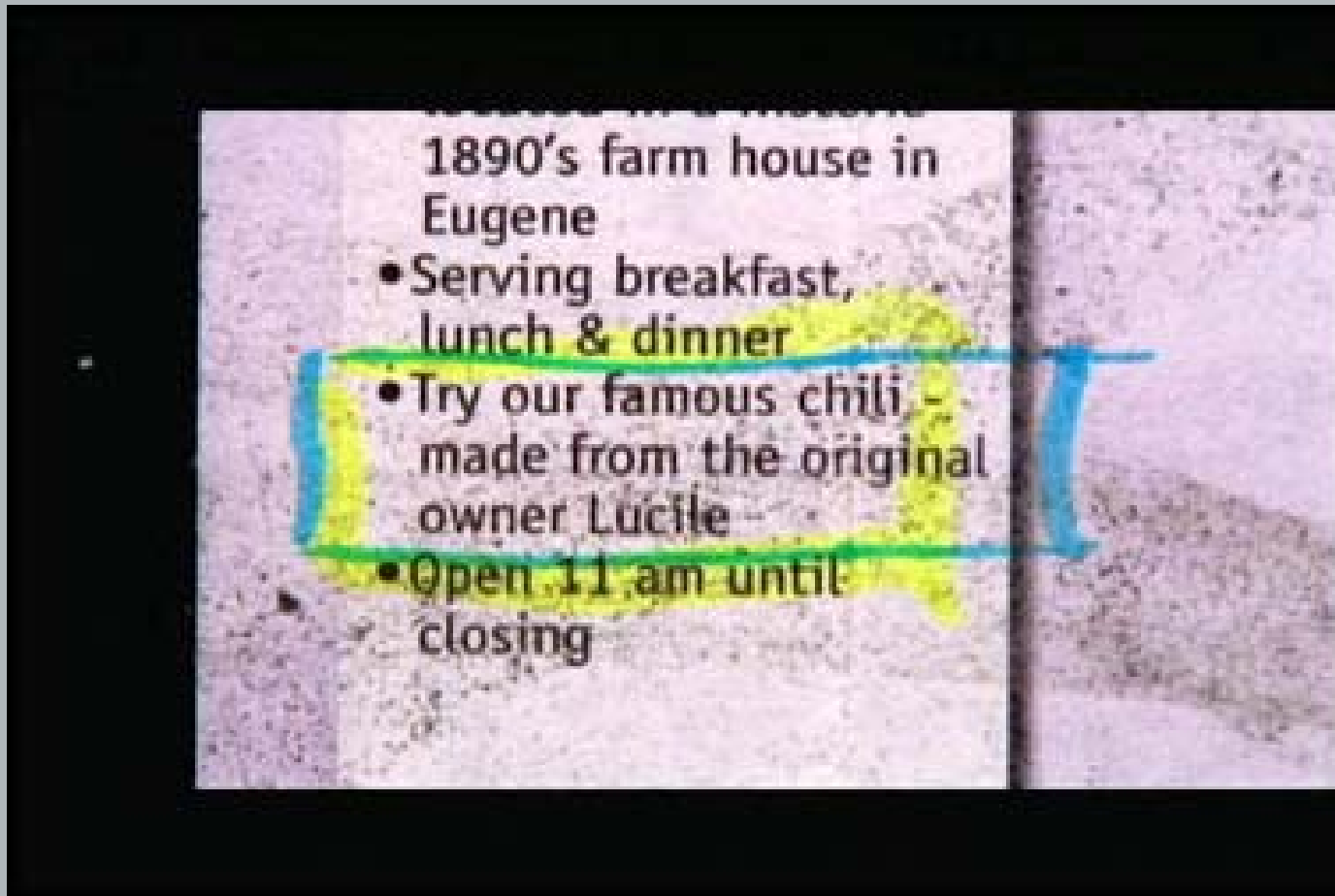
WHY IS GOOD WRITING/EDITING IMPORTANT?



Why is Good Writing/Editing Important?



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Why is Good Writing/Editing Important?



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Why is Good Writing/Editing Important?



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Christmas party at the
Legion Post Home.
The Christmas party
starts at noon, with a
covered dish. Bring a gift
to exchange. The host-
ess for the party will be
all officers. However,
due to the weather, the
party is canceled.



Why is Good Writing/Editing Important?



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Why is Good Writing/Editing Important?



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Good Business Writing Is...



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- Concise
- Correct
- Clear/Customized





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CONCISE



Why is it Important?

- Keeps your audience engaged
- Allows us to be good stewards of our clients' time
- Contributes to a clear message



Concise



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- Problems
 - Redundancy
 - Wordiness
 - Disorganized Documents
- Solutions
 - Meaningful Repetition
 - Methods for Eliminating Wordiness
 - Paramedic Method
 - Organizational Tips



Eliminating Wordiness



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- Eliminate unnecessary determiners and modifiers

WORDY

Any particular type of dessert is fine with me.

Balancing the budget by Friday is an impossibility without some kind of extra help.

MORE CONCISE

Any dessert is fine with me.

Balancing the budget by Friday is impossible without extra help.

Reference: Purdue University Online Writing Lab – http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_concise.html



Eliminating Wordiness



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- Prune your sentences

definitely

kind of

actually

sort of

generally

type of

individual

really

specific

basically

particular

for all intents and purposes

Reference: Purdue University Online Writing Lab – http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_concise.html



Eliminating Wordiness



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- Change phrases into single words

WORDY

The employee with ambition...

Jeff Converse, our chief of consulting, suggested at our last board meeting the installation of microfilm equipment in the department of data processing.

MORE CONCISE

The ambitious employee...

At our last board meeting, Chief Consultant Jeff Converse suggested that we install microfilm equipment in the data processing department.

Reference: Purdue University Online Writing Lab – http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_concise.html



Eliminating Wordiness



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- Change unnecessary that, who, and which clauses into phrases

WORDY

The report, which was released recently...

The system that is most efficient and accurate...

MORE CONCISE

The recently released report...

The most efficient and accurate system...

Reference: Purdue University Online Writing Lab – http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_concise.html



Eliminating Wordiness



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- Avoid overusing expletives at the beginning of sentences

WORDY

It is the governor who signs or vetoes bills.

There was a big explosion, which shook the windows, and people ran into the street.

MORE CONCISE

The governor signs or vetoes bills.

A big explosion shook the windows, and people ran into the street.

Reference: Purdue University Online Writing Lab – http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_concise.html



Eliminating Wordiness



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- Use active rather than passive verbs

WORDY

An account was opened by Mrs. Simms.

Your figures were checked by the research department.

MORE CONCISE

Mrs. Simms opened an account.

The research department checked your figures.

Reference: Purdue University Online Writing Lab – http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_concise.html



Eliminating Wordiness



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- Avoid overusing noun forms of verbs (nominalizations)

WORDY

The function of this department is the collection of accounts.

The current focus of the medical profession is disease prevention.

MORE CONCISE

This department collects accounts.

The medical profession currently focuses on disease prevention.

Reference: Purdue University Online Writing Lab – http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_concise.html



Eliminating Wordiness



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- Reword unnecessary infinitive phrases (to + verb)

WORDY

The duty of a clerk is to check all incoming mail and to record it.

A shortage of tellers at our branch office on Friday and Saturday during rush hours has caused customers to become dissatisfied with service.

MORE CONCISE

A clerk checks and records all incoming mail.

A teller shortage at our branch office on Friday and Saturday during rush hours has caused customer dissatisfaction.

Reference: Purdue University Online Writing Lab – http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_concise.html



Eliminating Wordiness



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- Replace circumlocutions with direct expressions

WORDY

At this/that point in time...

In accordance with your request...

MORE CONCISE

Now...

As you requested...

Reference: Purdue University Online Writing Lab – http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_concise.html



Eliminating Wordiness



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- Common circumlocutions

the reason for

for the reason that

owing/due to the fact that

in light of the fact that

considering the fact that

on the grounds that

this is why

= **because, since, why**

Reference: Purdue University Online Writing Lab – http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_concise.html



Eliminating Wordiness



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- Common circumlocutions

on the occasion of

in a situation in which

under circumstances in which

= **when**

Reference: Purdue University Online Writing Lab – http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_concise.html



Eliminating Wordiness



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- Common circumlocutions

as regards

in reference to

with regard to

concerning the matter of

where _____ is concerned

= about

Reference: Purdue University Online Writing Lab – http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_concise.html



Eliminating Wordiness



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- Common circumlocutions

it is crucial that

it is necessary that

there is a need/necessity for

it is important that

cannot be avoided

= must, should

Reference: Purdue University Online Writing Lab – http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_concise.html



Eliminating Wordiness



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- Common circumlocutions

is able to

has the opportunity to

has the capacity for

has the ability to

= can

Reference: Purdue University Online Writing Lab – http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_concise.html



Eliminating Wordiness



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- Common circumlocutions

it is possible that
there is a chance that
it could happen that
the possibility exists for

= may, might, could

Reference: Purdue University Online Writing Lab – http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_concise.html



Eliminating Wordiness



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- Omit repetitive wording

WORDY

The supply manager considered the correcting typewriter an unneeded luxury.

Our branch office currently employs five tellers. These tellers do an excellent job Monday through Thursday but cannot keep up with the rush on Friday and Saturday.

MORE CONCISE

The supply manager considered the correcting typewriter a luxury.

Our branch office currently employs five tellers, who do an excellent job Monday through Thursday but cannot keep up with Friday and Saturday rush periods.

Reference: Purdue University Online Writing Lab – http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_concise.html



Eliminating Wordiness



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- Redundant Pairs

terrible tragedy

end result

final outcome

free gift

past history

unexpected surprise

sudden crisis

past memories

various differences

each individual _____

basic fundamentals

true facts

important essentials

future plans

Reference: Purdue University Online Writing Lab – http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_concise.html



The Paramedic Method



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- Circle the prepositions (of, in, about, for, onto, into)
- Draw a box around the "is" verb forms
- Ask, "Where's the action?"
- Change the "action" into a simple verb
- Move the doer into the subject
- Eliminate any unnecessary slow wind-ups
- Eliminate any redundancies

Reference: Purdue University Online Writing Lab – <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/635/01/>
Paramedic Method originally developed by Richard Lanham in *Revising Prose*



The Paramedic Method

~~The point I wish to make is that the employees working
at this company are in need of a much better
manager of their money.~~

ACTION

DOER

New Sentence

Employees at this company need a better money manager.
(Original word count: 26. New word count: 10).

Reference: Purdue University Online Writing Lab – <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/635/01/>
Paramedic Method originally developed by Richard Lanham in *Revising Prose*



Organize Your Content



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- Use RFQ/RFP as outline
- Put the “news” up front



Organizational Layout Features



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- Bulleted lists
- Tables
- Side bars
- Call out boxes
- Table of contents
- Headings





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CORRECT



Why is it Important?

- Mistakes:
 - Distract from your message
 - Create an unprofessional image
 - Do not accurately reflect the pride with which we do our work



Correct



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- Problems
 - Editing not included in proposal process
 - Pride gets in the way
 - Many edits are only cursory
 - Reuse old documents
- Solutions
 - Make editing an integral part of process
 - Create collaborative environment
 - Develop a thorough editing process



Make Editing Part of the Process



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- Build it into the schedule
- Designate an editor for each project
- Include marketing and technical people
- Set standards



Create Collaborative Environment



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- Seek as many reviews as possible/practical
- Value other perspectives
- Be kind



Develop a Thorough Editing Process



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1. Gather information about the document

- Reader(s)
- Purpose
- Conditions of use
- Available pre-established document specifications or style sheet

Reference: Jackie Palmer, Texas A&M University – Copyright May 22, 2007



Develop a Thorough Editing Process



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2. Survey the document for suitability and placement of key features

- cover
- title page
- copyright page
- acknowledgments
- table of contents
- list of tables and/or figures
- abstract or executive summary
- preface
- glossary
- page numbers
- header/footer
- graphics
- section dividers, tabs
- electronic links
- appendix
- attachments
- references/bibliography
- works cited
- index

Reference: Jackie Palmer, Texas A&M University – Copyright May 22, 2007



Develop a Thorough Editing Process



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3. Evaluate the document to determine the extent to which it accomplishes what it should

Content

- completeness
- appropriateness of information
- effectiveness in enhancing understanding

Reference: Jackie Palmer, Texas A&M University – Copyright May 22, 2007



Develop a Thorough Editing Process



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3. Evaluate the document to determine the extent to which it accomplishes what it should (*cont'd*)

Organization

- order of information (logical, chronological, cause/effect, et al.)
- signals about the order (hierarchical structure, signposts, graphical markers, font size and style)
- flow of information

Reference: Jackie Palmer, Texas A&M University – Copyright May 22, 2007



Develop a Thorough Editing Process



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3. Evaluate the document to determine the extent to which it accomplishes what it should (*cont'd*)

Visual Design

- graphic selection, preparation, and placement
- font type, style and size
- indentation and text justification
- form and placement of lists and tables
- sidebars, highlights, or summaries
- margins and white space

Reference: Jackie Palmer, Texas A&M University – Copyright May 22, 2007



Develop a Thorough Editing Process



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3. Evaluate the document to determine the extent to which it accomplishes what it should (*cont'd*)

Style

- adherence to style sheet or guide (e.g., RFQ/RFP)
- writer's tone or persona
- efficiency of sentence structure
- concreteness and accuracy of words
- lack of cultural, gender bias
- use of appropriate jargon
- use of predominately active voice (except for scientific reports)
- use of appropriate point of view
- weaving of sentences to achieve cohesion

Reference: Jackie Palmer, Texas A&M University – Copyright May 22, 2007



Develop a Thorough Editing Process



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3. Evaluate the document to determine the extent to which it accomplishes what it should (*cont'd*)

Convention

- grammar (double-check computer grammar check.)
- punctuation
- spelling (double-check computer spellcheck.)
- capitalization (check documentation style guidelines)
- numeral use
- grammatically parallel structure of lists and series

Reference: Jackie Palmer, Texas A&M University – Copyright May 22, 2007



Develop a Thorough Editing Process



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4. Edit headings, subheadings, illustrations, tables, and figures for:

- Correctness
- Consistency
- Accuracy
- Completeness
- Readability
- Information value

Reference: Jackie Palmer, Texas A&M University – Copyright May 22, 2007
http://www-english.tamu.edu/pubs/tamu_tech_writing/Guides/Editing/copyediting.htm



Common Pitfalls and Mistakes



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- Homonyms
 - to/too/two
 - there/their/they're
 - its/it's
 - here/hear
 - who's/whose
 - your/you're



Common Pitfalls and Mistakes



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- Plural vs. Possessive
 - Plural = when there is more than one of something.
 - Streets
 - Classes
 - Possessive = when something belongs to someone/thing
 - Jennifer's
 - Class'
 - Clients'
 - 1950s – NOT possessive



Common Pitfalls and Mistakes



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- Commas (see handout for complete rules)
 - Independent clauses
 - Introductory clauses
 - Set off non-essential phrases
 - Three or more words in a series
 - Two or more adjectives that describe the same noun



Common Pitfalls and Mistakes



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- Parallelism
 - Lists, tables
 - In sentences:
 - Being a good friend involves good listening skills, to be considerate, and that ~~you~~ know how to have fun.
 - Being a good friend involves knowing how to listen, being considerate, and having fun.



Common Pitfalls and Mistakes



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- A few of my personal favorites
 - I/Me
 - Irregardless vs. Regardless
 - Definatly vs. Definitely
 - Greatful vs. Grateful





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CLEAR/CUSTOMIZED



Clear/Customized



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- Problems
 - No clear message – what’s the takeaway?
 - Generic marketing documents
- Solutions
 - Consider your audience
 - Plan the message and build your document around it
 - Tell them what they want to hear



Consider Your Audience



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- Who is on the review panel?
- What are their personal wins?
- What does the RFQ/RFP tell me?
- How will each audience member read the document?



Plan Your Message



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- Proposal kickoff meeting
 - What is our current relationship with the client?
 - Who is our competition?
 - What are the key issues surrounding this project?
 - How will we address the key issues?
 - What new information do we need?



Tell Them What They Want to Hear



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- Satisfy all RFP/RFQ requirements
- Clearly tell them how your firm can help them achieve their personal win
- Demonstrate how you will save them:
 1. Time
 2. Money
 3. Headaches





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QUESTIONS?

