

February 2007, Newsletter

Tips on Becoming a More Effective Writer

While some writers think that effective writing hinges on a knowledge of grammar, research shows that knowing grammar doesn't necessarily translate into well-written, useful documents. While certainly we have to know grammar to write a document that's understandable, the difference between an understandable and a useable document can be miles apart. What, then, can writers do to improve?

Studies show that good writers, well, they write. While this may catch some of you off guard, it's true. Good writers write often, and not just the kind of documents they have to write at work, but various kinds of documents. Consider the kind of writing you do day to day – is it the same? Do you ever venture outside that kind of writing? You should – you might be pleasantly surprised! When's the last time you wrote a personal letter to a friend, jotted ideas into a notebook, recorded reflections about a trip or a family event? Writing outside the sphere you're typically used to can help you write more effectively. In fact, experts suggest 15 minutes a day of writing for you to improve. Sound like a lot? Not really. Consider getting a journal and recording a few thoughts before bedtime.

The idea is to write, write, write! Try it – you might be pleasantly surprised by how you improve!

Next time we'll discuss other methods you can use to become a more effective writer.

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Writing Tips: Using "Creating "Flow."

Often, when I teach a writing seminar, participants will ask about "flow" in a document. What makes a document "flow"? One way that "flow" is created through:

- Transitions (and, but, although, however, which, that).

Transitional words and phrases are cues for readers, and tell readers how to read. For instance, if I wrote "I went to the store. I bought eggs," as the reader you'd have to assume that these two sentences are related, which may interrupt "flow." However, if I wrote "I went to the store, and I bought eggs," flow is created because I've shown you the connection between the two sentences.

Another way to create "flow," is by repeating key words or phrases, and using consistent terminology. For instance, you should be able to underline in any paragraph key words and phrases that are repeated throughout. If, for instance, you have a key word in the topic sentence that isn't repeated again, chances are your document lacks flow.

Enrollment for the study has been accomplished using the new enrollment software. The enrollment went smoothly, with no real issues documented. In the future, all enrollment will be conducted using the enrollment software.

Now, consider if this same paragraph were written without the repetition of key words and using synonyms:

Enrollment for the study has been accomplished using the new software. It went smoothly, with no real issues documented. In the future, registration will be conducted using it.

In this case, the "it" of the second sentence could refer to "enrollment" or to "study." Second, we see no real connection between the second and third sentences. Is the writer using the software because things went smoothly? As readers, we can guess, but we don't know for sure. Writing in business needs to be as clear as possible, with little room for interpretation by the reader.

Is there a specific question you would like to have answered? [Email Us!](#)

FAQs

Q: I try to proofread my documents, but am frustrated because I find I miss a lot of mistakes. Any suggestions?

A: The experts have a number of suggestions:

- If you proofread online, also print a hard copy to proofread
- Try reading the document from the back to the front, or backward. Doing so will help you see the document with fresh eyes.
- Read the document out loud (of course, if you work in a cube, this may annoy your coworkers!)
- Change the font and/or the size of the font.

Need more? We offer classes in editing and proofreading. Visit our website at www.hurleywrite.com for more information.

Upcoming Events

Last chance to register for the writing workshop in RTP on March 1! Only a few seats left; call 877-249-7483 or 919-818-6547 to register.

Pam Hurley will be speaking at the Atlanta Chapter ACRP meeting, March 24, on "Publishing 101."

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