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Making Your Writing Easy to Read

- Good Style in Business and Administrative Writing
- Evaluating “Rules” about Writing
- Building a Better Style
- Ten Ways to Make Your Writing Easier to Read
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- Organizational Preferences for Style
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AN INSIDE PERSPECTIVE

Writing for Real People

Plain-language writers emphasize audience research because once you know your readers, you can make choices that will make reading easier for them. You make these choices in tone, grammar, vocabulary, and design.

Conversational Style

- Choose everyday, familiar words.
- Use words that explain rather than mask meaning: *end, stop, finish*, or *close* instead of *terminate*. *Agree* or *comply* instead of *accede to*. Wouldn't you be upset by a letter from your lawyer saying, “Your will is now ready; please come in for execution”?
- In trying to be conversational, don't veer toward trendy. Remember, slang is an in-language for a certain group.
- Don't use technical words or jargon like *stem turns, gender segmentation, functional parameters, or marginal cost-pricing* unless you are talking to experts in those fields.

Brevity and Simplicity

People won't take the time to search a lengthy document for its essential message. Readers scan a long document to decide whether it has relevance to them. If the headings or graphics don't shout READ ME, the document will be dropped. In order to be read, documents must look interesting, relevant, brief, and easy.

Get Real, Be Clear

Today's audience is more diverse, and individuals have less time and patience for unnecessary complexity. You must expect that your audience has different needs and expectations than you. Watch the way you write and seek the common good: clear, easy, readable writing.



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Good business and administrative writing should sound like a person talking to another person. Unfortunately, much of the writing produced in organizations today seems to have been written by faceless bureaucrats rather than by real people.

Using an easy-to-read style makes the reader respond more positively to your ideas. You can make your writing easier to read in two ways. First, you can make individual sentences and paragraphs easy to read, so that skimming the first paragraph or reading the whole document takes as little work as possible. Second, you can make the document look visually inviting and structure it with signposts to guide readers through it. This chapter focuses on ways to make words, sentences, and paragraphs easier to read. See ► Appendix A, which will discuss ways to make the document as a whole easier to read.

Good Style in Business and Administrative Writing

Good business and administrative writing is closer to conversation and less formal than the style of writing that has traditionally earned high marks in college and university essays and term papers. (See Figure 4.1.) However, many business professors also like term papers that are easy to read and use good visual impact.

Most people have several styles of talking, which they vary instinctively depending on the audience. Good writers have several styles, too. An e-mail to your boss complaining about the delays from a supplier will be informal; a letter to the supplier demanding better service will be more formal.

Reports tend to be more formal than letters and memos, since they may be read many years in the future by audiences the writer can barely imagine. In reports, avoid contractions, spell out acronyms and abbreviations the first time you use them, and avoid personal pronouns. Since so many people read reports, *you* doesn't have much meaning. See ► Chapter 12 for more about report style.

Keep the following points in mind as you choose a level of formality for a specific document:

FIGURE 4.1 Different Levels of Style

Feature	Conversational style	Good business style	Traditional term-paper style
Formality	Highly informal	Conversational; sounds like a real person talking	More formal than conversation would be, but retains a human voice
Use of contractions	Many contractions	OK to use occasional contractions	Few contractions, if any
Pronouns	Uses <i>I</i> , first- and second-person pronouns	Uses <i>I</i> , first- and second-person pronouns	First- and second-person pronouns kept to a minimum
Level of friendliness	Friendly	Friendly	No effort to make style friendly
How personal	Personal; refers to specific circumstances of conversation	Personal; may refer to reader by name; refers to specific circumstances of readers	Impersonal; may generally refer to <i>readers</i> but does not name them or refer to their circumstances
Word choice	Short, simple words; slang	Short, simple words but avoids slang	Many abstract words; scholarly, technical terms
Sentence and paragraph length	Incomplete sentences; no paragraphs	Short sentences and paragraphs	Sentences and paragraphs usually long
Grammar	Can be ungrammatical	Uses standard edited English	Uses standard edited English
Visual impact	Not applicable	Attention to visual impact of document	No particular attention to visual impact

- Use a friendly, informal style to someone you've talked with.
- Avoid contractions, clichés, slang, and even minor grammatical lapses in paper documents to people you don't know. Abbreviations are OK in e-mail messages if they're part of the group's culture.
- Pay particular attention to your style when you write to people in positions of power over you or when you must give bad news. Reliance on nouns rather than on verbs and a general deadening of style increase when people are under stress or feel insecure.¹ Confident people are more direct. Edit your writing so that you sound confident, whether you feel that way or not.

Good business style allows for individual variation. The personal style of the opening paragraphs of CEO William J. Doyle's annual report letter (Figure 4.2) suggests energy and drive, engagement and empathy.

Evaluating "Rules" about Writing

Some "rules" are grammatical conventions. For example, standard edited English requires that each sentence have a subject and verb, and that the subject and verb agree. Business writing normally demands standard grammar, but exceptions exist. Promotional materials such as brochures, advertisements, and sales and fundraising letters may use sentence fragments to mimic the effect of speech.

FIGURE 4.2 William J. Doyle's Letter Uses Good Business Style

2003 Business Highlights

- Sold record potash volumes
- Acquired 26 percent interest in Arab Potash Company
- Nitrogen prices increased
- Realized \$90 million in natural gas hedges

Financial Highlights

All financial data in this report are stated in US dollars
\$ millions except per-share amounts

	2003	2002	2001
Net sales	\$ 2,465.8	\$ 1,928.7	\$ 2,080.8
Net (loss) income	\$ (126.3)	\$ 53.6	\$ 121.2
Adjusted net income *	\$ 76.9	\$ 53.6	\$ 121.2
Net (loss) income per diluted share	\$ (2.42)	\$ 1.03	\$ 2.32
Adjusted net income per diluted share *	\$ 1.46	\$ 1.03	\$ 2.32
Gross margin	\$ 380.4	\$ 307.3	\$ 407.3
EBITDA *	\$ 171.8	\$ 386.0	\$ 455.4
Adjusted EBITDA *	\$ 417.7	\$ 386.0	\$ 455.4
Cash flow prior to working capital changes *	\$ 364.5	\$ 289.2	\$ 345.8
Cash provided by operating activities	\$ 381.5	\$ 316.4	\$ 75.7

* See reconciliation and description of certain non-GAAP measures in Financial Performance Indicators on Pages 48-50

To our shareholders:

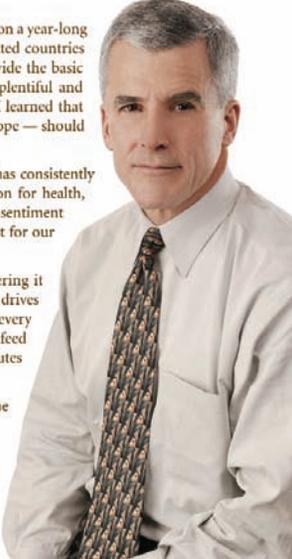
*Why fertilizer?
The answers are as diverse as the people who see the value of our products. Farmers, environmentalists and social scientists all appreciate the importance of fertilizer in food production and land conservation.*

My answer to the question "Why fertilizer?" was shaped on a year-long trip that followed my college graduation in 1972. I visited countries that were prosperous and others that struggled to provide the basic elements for survival. I saw nations where food was plentiful and places where people faced starvation on a daily basis. I learned that fundamental human needs — water, food, growth, hope — should never be taken for granted.

Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations, has consistently championed agricultural development as the foundation for health, economic stability and world peace. The insight of that sentiment is at the heart of why fertilizer is so important—not just for our individual needs, but to world development.

Fertilizer replenishes the strength of the soil, empowering it to supply the nutrient content in the food we eat. It drives agricultural production, which has been the basis for every developed nation around the world. It enables people to feed themselves and trade for things they need. That contributes to economic opportunities, health and happiness.

That's why I believe fertilizer is so important and why the opportunities for PotashCorp remain bountiful.



William J. Doyle, President and Chief Executive Officer

Short sentences, personal pronouns, parallel constructions, and action verbs mark the good business style.

For visual impact, the tables, italicized sidebar, and bolded salutation highlight the values of the corporation and its product.

Other “rules” may be conventions adopted by an organization so that its documents will be consistent. For example, a company might decide to capitalize job titles (e.g., *Production Manager*) even though grammar doesn’t require the capitals, or always to use a comma before *and* in a series, even though a sentence can be grammatical without the comma.

Still other “rules” are attempts to codify “what sounds good.” To evaluate these “rules,” you must consider your audience, the community of practice, discourse community, and organizational culture (p. 31), your purposes, and the situation. If you want the effect produced by an impersonal style and polysyllabic words, use them. But use them only when you want the distancing they produce.

Building a Better Style

To improve your style and make it vivid and vigorous,

- Start a clean page or screen, so that you aren’t locked into old sentence structures.
- Try WIRMI: What *I* Really Mean *Is*.² Then write the words.
- Try reading your draft out loud to someone sitting about one metre away—about as far away as you’d sit in casual conversation. If the words sound stiff, they’ll seem stiff to a reader, too.
- Ask someone else to read your draft out loud. Readers stumble because the words on the page aren’t what they expect to see. The places where that person stumbles are places where your writing can be better.
- Read widely and write a *lot*.
- Study revised sentences, like those in Figure 4.3.
- Use the 10 techniques in Figure 4.4 to polish your style.

The home page of the Canadian federal government’s Plain Language Online Training (www.plainlanguagenetwork.org/plaintrain/index.html) practises what it preaches in welcoming people to Plain Train and inviting them to

FIGURE 4.3 Mutual Fund Prospectuses Revised to Meet the SEC’s Plain English Guidelines

	Old prospectus	New prospectus
John Hancock Sovereign Balanced Fund	The fund utilizes a strategy of investing in those common stocks which have a record of having increased their shareholder dividend in each of the preceding ten years or more.	The fund’s stock investments are exclusively in companies that have increased their dividend payout in each of the last ten years.
State Street Research Equity Income Fund	The applicability of the general information and administrative procedures set forth below accordingly will vary depending on the investor and the record-keeping system established for a shareholder’s investment in the Fund. Participants in 401(k) and other plans should first consult with appropriate persons at their employer or refer to the plan materials before following any of the procedures below.	If you are investing through a large retirement plan or other special program, follow the instructions in your program materials.
State Street Research Equity Income Fund	The net asset value of the fund’s shares will fluctuate as market conditions change.	The fund’s shares will rise and fall in value.

Source: Toddi Gutner, “At Last, the Readable Prospectus,” *BusinessWeek*, April 13, 1998, 100E10. Reprinted by special permission. Copyright © 1998 by The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.



How Big is Huge?*

When two people use the same word to mean different things, bypassing occurs.

A potential client told Lois Geller that he wanted a “huge” advertising campaign for his company. She spent three weeks preparing a proposal for a \$500,000 ad campaign. The client was horrified. It turned out that his budget for the whole previous year had been \$10,000. To the client, a \$5,000 campaign would have been “huge.”

*Based on Alan Horowitz, “Can You Hear What I Hear?” *Selling Power*, July/August 2001, 70.

FIGURE 4.4 Ten Ways to Make Your Writing Easier to Read

As you choose words,

1. Use words that are accurate, appropriate, and familiar.
2. Use technical jargon only when it is essential and known to the reader. Eliminate business jargon.

As you write and revise sentences,

3. Use active verbs most of the time.
4. Use verbs—not nouns—to carry the weight of your sentence.
5. Tighten your writing.
6. Vary sentence length and sentence structure.
7. Use parallel structure. Use the same grammatical form for ideas that have the same logical function.
8. Put your readers in your sentences.

As you write and revise paragraphs,

9. Begin most paragraphs with topic sentences so that readers know what to expect in the paragraph.
10. Use transitions to link ideas.

“Click on the Conductor for the guided tour; click on the Train for the digest.” Plain language is about access and equity, respect and responsibility, transparency and accountability. It is less about following rules and substituting simple for more complex language than it is about adopting a new attitude or approach to writing. Plain language helps make our writing clear because it begins with the needs of the reader and matches those with the needs of the writer. The result is both effective and efficient because the reader can understand the message.

Ten Ways to Make Your Writing Easier to Read

Direct, simple writing is easier to read. James Suchan and Robert Colucci tested two versions of a memo report. The “high-impact” version had the “bottom line” (the purpose of the report) in the first paragraph, simple sentences in normal word order, active verbs, concrete language, short paragraphs, headings and lists, and first- and second-person pronouns. The high-impact version took 22% less time to read. Readers said they understood the report better, and tests showed that they really did understand it better.³ Another study showed that high-impact instructions were more likely to be followed.⁴ We’ll talk about layout, headings, and lists in ► Appendix A.

As You Choose Words

The best word depends on context: the situation, your purposes, your audience, the words you have already used.

Accurate words mean what you want to say. Appropriate words convey the attitudes you want and fit well with the other words in your document. Familiar words are easy to read and understand.

Some meanings have already evolved before we join the conversation. We may learn the meaning of words, of actions, or of office layouts by being alert and observant. We learn some meanings by formal and informal study: the importance of “generally accepted accounting principles,” the best strategies for increasing the size of donations in a fundraising letter, or what the garbage can

on a computer screen symbolizes. Some meanings are negotiated as we interact one-on-one with another person, attempting to communicate. Some words persist, even though the reality behind them has changed. In nine of the ten largest U.S. cities, so-called “minorities” are already in the majority.⁵

In multicultural Canada, Toronto has fast emerged as one of the world’s most diverse cities. In 1931, 81% of a city population of 631,207 was British in origin; by 1996 only 16% of 4.2 million self-identified as exclusively British (Statistics Canada, 1998). In 1998, Toronto adopted its motto, “Diversity, Our Strength.”⁶

Accurate denotations. To be accurate, a word’s denotation must match the meaning the writer wishes to convey. Denotation is a word’s literal or dictionary meaning. Most common words in English have more than one denotation. The word *pound*, for example, means, or denotes, a unit of weight, a place where stray animals are kept, a unit of money in the British system, and the verb to hit. Coca-Cola spends an estimated \$20 million a year to protect its brand names so that Coke will denote only that brand and not just any cola drink.

When two people use the same word to mean, or denote, different things, **bypassing** (■ p. 88) occurs. For example, *risk* may be an economic term dealing with efficiency; for an environmentalist the word may denote health concerns. Progress is possible only when the writer and readers agree on a meaning.

Problems also arise when writers misuse words. President George W. Bush is a major source: “The law I sign today directs new funds and new focus to the task of collecting vital intelligence on terrorist threats and on weapons of mass production⁷” [*production for destruction*].

An example of a misused word in an idiom (when people have forgotten the metaphor on which it depends) is *Tow the line*. To *toe the line* is to conform to a general policy or principle (especially when unwilling or pressured to do so).

Earn a free lunch.⁸

(A lunch one earns isn’t free.)

Accurate denotations can make it easier to solve problems. In one production line with a high failure rate, the largest category of defects was *missed operations*. At first, the supervisor wondered if the people on the line were lazy or irresponsible. But some checking showed that several different problems were labelled *missed operations*: parts installed backward, parts that had missing screws or fasteners, parts whose wires weren’t connected. Each of these problems had a different solution. Using accurate words redefined the problem and enabled the production line both to improve quality and to cut repair costs.⁹

Using words correctly remains a challenge for many. If you can master the distinctions between commonly confused pairs of words, you will communicate more accurately and effectively. Don’t confuse the following:

accept (receive) and *except* (exclude)

adept (skilled) and *adopt* (take as one’s own)

affect (verb: to influence) and *effect* (verb: to produce; noun: result)

a lot (many) and *allot* (divide or give to)

between (used with two) and *among* (used with more than two)

compose (make up) and *comprise* (consist of)

discreet (tactful) and *discrete* (distinct)

lie (recline, tell falsehood) and *lay* (put object on something)

principal (adjective: main; noun: person in charge and money lent at interest) and *principle* (rule, code of conduct)

stationary (not moving) and *stationery* (paper)

Appropriate connotations. Words are appropriate when their connotations, that is, their emotional associations or colourings, convey the attitude you want. Many words carry connotations of approval or disapproval, disgust or delight.

Positive word	Negative word
assume	guess
curious	nosy
cautious	fearful
firm	obstinate
flexible	wishy-washy

A supervisor can “tell the truth” about a subordinate’s performance and yet write either a positive or a negative performance appraisal, based on the connotations of the words in the appraisal. Consider an employee who pays close attention to details. A positive appraisal might read, “Terry is a meticulous team member who takes care of details that others sometimes ignore.” But the same behaviour might be described negatively: “Terry is hung up on trivial details.”

Advertisers carefully choose words with positive connotations. Expensive cars are never *used*; instead, they’re *pre-owned*, *experienced*, or even *previously adored*.¹⁰

Words may also connote status. Both *salesperson* and *sales representative* are non-sexist job titles. But the first sounds like a clerk in a store; the second suggests someone selling important items to corporate customers.

Connotations change over time. The word *charity* had acquired such negative connotations by the 19th century that people began to use the term *welfare* instead. Now, *welfare* has acquired negative associations.

Ethical implications of word choice. How positively can we present something and still be ethical? Pressure-treated lumber sounds acceptable. But naming the material injected under pressure—arsenic-treated lumber—may lead the customer to make a different decision. We have the right to package our ideas attractively, but we have the responsibility to give the public or our superiors all the information they need to make decisions.

Word choices have ethical implications in other contexts as well. For example, as the racial and ethnic makeup of the workforce has changed, more companies have adopted the language of “managing diversity.” People tend to view this language as positive, because it presumes employees’ differences can be an asset to their employer, not a source of difficulty. However, communication professors Erika Kirby and Lynn Harter point out that referring to employees as resources to be managed places corporate financial interests above employees’ human interests. The risk is that managers may forget ethical dimensions of how they treat their diverse employees.¹¹

Familiar words. Use familiar words, words that are in almost everyone’s vocabulary. Use the word that most exactly conveys your meaning, and try to use specific, concrete words, which are easier to understand and remember.¹²

The following list gives a few examples of short, simple alternatives:

Formal and stuffy

ameliorate
commence
enumerate
finalize
prioritize
utilize
viable option

Short and simple

improve
begin
list
finish, complete
rank
use
choice

There are four exceptions to the general rule that “shorter is better”:

1. Use a long word if it is the only word that expresses your meaning exactly.
2. Use a long word if it is more familiar than a short word. *Send out* is better than *emit* and *a word in another language for a geographic place or area* is better than *exonym* because more people know the first item in each pair.
3. Use a long word if its connotations are more appropriate. *Exfoliate* is better than *scrape off dead skin cells*.
4. Use a long word if the discourse community (◀ p. 32) prefers it.

There are two kinds of **jargon**. The first is the specialized terminology of a technical field. *LIFO* and *FIFO* are technical terms in accounting; *byte* and *baud* are computer jargon. A job application letter is the one occasion when it's desirable to use technical jargon: using the technical terminology of the reader's field suggests that you're a peer who also is competent in that field. In other kinds of messages, use technical jargon only when the term is essential and known to the reader.

If a technical term has a “plain English” equivalent, use the simpler term:

Jargon: **Foot** the average monthly budget column down to Total Variable Costs, Total Management Fixed Costs, Total Sunk Costs, and Grand Total.

Better: **Add the figures** in the average monthly budget column for each category to determine the Total Variable Costs, the Total Management Fixed Costs, and the Total Sunk Costs. **Then add the totals** for each category to arrive at the Grand Total.

The revision here is longer but better because it uses simple words. The original will be meaningless to a reader who does not know what *foot* means.

The second kind of jargon is the **businessese** that some writers still use: *as per your request, enclosed please find, please do not hesitate*. Some writers call these terms *deadwood*, since they are no longer living words. If any of the terms in the first column of Figure 4.5 show up in your writing, replace them with more modern language.



Sales of prunes fell 14% from 1993 to 1999. To stop the slide, what had been the California Prune Board decided to change the product's name (and its own). Changing the product's name required approval from the US Food and Drug Administration. Now you don't buy prunes; you buy “dried plums.”

InSite

www.xmission.com/~dtubbs/jargon/jw.html



Wired magazine lists business and computer jargon.

FIGURE 4.5 Getting Rid of Business Jargon

Instead of	Use	Because
At your earliest convenience	The date you need a response	If you need it by a deadline, say so. It may never be convenient to respond.
As per your request; 65 kilometres per hour	As you requested; 65 kilometres an hour	<i>Per</i> is a Latin word for <i>by</i> or <i>for each</i> . Use <i>per</i> only when the meaning is correct; avoid mixing English and Latin.
Enclosed please find	Enclosed is; Here is	An enclosure isn't a treasure hunt. If you put something in the envelope, the reader will find it.
Forward same to this office.	Return it to this office.	Omit legal jargon.
Hereto, herewith	Omit	Omit legal jargon.
Please be advised; Please be informed	Omit—simply start your response	You don't need a preface. Go ahead and start.
Please do not hesitate	Omit	Omit negative words.
Pursuant to	According to; or omit	<i>Pursuant</i> does not mean <i>after</i> . Omit legal jargon in any case.
Said order	Your order	Omit legal jargon.
This will acknowledge receipt of your letter.	Omit—start your response	If you answer a letter, the reader knows you got it.
Trusting this is satisfactory, we remain	Omit	Eliminate <i>-ing</i> endings. When you are through, stop.

As You Write and Revise Sentences

At the sentence level, you can do many things to make your writing easy to read. “Who does what” sentences with active verbs make your writing more forceful.

Passives are usually made up of a form of the verb *to be* plus a past participle. *Passive* has nothing to do with *past*. Passives can be past, present, or future:

were received	(in the past)
is recommended	(in the present)
will be implemented	(in the future)

To spot a passive, find the verb. If the verb describes something that the grammatical subject is doing, the verb is active. If the verb describes something that is being done to the grammatical subject, the verb is passive.

Active

The customer received 500 widgets.

I recommend this method.

The federal agencies will implement the program.

Passive

Five hundred widgets were received by the customer.

This method is recommended by me.

The program will be implemented by the federal agencies.

Verbs can be changed from active to passive by making the direct object (in the oval) the new subject (in the box). To change a passive verb to an active one, you must make the agent (“by _____” in <>) the new subject. If no agent is specified in the sentence, you must supply one to make the sentence active.

Active

The **plant manager** approved the **request**.

The **committee** will decide next month.

[You] Send the customer a **letter** informing her about the change.

Passive

The **request** was approved by the **<plant manager.>**

A decision will be made next month. **No agent in sentence.**

A **letter** will be sent informing the customer of the change. **No agent in sentence.**

**Writing for the Web***

Writers preparing content for a Web site should keep in mind the physical demands of reading a computer screen. Reading a screen is more tiring than reading a printed page, so readers tend to scan. Internet users also tend to be in a hurry to find whatever they are looking for. Writing for the Web is therefore most effective when it follows these guidelines:

- Write concisely.
- Put the main point first; then provide details.
- Break up the text with headings that describe the content.
- Choose easy-to-read type fonts.
- Use informal and direct language; don't try to be cute and clever.
- Keep hyperlinks to a minimum.

*Based on Change Sciences Group, "Writing for the Web: Best Practices," Change Sciences Research Brief (Irvington, NY: Change Sciences Group, 2003), downloaded at <http://www.changesciences.com>.

Passive verbs have at least three disadvantages:

1. If all the information in the original sentence is retained, passive verbs make the sentence longer. Passives take more time to understand.¹³
2. If the agent is omitted, it's not clear who is responsible for doing the action.
3. Using many passive verbs, especially in material that has a lot of long words, can make the writing boring and pompous.

Passive verbs are desirable in these situations:

1. Use passives to emphasize the object receiving the action, not the agent.

Your order was shipped November 15.

The customer's order, not the shipping clerk, is important.

2. Use passives to provide coherence within a paragraph. A sentence is easier to read if "old" information comes at the beginning of a sentence. When you have been discussing a topic, use the word again as your subject even if that requires a passive verb.

The bank made several risky *loans* in the late 1990s. These *loans were written off* as "uncollectible" in 2001.

Using *loans* as the subject of the second sentence provides a link between the two sentences, making the paragraph as a whole easier to read.

3. Use passives to avoid assigning blame.

The order was damaged during shipment.

An active verb would require the writer to specify *who* damaged the order. The passive here is more tactful.

Put the weight of your sentence in the verb to make your sentences more forceful and up to 25% easier to read.¹⁴ When the verb is a form of the verb *to be*, revise the sentence to use a more forceful verb.

Weak: The financial advantage of owning this equipment instead of leasing it **is** 10% after taxes.

Better: Owning this equipment rather than leasing it **will save** us 10% after taxes.

Nouns ending in *-ment*, *-ion*, and *-al* often hide verbs.

make an adjustment	adjust
make a payment	pay
make a decision	decide
reach a conclusion	conclude
take into consideration	consider
make a referral	refer
provide assistance	assist

Use verbs to present the information more forcefully.

Weak: We **will perform** an **investigation** of the problem.

Better: We **will investigate** the problem.

Weak: Selection of a program should be based on the client's needs.

Better: Select the program that best fits the client's needs.

Writing is wordy if the same idea can be expressed in fewer words. Unnecessary words increase keying and reading time, bore your reader, and make your meaning more difficult to decipher.

Good writing is tight; however, tight writing may be long because it is packed with ideas. In Chapter 2, we saw that revisions to create you-attitude and positive emphasis (pp. 44, 47, respectively) and to develop reader benefits were frequently longer than the originals because the revision added information not given in the original.

Sometimes you may be able to look at a draft and see immediately how to tighten it. When the solution isn't obvious, try the following strategies for tightening your writing.

a. Eliminate words that say nothing. Cut words if the idea is already clear from other words in the sentence. Substitute single words for wordy phrases.

Wordy: Keep this information on file for future reference.

Tighter: Keep this information for reference.

or: File this information.

Wordy: Ideally, it would be best to put the billing ticket just below the CRT screen and above the keyboard.

Tighter: If possible, put the billing ticket between the CRT screen and the keyboard.

Phrases beginning with *of*, *which*, and *that* can often be shortened.

Wordy: the question of most importance

Tighter: the most important question

Wordy: the estimate that is enclosed

Tighter: the enclosed estimate

Sentences beginning with *There are* or *It is* can often be tighter.

Wordy: There are three reasons for the success of the project.

Tighter: Three reasons explain the project's success.

Wordy: It is the case that university graduates advance more quickly in the company.

Tighter: University graduates advance more quickly in the company.

Check your draft. If you find these phrases, or any of the unnecessary words shown in Figure 4.6, eliminate them.

b. Use gerunds and infinitives to make sentences shorter and smoother. A gerund (the *-ing* form of a verb) is a verb used as a noun. In the sentence, "Running is my favourite activity," *running* is the subject of the sentence. An **infinitive** is the form of the verb that is preceded by *to*: *to run* is the infinitive.

In the revision below, a gerund (*purchasing*) and an infinitive (*to transmit*) tighten the revision.

Wordy: A plant suggestion has been made where they would purchase a QWIP machine for the purpose of transmitting test reports between plants.

Tighter: The plant suggests purchasing a QWIP machine to transmit test reports between plants.

Even when gerunds and infinitives do not greatly affect length, they often make sentences smoother and more conversational.

FIGURE 4.6 Words to Cut

Cut the following words	Cut redundant words	Substitute a single word for a wordy phrase	
quite	a period of three months	at the present time	now
really	during the course of the negotiations	due to the fact that	because
very	during the year of 2004	in the event that	if
	maximum possible	in the near future	soon (or give the date)
	past experience	prior to the start of	before
	plan in advance	on a regular basis	regularly
	refer back		
	the colour blue		
	true facts		

c. Combine sentences to eliminate unnecessary words. In addition to saving words, combining sentences focuses the reader's attention on key points, adds energy, and sharpens the relationship between ideas, thus making your writing more coherent.

Wordy: I conducted this survey by telephone on Sunday, April 21. I questioned two groups of seniors—male and female—who, according to the Student Directory, were still living in the dorms. The purpose of this survey was to find out why some seniors continue to live in the dorms even though they are no longer required by the University to do so. I also wanted to find out if there were any differences between male and female seniors in their reasons for choosing to remain in the dorms.

Tighter: On Sunday, April 21, I phoned seniors living in the dorms to find out (1) why they continue to live in the dorms even though they are no longer required to do so, and (2) whether men and women had the same reasons for staying in the dorms.

d. Put the meaning of your sentence into the subject and verb to cut the number of words. Put the core of your meaning into the subject and verb of your main clause.

Wordy: The **reason** we are recommending the computerization of this process **is** because **it will reduce** the time required to obtain data and **will give** us more accurate data.

Better: **We are recommending** the computerization of this process because **it will save** time and **give** us more accurate data.

Tight: **Computerizing** the process **will give** us more accurate data more quickly.

Readable prose mixes sentence lengths and varies sentence structure. A really short sentence (under 10 words) can add punch to your prose. Really long sentences (over 30 or 40 words) are danger signs.

You can vary sentence patterns in several ways. First, you can mix simple, compound, and complex sentences. **Simple sentences** have one **main or independent clause**:

We will open a new store this month.

A main clause is a complete sentence with subject and verb. A **subordinate or dependent clause** contains a subject and verb but is not a complete statement and cannot stand by itself.

Compound sentences have two main clauses joined with *and*, *but*, *or*, or another conjunction. Compound sentences work best when the ideas in the two clauses are closely related.

We have hired staff, and they will complete their training next week.

We wanted to have a local radio station broadcast from the store during its grand opening, but the DJs were already booked.

Complex sentences have one main and one **subordinate or dependent clause**; they are good for showing logical relationships.

When the stores open, we will have balloons and specials in every department.

Because we already have a strong customer base in the northwest, we expect the new store to be just as successful as the store in the Granville Mall.

You can also vary sentences by changing the order of elements. Normally the subject comes first.

We will survey customers later in the year to see whether demand warrants a third store on campus.

To create variety, occasionally begin the sentence with some other part of the sentence.

Later in the year, we will survey customers to see whether demand warrants a third store on campus.

To see whether demand warrants a third store on campus, we will survey customers later in the year.

Use these guidelines for sentence length and structure:

- Always edit sentences for tightness. Even a 17-word sentence can be wordy.
- When your subject matter is complicated or full of numbers, make a special effort to keep sentences short.
- Use long sentences
 - To show how ideas are linked to each other.
 - To avoid a series of short, choppy sentences.
 - To reduce repetition.
- Group the words in long and medium-length sentences into chunks that the reader can process quickly.¹⁵
- When you use a long sentence, keep the subject and verb close together.

Let's see how to apply the last three principles.

- a. **Use long sentences to show how ideas are linked to each other; to avoid a series of short, choppy sentences; and to reduce repetition.** The following sentence is hard to read not simply because it is long but because it is shapeless. Just cutting it into a series of short, choppy sentences doesn't help. The best revision uses medium-length sentences to show the relationship between ideas.

Too long: It should also be noted in the historical patterns presented in the summary, that though there were delays in January and February which we realized were occurring, we are now back where we were about a year ago, and that we are not off line in our collect receivables as compared to last year at this time, but we do show a considerable over-budget figure because of an ultraconservative goal on the receivable investment.

Choppy: There were delays in January and February. We knew about them at the time. We are now back where we were about a year ago. The summary shows this. Our present collect receivables are in line with last year's.

However, they exceed the budget. The reason they exceed the budget is that our goal for receivable investment was very conservative.

Better: As the summary shows, although there were delays in January and February (of which we were aware), we have now regained our position of a year ago. Our present collect receivables are in line with last year's, but they exceed the budget because our goal for receivable investment was very conservative.

- b. Group the words in long and medium-length sentences into chunks.** The “better” revision above has seven chunks. Any sentence pattern will get boring if repeated. Use different sentence patterns to keep your prose interesting.
- c. Keep the subject and verb close together.** Often you can move the subject and verb closer together if you put the modifying material in a list at the end of the sentence. For maximum readability, present the list vertically.

Hard to read: **Movements** resulting from termination, layoffs and leaves, recalls and reinstates, transfers in, transfers out, promotions in, promotions out, and promotions within **are presently documented** through the Payroll Authorization Form.

Smoother: The following **movements are documented** on the Payroll Authorization Form: termination, layoffs and leaves, recalls and reinstates, transfers in and out, and promotions in, out, and within.

Still better: The following **movements are documented** on the Payroll Authorization Form:

- Termination
- Layoffs and leaves
- Recalls and reinstates
- Transfers in and out
- Promotions in, out, and within

Parallel structure puts words, phrases, or clauses in the same grammatical and logical form. In the following faulty example, *by reviewing* is a gerund, while *note* is an imperative verb. Make the sentence parallel by using both gerunds or both imperatives.

Faulty: Errors can be checked **by reviewing** the daily exception report or **note** the number of errors you uncover when you match the lading copy with the file copy of the invoice.

Parallel: Errors can be checked **by reviewing** the daily exception report or **by noting** the number of errors you uncover when you match the lading copy with the file copy of the invoice.

Also To check errors, **note**

parallel: 1. **The number** of items on the daily exception report.
2. **The number** of errors discovered when the lading copy and the file copy are matched.

Note that a list in parallel structure must fit grammatically into the umbrella sentence that introduces the list.

Words must also be logically parallel. In the following faulty example, *juniors*, *seniors*, and *athletes* are not three separate groups. The revision groups words into non-overlapping categories.

Faulty: I interviewed **juniors and seniors and athletes**.

Parallel: I interviewed **juniors and seniors**. In each rank, I interviewed **athletes and non-athletes**.



When Is a Tax Cut Not a Tax Cut? When It's a Refund.*

[President George W. Bush] is smart enough to have figured one thing out: Words are weapons. ...

The unpopular concept of school vouchers has become “opportunity scholarships.” ... Similarly, Bush has relabeled churches, which many Americans do not think should receive federal support, as “faith-based institutions.” Watered-down penalties on Iraq are “smart sanctions.” ...

The upside of choosing *le mot juste* can be huge, as previous administrations have demonstrated. Reagan scored a coup when he christened the MX missile the Peacekeeper at the height of the Cold War. ... More recently, Clinton reshaped the debate over the trade with China when he ditched the elitist-sounding term “Most-Favored Nation” trade status in favor of the more egalitarian handle “Normal Trade Relations.” ...

Terminology also play[ed] a big role in [cutting] the estate tax—which is now being called the “death tax.” [“Estate” is the term for the total amount of assets left by someone who dies. The term sounds like something only rich people have.] But everybody dies.

*Quoted from Richard S. Dunham, “When Is a Tax Cut Not a Tax Cut?” *BusinessWeek*, March 19, 2001, 38–39.

Parallel structure is a powerful device for making your writing tighter, smoother, and more forceful. As Figure 4.7 shows, parallelism often enables you to tighten your writing. To eliminate repetition in parallel lists, see Figure 4.8.

Use second-person pronouns (*you*) rather than third-person (*he, she, one*) to give your writing more impact. *You* is both singular and plural; it can refer to a single person or to every member of your organization.

Third-person: Funds in a participating **employee's** account at the end of each six months will automatically be used to buy more stock unless a "Notice of Election Not to Exercise Purchase Rights" form is received from **the employee**.

Second-person: Once **you** begin to participate, funds in **your** account at the end of each six months will automatically be used to buy more stock unless **you** turn in a "Notice of Election Not to Exercise Purchase Rights" form.

Be careful to use *you* only when it refers to your reader.

Incorrect: My visit with the outside sales rep showed me that **your schedule** can change quickly.

Correct: My visit with the outside sales rep showed me that **schedules** can change quickly.

As You Write and Revise Paragraphs

Paragraphs are visual and logical units. Use them to chunk your sentences.

A good paragraph has **unity**; that is, it discusses only one idea, or topic. The **topic sentence** states the main idea and provides a scaffold to structure your document. Your writing will be easier to read if you make the topic sentence explicit and put it at the beginning of the paragraph.¹⁶

FIGURE 4.7 Use Parallelism to Tighten Your Writing



Faulty



Parallel

FIGURE 4.8 Eliminate Repeated Words in Parallel Lists



Wordy



Tight

Hard to read (no topic sentence):	In fiscal 2005, the company filed claims for refund of federal income taxes of \$3,199,000 and interest of \$969,000 paid as a result of an examination of the company's federal income tax returns by the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) for the years 2000 through 2002. It is uncertain what amount, if any, may ultimately be recovered.
Better (paragraph starts with topic sentence):	The company and the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) disagree about whether the company is owed back taxes. In fiscal 2005, the company filed claims for a refund of federal income taxes of \$3,199,000 and interest of \$969,000 paid as a result of an examination of the company's federal income tax returns by the CRA for the years 2000 through 2002. It is uncertain what amount, if any, may ultimately be recovered.

A good topic sentence forecasts the structure and content of the paragraph.

Plan B also has economic advantages.

(Prepares the reader for a discussion of B's economic advantages.)

We had several personnel changes in June.

(Prepares the reader for a list of the month's terminations and hires.)

When the first sentence of a paragraph is not the topic sentence, readers who skim may miss the main point. Move the topic sentence to the beginning of the paragraph. If the paragraph does not have a topic sentence, you will need to write one. If you can't think of a single sentence that serves as an "umbrella" to cover every sentence, the paragraph lacks unity. To solve the problem, either split the paragraph into two or eliminate the sentence that digresses from the main point.

Transition words and sentences signal the connections between ideas to the reader. **Transitions** tell whether the next sentence continues the previous thought or starts a new idea; transitions can tell whether the idea that comes next is more or less important than the previous thought. Figure 4.9 lists some of the most common transition words and phrases.

Readability Formulas and Good Style

Readability formulas attempt to measure objectively how easy something is to read. However, since they don't take many factors into account, the formulas are at best a very limited guide to good style.

FIGURE 4.9 Transition Words and Phrases

To show addition or continuation of the same idea	To introduce an example	To show that the contrast is more important than the previous idea	To show time
and	for example (e.g.)	but	after
also	for instance (i.e.)	however	as
first, second, third	indeed	nevertheless	before
in addition	to illustrate	on the contrary	in the future
likewise	namely	To show cause and effect	next
similarly	specifically	as a result	then
To introduce the last or most important item	To contrast	because	until
finally	in contrast	consequently	when
furthermore	on the other hand	for this reason	while
moreover	or	therefore	To summarize or end
			in conclusion
			finally



The Boss Won't Let Me Write That Way

When a writing consultant urged them to use *I*, the engineers in R&D at one firm claimed they couldn't: "Our boss won't let us." The consultant checked with their boss, the vice-president for research and development. He said, "I don't care what words they use. I just want to be able to understand what they write."

Moral 1: If you think your boss doesn't want you to use a word, ask. A few bosses do prize formal or flowery language. Most don't.

Moral 2: Even if your boss has the same background you do, he or she won't necessarily understand what you write. Revise your memos and reports so they're clear and easy to read.

Moral 3: What's in the file cabinet isn't necessarily a guide to good writing for your organization.

Computer packages that analyze style may give you a readability score. Some companies require that guarantees and other consumer documents meet certain scores.

The two best-known readability formulas—the Gunning Fog Index and the Flesch Reading Ease Scale—depend heavily on word length and sentence length. But as Janice C. Redish and Jack Selzer have shown,¹⁷ using shorter words and sentences will not necessarily make a passage easy to read. Short words are not always easy to understand, especially if they have technical meanings (e.g., *waive*, *bear market*, *liquid*). Short, choppy sentences and sentence fragments are actually harder to understand than well-written medium-length sentences.

No reading formula yet devised takes into account three factors that influence how easy a text is to read: the complexity of the ideas, the organization of the ideas, and the layout and design of the document.

Instead of using readability formulas to measure style, test your draft with the people for whom it is designed. How long does it take them to find the information they need? Do they make mistakes when they try to use the document? Do they think the document is easy to use? Answers to these questions can give us much more accurate information than any readability score.

Organizational Preferences for Style

Different organizations and bosses may legitimately have different ideas about what constitutes good writing. If the style the company prefers seems reasonable, use it. If the style doesn't seem reasonable—if you work for someone who likes flowery language or wordy paragraphs, for example—you have several choices.

- Go ahead and use the techniques in this chapter. Sometimes seeing good writing changes people's minds about the style they prefer.
- Help your boss learn about writing. Show him or her this book or the research cited in the notes to demonstrate how a clear, crisp style makes documents easier to read.
- Recognize that a style may serve other purposes than communication. An abstract, hard-to-read style may help a group forge its own identity. James Suchan and Ronald Dulek have shown that Navy officers preferred a passive, impersonal style because they saw themselves as followers.¹⁸ When big words, jargon, and wordiness are central to a group's self-image, change will be difficult, since changing style will mean changing the corporate culture.
- Ask. Often the documents that end up in files aren't especially good; later, other workers may find these and copy them, thinking they represent a corporate standard. Bosses may in fact prefer better writing.

Building a good style takes energy and effort, but it's well worth the work. Good style can make every document more effective; good style can help make you the good writer so valuable to every organization.

Summary of Key Points

- Good style in business and administrative writing is less formal, more friendly, and more personal than the style usually used for term papers.
- To improve your style,
 1. Start a clean page or screen so that you aren't locked into old sentence structures.
 2. Try WIRMI: What *I* Really Mean *Is*. Then write the words.

3. Try reading your draft out loud to someone sitting about one metre away. If the words sound stiff, they'll seem stiff to a reader, too.
 4. Ask someone else to read your draft out loud. Readers stumble because the words on the page aren't what they expect to see. The places where that person stumbles are places where your writing can be better.
 5. Write a *lot*.
- Use the following techniques to make your writing easier to read:
As you choose words,
 1. Use words that are accurate, appropriate, and familiar. Denotation is a word's literal meaning; connotation is the emotional colouring that a word conveys.
 2. Use technical jargon only when it is essential and known to the reader. Eliminate business jargon.
 - As you write and revise sentences,
 3. Use active verbs most of the time. Active verbs are better because they are shorter, clearer, and more interesting.
 4. Use verbs—not nouns—to carry the weight of your sentence.
 5. Tighten your writing. Writing is wordy if the same idea can be expressed in fewer words.
 - a. Eliminate words that say nothing.
 - b. Use gerunds and infinitives to make sentences shorter and smoother.
 - c. Combine sentences to eliminate unnecessary words.
 - d. Put the meaning of your sentence into the subject and verb to cut the number of words.
 6. Vary sentence length and sentence structure.
 7. Use parallel structure. Use the same grammatical form for ideas that have the same logical function.
 8. Put your readers in your sentences.
 - As you write and revise paragraphs,
 9. Begin most paragraphs with topic sentences so that readers know what to expect in the paragraph.
 10. Use transitions to link ideas.
 - Readability formulas are not a sufficient guide to style. They imply that all short words and all short sentences are equally easy to read; they ignore other factors that make a document easy or hard to read: the complexity of the ideas, the organization of the ideas, and the layout and design of the document.
 - Different organizations and bosses may legitimately have different ideas about what constitutes good writing.

CHAPTER 4

Exercises and Problems

Getting Started

4.1 Identifying Words with Multiple Denotations

- a. Each of the following words has several denotations. How many can you list without going to a dictionary? How many additional meanings does a good dictionary list?

browser	log
court	table
- b. List five words that have multiple denotations.

4.2 Evaluating the Ethical Implications of Connotations

In each of the following pairs, identify the more favourable term. Is its use justified? Why or why not?

1. wastepaper recovered fibre
2. feedback criticism

3. deadline due date
4. scalper ticket reseller
5. budget spending plan

4.3 Choosing Levels of Formality

Identify the more formal word in each pair. Which term is better for most business documents? Why?

1. adapted to geared to
2. befuddled confused

3. assistant helper
4. pilot project testing the waters
5. cogitate think

Choosing Your Words

4.4 Eliminating Jargon and Simplifying Language

Revise these sentences to eliminate jargon and to use short, familiar words. In some sentences, you'll need to reword, reorganize, or add information to produce the best revision.

1. Computers can enumerate pages when the appropriate keystroke is implemented.
2. Any alterations must be approved during the 30-day period commencing 60 days prior to the expiration date of the agreement.
3. As per your request, the undersigned has obtained estimates of upgrading our computer system. A copy of the estimated cost is attached hereto.
4. Please be advised that this writer is in considerable need of a new computer.
5. Enclosed please find the proposed schedule for the training session. In the event that you have alterations that you would like to suggest, forward same to my office at your earliest convenience.

4.5 Changing Verbs from Passive to Active

Identify the passive verbs in the following sentences and convert them to active verbs. In some cases, you may need to add information to do so. You may use different words as long as you retain the basic meaning of the sentence. Remember that imperative verbs are active, too.

1. The business plan was written by Tyrone King.
2. The cost of delivering financial services is being slashed by computers, the Internet, and toll-free phone lines.
3. When the vacation schedule is finalized it is recommended that it be routed to all supervisors for final approval.
4. As stated in my résumé, I have designed Web pages for three student organizations.
5. Material must not be left on trucks outside the warehouse. Either the trucks must be parked inside the warehouse or the material must be unloaded at the time of receiving the truck.

4.6 Reducing Wordiness

1. Eliminate words that say nothing. You may use different words.
 - a. There are many businesses that are active in community and service work.
 - b. The purchase of a new computer will allow us to produce form letters quickly. In addition, return on investment could be calculated for proposed repairs. Another use is that the computer could check databases to make sure that claims are paid only once.
 - c. Our decision to enter the South American market has precedence in the past activities of the company.
2. Use gerunds and infinitives to make these sentences shorter and smoother.
 - a. The completion of the project requires the collection and analysis of additional data.
 - b. The purchase of laser printers will make possible the in-house production of the newsletter.

- c. The treasurer has the authority for the investment of assets for the gain of higher returns.
3. Combine sentences to show how ideas are related and to eliminate unnecessary words.
 - a. Some customers are profitable for companies. Other customers actually cost the company money.
 - b. If you are unable to come to the session on dental coverage, please call the human resources office. You will be able to schedule another time to ask questions you may have about the various options.
 - c. Major Japanese firms often have employees who know English well. Canadian companies negotiating with Japanese companies should bring their own interpreters.

4.7 Improving Parallel Structure

Revise each of the following sentences to create parallelism.

1. The orientation session will cover the following information:
 - Company culture will be discussed.
 - How to use the equipment.
 - You will get an overview of key customers' needs.
2. Five criteria for a good Web page are content that serves the various audiences, attention to details, and originality. It is also important to have effective organization and navigation devices. Finally,
 - Summarize your main point in a sentence or two.
 - The name and phone number should be given slowly and distinctly.
 - The speaker should give enough information so that the recipient can act on the message.
 - Tell when you'll be available to receive the recipient's return call.
3. When you leave a voice mail message,
 - provide attention to details such as revision date and the Webmaster's address.

4.8 Using Topic Sentences

Make each of the following paragraphs more readable by opening each paragraph with a topic sentence. You may be able to find a topic sentence in the paragraph and move it to the beginning. In other cases, you'll need to write a new sentence.

1. At Disney World, a lunch put on an expense account is "on the mouse." McDonald's employees "have ketchup in their veins." Business slang flourishes at companies with rich corporate cultures. Memos at Procter & Gamble are called "reco's" because the model P&G memo begins with a recommendation.
2. The first item on the agenda is the hiring for the coming year. George has also asked that we review
 - the agency goals for the next fiscal year. We should cover this early in the meeting since it may affect our hiring preferences. Finally, we need to announce the deadlines for grant proposals, decide which grants to apply for, and set up a committee to draft each proposal.
3. Separate materials that can be recycled from your regular trash. Pass along old clothing, toys, or appliances to someone else who can use them. When you purchase products, choose those with minimal packaging. If you have a yard, put your yard waste and kitchen scraps (excluding meat and fat) in a compost pile. You can reduce the amount of solid waste your household produces in four ways.

4.9 Revising Paragraphs

Revise each paragraph to make it easier to read. Change, rearrange, or delete words and sentences; add any material necessary.

- a. Once a new employee is hired, each one has to be trained for a week by one of our supervisors at a cost of \$1,000 each which includes the supervisor's time. This amount also includes half of the new employee's salary, since new hires produce only half the normal production per worker for the week. This summer \$24,000 was spent in training 24 new
 - employees. Absenteeism increased in the department on the hottest summer days. For every day each worker is absent we lose \$200 in lost production. This past summer there was a total of 56 absentee days taken for a total loss of \$11,200 in lost production. Turnover and absenteeism were the causes of an unnecessary expenditure of over \$35,000 this summer.
- b. One service is investments. General financial news and alerts about companies in the customer's

portfolio are available. Quicken also provides assistance in finding the best mortgage rate and in providing assistance in making the decision whether to refinance a mortgage. Another service from Quicken is advice for the start and management of a small business. Banking services, such as paying bills and applying for loans, have

long been available to Quicken subscribers. The taxpayer can be walked through the tax preparation process by Quicken. Someone considering retirement can use Quicken to ascertain whether the amount being set aside for this purpose is sufficient. Quicken's Web site provides seven services.

4.10 Writing Paragraphs

Write a paragraph on each of the following topics.

- Discuss your ideal job.
- Summarize a recent article from a business magazine or newspaper.
- Explain how technology is affecting the field you plan to enter.
- Explain why you have or have not decided to work while you attend university.

- Write a profile of someone who is successful in the field you hope to enter.

As Your Professor Directs,

- Label topic sentences, active verbs, and parallel structure.
- Edit a classmate's paragraphs to make the writing even tighter and smoother.

4.11 Choosing the Right Word

Choose the right word for each sentence.

- The audit revealed a small (amount, number) of errors.
- Diet beverages have (fewer, less) calories than regular drinks.
- In her speech, she (implied, inferred) that the vote would be close.
- We need to redesign the stand so that the catalogue is eye level instead of (laying, lying) on the desk.
- (Their, There, They're) is some evidence that (their, there, they're) thinking of changing (their, there, they're) policy.
- The settlement isn't yet in writing; if one side wanted to back out of the (oral, verbal) agreement, it could.
- In (affect, effect), we're creating a new department.
- The firm will be hiring new (personal, personnel) in three departments this year.
- Several customers have asked that we carry more campus merchandise, (i.e., e.g.,) pillows and mugs with the university seal.
- We have investigated all of the possible solutions (accept, except) adding a turning lane.

4.12 Tracking Your Own Mechanical Errors

Analyze the mechanical errors (grammar, punctuation, word use, and typos) in each of your papers.

- How many different errors are marked on each paper?
- Which three errors do you make most often?
- Is the number of errors constant in each paper, or does the number increase or decrease during the term?

As Your Professor Directs,

- Correct each of the mechanical errors in one or more papers.

- Deliberately write two new sentences in which you make each of your three most common errors. Then write the correct version of each sentence.
- Write a memo to your professor discussing your increasing mastery of mechanical correctness during the semester.
- Briefly explain to the class how to avoid one kind of error in grammar, punctuation, or word use.