

Writing Topic #3:

Eliminating Noise,
Punctuation Notes, &
Avoiding “Which Hunts”

Noise and Writing

or Noise and the Communication Process.

- The first draft of a document is noisy.
- Editing improves the “signal-to-noise ratio.”
- Wrong words, excess words, poor organization, and poor punctuation disrupt information flow.

Effect of Noisy Sentences

- A single noisy sentence will not cause great fatigue and confusion for your reader.
- Continuous, noisy sentences and paragraphs throughout your document will trouble your reader.

Noise Example 1

Punctuation

- When they bought the machine they werent aware of it's shortcomings.

Noise Example 2

Redundant Words

- There was not a sufficient enough number of samples to validate the data.

Noise Example 3

Multiple Noise Sources

- Our intention is to implement the verification of the reliability of the system in the near future.

Minimize use of
the * of, a * of, an * of phrases

- We plan to verify the reliability of the system in the near future.

REMEMBER THIS SIMPLE RULE:

AVOID

Nefarious Nebulous Numbers

- Technical writing must state the facts.
- “This result was close to the standard value.” (Trust me!)
- “This result was very very very close to the standard value.” (Trust me!)
- Nebulous statements of quantity and quality are useless and they waste your client’s time.

NonNebulous Numbers

- “This result was within 5 % of the standard value.”
- “The new process improved the strength by 2 %.” [It’s a separate question, then, if a 2% change actually improves strength.]

Nebulous Numbers

- We plan to verify system reliability in the near future.
- Avoid nebulous numbers, dates, amounts, comparisons.

Eliminating Intermittent Noise in Writing

- Spelling and Spell Checkers
- Punctuation
- Sentence Sense
- Technical Usage
- Edit, Edit, Edit

Which Hunts: What Spell Checker CAN and can NOT Do

- Beware! Spell check will not 'flag' a correctly spelled word even if it is not the right word.
- Signal example:
“They're know miss steaks in this newsletter because we used special soft wear witch cheques you're spelling.... ”

....It is mow or lass a weigh to verify. How ever it can knot correct arrows in punctuation ore usage: an it will not fined words witch are miss used butt spelled rite. Four example; a paragraph cud half mini flaws but wood bee past by the spill checker. And it wont catch the sent tense fragment which you. Their fore, the massage is that proofreading is knot eliminated, it is still berry much reek wired.

THIS PASSED SPELL CHECK!! You MUST proofread for correct USAGE with brain in gear.

From www.cmiiw.com/mistakes.htm.

Spell Checkers do not Eliminate the Dictionary

- Use the correct word, correctly spelled.
- Try m-w.com or thefreedictionary.com while writing and editing.

Punctuation Controls Meaning

- Classic example:
 - The panda eats shoots and leaves.
 - OR
 - The panda eats, shoots, and leaves.

Two very different pictures!!

Punctuation Controls Meaning

- woman without her man would be nothing
- Woman, without her man, would be nothing.
- Woman! Without her, man would be nothing.

Commas

- Phrase commas
 - “After the workers finished eating rats emerged to eat the scraps.”
- Serial comma signals the end of a list
 - We bought apples, oranges, peaches and apricots.

Semicolon

- Semicolon as a super-comma
- I interviewed with Bowers Corporation, Johnson and Johnson, Union Carbide, and Polk Brothers.

Semicolons Joining Sentences (=two independent phrases)

- This was discouraging; however, we started the new plant anyway.
- Getting through the maze is easy; however, you should take a bottle of water and a snack.

Lack of semi-colon leads to The Runs (=run-on sentences)

- Our subject's systolic blood pressure did not fall below supine values after she stood up however it may be that we did we not measure it quickly enough.
- Our subject's systolic blood pressure did not fall below supine values after she stood up; however, it may be that we did not measure it quickly enough.

OR to “COMMA SPLICES”

(comma links two independent phrases)

- Both female and male average cholesterol values were well under 200 mg/dL, therefore it is apparent that on average this group has relatively low risk for cardio-vascular disease.
- Both female and male average cholesterol values were well under 200 mg/dL ; therefore , it is apparent that on average this group has relatively low risk for cardiovascular disease.

Comma Olympics:

Lab Group A takes on Lab Group B

- http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g_comma.html