

CHAPTER 7

STEP 5: WRITING YOUR DRAFT

This chapter covers:

- Drafting using a three-part structure (introduction, body and conclusion).
- Drafting effective paragraphs.
- Drafting clear and concise sentences.
- Overcoming writer's block.

After completing the prewriting process, you've got what you need to produce a first rate communication product. Congratulations! You're ready to write your first draft! In this chapter we'll take a "top down" approach to writing a draft. We'll start with the big picture: a three-part structure consisting of the introduction, the body, and the conclusion. Next, we'll describe how to write effective paragraphs within the body. Finally, we'll dig down deeper into the sentences, phrases, and words that make up the paragraphs of your draft.

*"The basic rule every military writer ought to live by is this:
'I will write only when I must.'"*

– Colonel William A. McPeak

DRAFTING BASIC PHILOSOPHY

Keep a few things in mind as you start the drafting process. A draft is not the finished product, and each sentence does not have to be polished and perfect. Your focus should be to get your ideas on paper. Don't obsess about grammar, punctuation, spelling, and word choice at this point—that comes later. You don't have to fix every mistake as you see it—you can catch these during the editing process.

On the other hand, it's helpful to keep an eye on your outline when drafting your masterpiece, especially when you're writing something longer than a page or two. By periodically checking your outline, you are less likely to lose focus and include irrelevant information.

Okay, this sounds great, but have you ever sat down to start your first draft and found yourself just staring at the blank computer screen or paper? If you suffer from writer's block, we'll cover strategies for overcoming this fairly common problem at the end of this chapter.

THREE PART STRUCTURE: AN INTRODUCTION, BODY AND CONCLUSION

What is your draft going to look like? Is it going to be one huge paragraph? No, in most cases, you'll organize your draft in a three-part structure—introduction, body and conclusion.

- The **introduction** must capture your audience's attention, establish rapport and announce your purpose.
- The **body** must be an effective sequence of ideas that flow logically in a series of paragraphs.
- The **conclusion** must summarize the main points stated in the body and close smoothly.

Let's take a closer look at this structure. We'll examine these parts out of order—first, the introduction, then the conclusion and lastly the body where we'll spend most of our “time.”

DRAFTING THE INTRODUCTION

The *introduction* sets the stage and tone for your message. Although the content and length of your introduction may vary with the assignment, the introduction should, at a minimum, clearly state your purpose (“bottom line”) and the direction you plan to take the audience.

A typical introduction has three components: *stage setting remarks*, a *purpose statement*, and an *overview*.

- *Stage-setting remarks* set the tone of the communication, capture the audience's attention and encourage them to read further. Stage setting remarks are *optional*, so you can omit them in very short messages or in messages where you don't want to waste words.
- The *purpose statement* is the one sentence you'd keep if you had only one. It specifically states your purpose, thesis or main point. For some examples and more details, refer back to Chapter 3 (page 20).

Stage Setting Remarks: Use them properly!

Stage setting remarks are optional. Though they add polish to an introduction, your reader has to be able to pick which sentences are “setting the stage” and which sentence is the “bottom line.”

If you've received feedback that readers are sometimes confused about the purpose of your writing, get to the point quickly and don't overdo stage-setting remarks. Too many preliminaries can backfire and actually confuse the reader.

- The *overview* is like a good roadmap—it clearly presents your main points, previews your paragraph sequence and ties your main points to your purpose.

Here’s an example of a short introduction that contains all three components:

Communication is essential to mission accomplishment, and all Air Force personnel should be able to write effectively. (*Stage Setting Remarks*) This handbook provides general guidelines and specific formats for use in both staff environments and Professional Military Education schools. (*Purpose Statement*) It begins with an overarching philosophy on military communication, then describes processes and techniques to improve writing and speaking products, and summarizes the most common formats used in Air Force communication. (*Overview*)

Even though readers read the introduction first, you don’t have to write it first. If the introduction doesn’t come easily or naturally, you can work on another part of the communication and then return to it. Some writers backpedal and don’t want to work on the introduction until the rest of the communication is written. Others insist it guides them in shaping the content or body of their message. Regardless of when you write the introduction, make sure that it captures your purpose and make sure it prepares your audience for what is to come.

Here’s the bottom line on your introduction: It must be an appropriate length for your specific communication and it should contain a clear statement of your purpose and direction.

DRAFTING THE CONCLUSION

The *conclusion* is the last and often neglected part of a well-arranged communication. Sometimes inexperienced writers stop writing as soon as they finish discussing their last main idea. That’s not an effective conclusion. The conclusion is your last chance to summarize your communication and give your audience a sense of closure.

An effective conclusion often summarizes the overall theme and main points discussed in the body. If you have a simple, straightforward purpose, you might want to emphasize it by restating it in slightly different words in the conclusion. If you have a complicated purpose or a long, involved communication, you’ll probably need to emphasize your main ideas and state your proposals or recommendations.

For effective endings, restate the main ideas or observations or emphasize the main thrusts of arguments. Under no circumstances apologize for real or perceived inadequacies or inject weak afterthoughts. Conclude your communication with positive statements based on your preceding discussion. Generally, avoid bringing up new ideas in the conclusion; these belong in the body of your communication. Opening up new “cans of worms” will just confuse your reader.

Your introduction and conclusion should balance each other without being identical. To check this, read your introduction and then immediately read your conclusion to determine if your

Introductions and conclusions: How long?

The length of your introduction and conclusion will be proportional to the length of your overall writing assignment. On a one-page assignment, they may be very short, while lengthy staff studies or publications may contain introductions and conclusions that are several paragraphs long. Introductions and conclusions to books are often an entire chapter!

Remember that introductions and conclusions are designed to help your readers; use good judgment in determining the appropriate length for your assignment.

conclusion flows logically from your introduction and whether it fulfills your purpose. An effective conclusion leaves you with a sense you're justified in ending your communication. You're ready to call it a day only when you assure your audience you've accomplished the purpose stated in your introduction.

Recall our sample introduction on page 67; here's a short conclusion derived from that introduction and the body (which we don't have right now):

As Air Force personnel, we can't accomplish our mission without effective communication. Hopefully, this handbook has provided you with some practical tools to improve your communication skills, specifically speaking and writing. Keep it handy and refer to it often as you prepare and review a variety of spoken and written products throughout your career.

Even without the "body" available, you can see how the introduction and conclusion complement each other.

DRAFTING THE BODY

The *body* of your communication is the heart of your message. It includes your main ideas about your subject and supporting details under each main idea.

The body typically consists of several paragraphs. The total number of paragraphs (and overall length of the body) will depend on your purpose and subject. As a general rule, write a separate paragraph for each main idea—you might confuse your reader if you have two or more main ideas in a single paragraph. In a longer communication, you may find it necessary to use more than one paragraph to cover one main point or idea.

So much for a quick review of introductions, conclusions and bodies. Now, let's dig down a little deeper into the paragraphs that make up the body of your communication.

DRAFTING EFFECTIVE PARAGRAPHS

PARAGRAPHS SHOULD CONTAIN ONE MAIN POINT

Paragraphs are the primary vehicles to develop ideas in your writing. They serve three purposes:

- ① To group related ideas into single units of thought.
- ② To separate one unit of thought from another unit.
- ③ To alert your readers you're shifting to another phase of your subject.

An effective paragraph is a functional unit with clusters of ideas built around a single main point or idea and linked with other clusters preceding and following it. It's not an arbitrary collection designed for physical convenience. It performs a definite, planned function—it presents a single major idea or point, describes an event, or creates an impression.

Most staff writing depends on relatively short paragraphs of three to seven sentences. If you follow this practice, you'll be more likely to develop clear, easy-to-read paragraphs. The length of individual paragraphs will vary because some main points need more supporting details than others.

In general, the flow of your paragraphs will follow the organizational pattern or format you selected in Step 4: “Organizing and Outlining” (Chapter 6). That is, you build your paragraphs to meet the structural requirements of your overall communication. But you can use analogy, examples, definition, and comparison and contrast to develop single paragraphs within your overall pattern. The guiding principle is to develop one main idea or point in each paragraph.

TOPIC SENTENCES

Capturing the main point of each PARAGRAPH

In staff writing, it’s helpful to start off each paragraph with a *topic sentence* that captures the subject or controlling idea of the paragraph. The topic sentence prepares the reader for the rest of the paragraph and provides a point of focus for supporting details, facts, figures and examples.

In the body, don’t make your reader search for the topic sentences of your paragraphs. (As stated earlier, the rules are different for introductions and conclusions.) Since the topic sentence is the subject and main idea of the paragraph, the best place for it is up front—the first sentence. This helps with clarity and makes things convenient for your readers. Many people need only general information about the content of certain letters, reports and directives.

Scanning topic sentences at the beginning of paragraphs for the most important ideas saves a lot of time. If your readers need more details, they can always read beyond your topic sentences.

Once you’ve written a topic sentence, the rest of the paragraph should fall neatly in place. Other sentences between the topic sentence and the last sentence must be closely related to expand, emphasize, and support the topic sentence. In some paragraphs, the last sentence is used to summarize key points, clinch the main idea in the reader’s mind, or serve as a transition to the next topic sentence. (We’ll talk more about transitions in the next section.) Eliminate any “extra” sentences that don’t perform one of these functions!

Though most writers will draft an entire paragraph at a time, **an alternate drafting strategy is to first write all the topic sentences in your body.** Once the topic sentences are completed, go back and write the rest of the paragraphs, one at a time. Drafting the topic sentences first requires the writer to stay focused on the “big picture” and can help produce a clear and well-organized draft. This technique can be very useful for longer writing assignments and is recommended for writers who struggle to organize their writing.

Here’s the bottom line on paragraphs in the body: Each paragraph should have one main point/idea captured in a topic sentence, preferably at the beginning of the paragraph. Use supporting ideas to prove, clarify, illustrate and develop your main point. Your objective is to help your readers see your paragraphs as integrated units rather than mere collections of sentences.

**If your readers are confused,
check your topic sentences!**

A *topic sentence* announces your intent for a single paragraph in the same way a *purpose statement* announces your intent for the entire writing assignment.

Most readers are better able to understand how ideas relate to each other if they know what’s coming.

If you’ve received feedback that readers have trouble understanding the “flow” of your writing, check your topic sentences. Does one exist for each paragraph? Can you underline it? Do they start off the paragraph? Do they tie back to your purpose statement?

THE BULLETIN BOARD

TO CONTRAST IDEAS

but
yet
nevertheless
however
still
conversely
on the one hand
instead of
neither of these
(to) (on) the contrary
rather than
no matter what
much less as
in contrast
otherwise
on the other hand
in the (first) (second) place
nor
according to

TO SHOW TIME

immediately
presently
nearly a ... later
meantime
meanwhile
afterward
next
as of today
this year, however
a little later
then last year
next week
tomorrow
as of now
finally

TO RELATE THOUGHTS

indeed
anyway, anyhow
elsewhere
nearby
above all
even these
beyond
in other words
for instance
of course
in short
in sum
yet
in reality
that is
by consequence
notwithstanding
nonetheless
as a general rule
understandably
traditionally
the reason, of course
the lesson here is
from all information
at best
naturally
in the broader sense
to this end
in fact

TO COMPARE IDEAS

like
just as
similar
this

TO SHOW RESULTS

therefore
as a result
thus
consequently
hence

TO ADD IDEAS

first, second, next, last, etc.
in addition
additionally
moreover
furthermore
another
besides
clear, too, is
the answer does not only lie
to all that
more than anything else
here are some ... facts
now, of course, there are
now however

TRANSITIONS: BRIDGES BETWEEN DIFFERENT IDEAS

One way to make sure your paragraphs flow together, both internally and externally, is by using transitions in the form of words, phrases, and sentences. *Internal transitions* improve the flow of sentences within a paragraph, while *external transitions* link separate paragraphs together within the body of your communication. Though some inexperienced writers are intimidated by the idea of transitions, a few examples usually make the point.

INTERNAL TRANSITIONS

Internal transitions are one or more related words that show the relationship between ideas *within a paragraph*. Woven skillfully into your writing, internal transitions help your reader follow your line of thought.

Some internal transitions show a relationship between two ideas inside a single sentence:

“**First** go home and **then** clean your room.”

Other internal transitions show a relationship between two or more sentences within a single paragraph:

“Our plan for Saturday afternoon involves both business and pleasure. **First**, all the kids will come home at noon and we’ll eat lunch. **Next**, we’ll get the house cleaned—the whole mess. **Finally**, we’ll go out for ice cream and a movie.”

Take a look at page 70 for a bulletin board of transitional words and phrases that provide the ideal logic links between your key points and the mind of the reader. In most cases, favor the short, spoken ones over the long, bookish ones. For example, use *but* more than *however*, *so* more than *therefore*, and *also* more than *in addition*. (Note that different transitions require different punctuation. If you’re uncertain about the rules, check out guidelines for comma and semicolon usage on pages 282 and 307.)

“The movie was too long; **therefore**, we left after three hours.”

“The movie was too long, **so** we left after three hours.”

There are many ways to bridge gaps in thought and move the reader from one idea to another. One classic transitional approach involves repetition of key words at the beginning of individual sentences. This is especially popular in formal or ceremonial writing or speaking. Notice how the writer of the following paragraph repeated *simplicity*, *incisiveness* and *focus* to make points clear:

The effective presentation of concepts depends on simplicity, incisiveness and focus. Simplicity is necessary under time constraints when there’s insufficient time for complicated relationships.

Incisiveness fixes an idea in the listener’s mind, appeals to common sense and facilitates understanding. Focus limits the subject to essentials, promoting the presenter’s objectives.

Internal transitions, in the form of one or more related words, are key to a well-written paragraph because they guide the reader between related ideas. But how do we move from paragraph to paragraph? We need *external transitions* to knit together their main points.

EXTERNAL TRANSITIONS

External transitions are typically sentences or paragraphs that guide the reader **between separate paragraphs** and **major sections** of your communication.

Transitional paragraphs are usually reserved for long papers, books, and reports that contain major sections or chapters. They are used to summarize one section and lead the reader to the next section, or they introduce the next section and tie it to the preceding section. Transitional paragraphs are not commonly used in staff writing, but are often seen in books and academic essays.

The short paragraph immediately above this section (“Internal transitions, in the form of one or more related words...”) is an example of a transitional paragraph. As you can see, it sums up the previous section on internal transitions and then introduces the new section on external transitions.

Let’s look closer at transitional sentences, which you’ll probably use more frequently than transitional paragraphs. A transitional sentence is often used to bridge main points in two separate paragraphs (though not every new paragraph requires an external transition). There are three options of a transitional sentence bridging paragraph 1 and paragraph 2:

- 1) It can be a stand-alone sentence at the end of paragraph 1.
- 2) It can be a stand-alone sentence at the beginning of paragraph 2 (In this case, paragraph 2’s topic sentence is the second sentence in the paragraph).
- 3) It can be merged with the topic sentence of paragraph 2 (In this case, the “transitional” part of the sentence is a separate clause at the beginning of the sentence).

Let’s look at a situation where a transitional sentence is appropriate. Suppose we have two paragraphs:

Paragraph 1 describes parking problems.

Paragraph 2 describes potential solutions to the parking problems.

Here’s an example of a stand-alone transitional sentence for these paragraphs:

Fortunately, we can solve these parking problems if we offer our people some incentives to use car pools. (*transitional sentence*)

If this sentence were at the end of paragraph 1 (option 1), paragraph 2 would start with a topic sentence written something like this:

We can offer our personnel three incentives to participate in car pools: preferred parking spaces, guaranteed duty hours and distant parking for nonparticipants. (*topic sentence*)

If our transitional sentence were at the beginning of paragraph 2 (option 2), then our topic sentence would be the second sentence in paragraph 2, like this:

Fortunately, we can solve these parking problems if we offer our people some incentives to use carpools. (*transitional sentence*) **We can offer them three incentives: preferred parking spaces, guaranteed duty hours, and distant parking for nonparticipants.** (*topic sentence*)

Now let’s look at our third option where we merge the transition with the topic sentence of paragraph 2. In this case, we have one sentence instead of two, like this:

Fortunately, we can solve these parking problems (*transitional clause*) **by offering our people three incentives to participate in car pools: preferred parking spaces, guaranteed duty hours and distant parking for nonparticipants** (*topic of paragraph 2*).

Whether used at the end or beginning of a paragraph, transitional sentences can make your writing smoother and make your reader happier!

HEADINGS

Another effective way to transition from one major area to another, especially in a longer report, is to use *headings*. They allow your reader to follow along easily, even at a glance. Headings are also helpful when topics vary widely. Be informative and avoid relying on headings that use one or two vague words. You'll note that headings are used effectively in this publication! Here are a couple examples.

For: Procedures

Try: *How to Complete AF Form XXXX*

For: *Contractors*

Try: *How Much Contractors May Charge*

Now that you have a good idea of how to draft “the big picture” part of your communication—your introduction, conclusion and paragraphs in the body—it’s time to dig a little deeper. It’s time to look at building effective sentences within your paragraphs.

DRAFTING EFFECTIVE SENTENCES

To draft clear and concise sentences, choose clear and concise words and phrases to make up your sentences. In this section, we’ll cover some of the most important considerations when writing effective sentences: active voice, smothered verbs, parallel construction, misplaced modifiers, using the right word for the job and avoiding wordy words and phrases. Let’s get started with probably the most common pitfall to clear and concise sentences—not writing actively.

WRITE ACTIVELY: DOERS BEFORE VERBS

Is your active voice all bottled up? Active voice shows the subject as the actor. For example: *The girl sang a song*. By using mostly active voice, your writing is clear, concise, and alive—it reaches out to the reader and gets to the point quickly with fewer words. Unfortunately, many writers overuse passive voice. Passive voice shows the subject as receiver of the action. For example: *A song was sung by her*. Besides lengthening and twisting sentences, passive verbs often muddy them. Whereas active sentences must have doers, passive ones are complete without them. When you overuse passive voice and reverse the natural subject-verb-object pattern, your writing becomes lifeless.

Your support is appreciated ...

Requisitions should be submitted ...

The IG team will be appointed ...

It is requested that you submit ...

Yawn. The actor (or doer) in the sentence is either obscure, absent altogether or just lying there. Who appreciates? Who should requisition? Who appoints? Why not write ...

I appreciate your support ...
Submit your requisitions ...
Colonel Hall will appoint the IG team ...
Please submit ...

THE SYMPTOMS OF PASSIVE VOICE AND THREE CURES

How can you diagnose passive voice? You don't have to be a grammarian to recognize passive voice. First, find the verb by asking yourself, "What's happening in this sentence?" Then find the actor by asking, "Who's doing it?" If the actor comes after the verb, it's passive voice. Also, watch for these forms of the verb *to be* (*am, is, are, was, were, be, being, been*) and a main verb usually ending in *-ed* or *-en*. Let's look at a few examples:

Passive: The mouse *was* eaten by the cat.
Active: The *cat* ate the mouse.

Passive: Livelier sentences will be written by you.
Active: You will write livelier sentences.

Passive: Water is drunk by everybody.
Active: Everybody drinks water.

To correct a passive sentence, try one of these cures:

1. Put the actor (*doer*) before the verb.

This: The *handlers* must have broken the part.
Not: The part must have been broken by the *handlers*.

2. Drop part of the verb.

This: The results *are* in the attachment.
Not: The results *are listed* in the attachment.

3. Change the verb.

This: The replacement has not *arrived* yet.
Not: The replacement has not *been received* yet.

Though most writers overuse passive voice sometimes it's appropriate. Clear and forceful language may be inappropriate in diplomacy or in political negotiations. Passive voice is also used to soften bad news, or when the doer or actor of the action is unknown, unimportant, obvious or better left unnamed. Here are a few examples:

The part was shipped on 1 June. (The *doer* is unimportant.)
Presidents are elected every four years. (The *doer* is obvious.)
Christmas has been scheduled as a workday. (The *doer* is better left unnamed.)

The bottom line: Passive voice is wordy, indirect, unclear and reverses the natural order of English. Active voice is clear and concise. So, activate your writing!

As you can see, using verbs correctly—actively—is key to writing clear, concise and interesting sentences. For that reason, let's look at another way to keep your verbs active—don't smother them!

WATCH OUT FOR SMOTHERED VERBS

Make your verbs do the work for you. Weak writing relies on general verbs that take extra words to complete their meaning. Don't use a general verb (make) plus extra words (a choice) when you can use one specific verb (choose). For example:

Wordy: The IG team *held a meeting to give consideration to* the printing issue.

Better: The IG team *met to consider* the printing issue.

Wordy: They *made the decision to give their approval*.

Better: They *decided to approve it*.

Here's another tip on verbs—watch out for words ending in *-ion* and *-ment*. These are verbs turned into nouns. Whenever possible, change these nouns to verb forms, and your sentences will be shorter and livelier. For example:

Wordy: Use that format *for the preparation of* your command history.

Better: Use that format *to prepare* your command history.

Wordy: *The settlement of* travel claims involves *the examination of* orders.

Better: *Settling* travel claims involves *examining* orders.

We've spent a lot of time looking at verbs because they're the most important words in your sentences. **The bottom line:** keep verbs active, lively, specific, concise, and out in front, not hidden. Another potential stumbling block for readers is "unparallelism."

USE PARALLEL CONSTRUCTION (PARALLELISM)

Use a consistent pattern when making a list. If your sentence contains a series of items separated by commas, keep the grammatical construction similar—if two of three items start with a verb, make the third item start with a verb. Violations occur when writers mix things and actions, statements and questions, and active and passive instructions. The trick is to be consistent. Make ideas of equal importance look equal.

Needs work: The functions of a military staff are *to advise* the commander, *transmit* instructions and *implementation* of decisions.

[Advise and transmit are verbs, while implementation is a noun.]

Acceptable: The functions of a military staff are *to advise* the commander, *transmit* instructions and *implement* decisions. [Parallel ideas are now written in the same grammatical form.]

Needs work: The security policeman told us *to observe the speed limit* and *we should dim our lights*. [Parallel ideas are not written in the same grammatical form.]

Acceptable: The security policeman told us *to observe the speed limit* and *to dim our lights*.

Needs work: Universal military values include that we should act with integrity, dedication to duty, the belief that freedom is worth dying for and service before self.

Acceptable: Universal military values include commitment to integrity, dedication to duty, service before self, and the belief that freedom is worth dying for.

If one of the items in a list can't be written in the same grammatical structure, place it at the end of the sentence. In the previous example, "the belief that freedom is worth dying for" does not match the three-word construction of the other items, but its placement helps the sentence's readability.

Active voice, strong verbs and parallelism can help make your sentences clear and concise. Now, let's look at some more things you can do to write effective sentences—using the right word for the job.

USE THE RIGHT WORD FOR THE JOB

BE CONCRETE. Without generalizations and abstractions, lots of them, we would drown in detail. We sum up vast amounts of experience when we speak of dedication, programs, hardware and lines of authority. But such abstract language isn't likely to evoke the same experiences in each reader's mind. Lazy writing overuses vague terms such as *immense dedication, enhanced programs, viable hardware* and *responsive lines of authority*. It especially weakens job descriptions and performance evaluations, etc.

Do not write "The commander will give guidance," or "The equipment must meet specs." Your reader might wonder what kind of guidance and what kind of specs? Neither you nor your readers can tackle the problem until you are specific. Be as definite as the situation permits. Include only the ideas your reader needs and then give those ideas no more words than they deserve.

For	Try	For	Try
commanders	MAJCOM commanders	Ford	Ranger
headache	migraine	emotion	love
car, vehicle	Ford	plane	F-117
computer	Pentium	socialize	mingle, meet

KNOW VARIOUS SHADES OF MEANING. Use different words to express various shades of meaning. The writer with an adequate vocabulary writes about the *aroma* of a cigar, the *fragrance* of a flower, the *scent* of perfume or the *odor* of gas instead of the *smell* of all these things.

JUDGE THE JARGON. The aim of all communication is to make a personal contact in the simplest possible way, and the simplest way is to use familiar, everyday words. Above all, it must be adapted to specific circumstances with a minimum of jargon. Jargon consists of "shorthand" words, phrases or abbreviations that are peculiar to a relatively small group of people. *DEROS* (Date Eligible to Return from Overseas) and *AWOL* (Absent Without Leave) are examples of military jargon. Every profession has it. *NPO* which means Nil Peros (nothing by mouth) and contusion (bruise) are examples of medical jargon. Writers often use jargon in their sentences to fill space and impress the naive. Unfortunately, overuse of jargon can backfire on you by actually confusing your reader. **CAUTION!** Before you use jargon, make sure you have carefully assessed the audience! Keep it simple with everyday words and phrases, or at least explain any jargon you must use. If you use an abbreviation, spell it out the first time it

appears. If it appears only twice or infrequently, spell out the term every time and avoid the abbreviation entirely. For more on abbreviations see Appendix 1.

CLICHÉS. Clichés are expressions that have lost their impact because they have been overused. Strive for originality in your choice of words and phrases. The list below is not exhaustive. You just may not find your favorite here.

acid test	gory details	predawn darkness
add insult to injury	grief stricken	prestigious law firm
armed to the teeth	grim reaper	proud heritage
as a matter of fact	hammer out (an agreement)	proud parents
at a loss for words	hand in glove	pursuit of excellence
banker's hours	happy couple	quick as a flash
battle royal	hard as a rock	radiant bride
beat a hasty retreat	head over heels in love	red faces, red-faced
beauty and the beast	heart of gold	reign supreme
benefit of the doubt	heavily armed troops	reins of government
better late than never	honest as the day is long	round of applause
bewildering variety	hook, line and sinker	rushed to the scene
beyond the shadow of a doubt	hungry as wolves	sadder but wiser
bite the dust	in short supply	scantily clad
blazing inferno	in this day and age	scintilla of evidence
blessed event	intensive investigation	scurried to shelter
blessing in disguise	iron out (problems)	selling like hotcakes
blissful ignorance	irony of fate	sharp as a razor
brave as a lion	it goes without saying	sings like a bird
break of day	Lady Luck	spearheading the campaign
bright and early	lash out	spirited debate
bull in a china shop	last but not least	spotlessly clean
burn one's bridges	last-ditch stand	sprawling base, facility
burn the midnight oil	leaps and bounds	spreading like wildfire
burning issue	leave no stone unturned	steaming jungle
bury the hatchet	lend a helping hand	stick out like a sore thumb
busy as a bee	light at the end of the tunnel	storm of protest
by the same token	lightening speed	stranger than fiction
calm before the storm	limp into port	supreme sacrifice
cherished belief	lock, stock and barrel	surprise move
clear the decks	long arm of coincidence (the law)	sweep under the rug
club-welding police	man in the street	sweet harmony
colorful scene	marvels of science	sweetness and light
conspicuous by its absence	matrimonial bliss (knot)	tempest in a teapot
cool as a cucumber	meager pension	tender mercies
coveted award	miraculous escape	terror stricken
crack of dawn	moment of truth	tip of the iceberg
crack troops	more than meets the eye	to no avail
cutting edge	Mother Nature	too numerous to mention
dramatic new move	move into high gear	tower of strength
dread disease	never a dull moment	tragic death
dream come true	Old Man Winter	trail of death and destruction
drop in the bucket	on more than one occasion	true colors
easier said than done	paint a grim picture	vanish in thin air
fame and fortune	pay the supreme penalty	walking encyclopedia
feast or famine	picture of health	wealth of information
fickle fortune	pillar of (the church, society)	wave of the future
food for thought	pinpoint the cause	whirlwind campaign
from the face of the earth	police dragnet	wouldn't touch with a 10-
gentle hint	pool of blood	foot pole
glaring omission	posh resort	
glutton for punishment	powder keg	

EASILY CONFUSED WORDS. Many writers and speakers frequently confuse the meaning of some words. Even the dictionary isn't clear-cut and can add to your confusion. Here's a small list of some easily confused words. Be on the lookout for others.

accept	verb, receive		
except	verb or preposition, omitting or leaving out	censor	examine in order to forbid if objectionable
		censure	condemn or to reprimand
advice	noun, counsel given, an opinion	compliment	praise
advise	verb, to give counsel or advice	complement	supplies a lack; it completes
affect	verb, to influence or feign	compose	to constitute
effect	noun, result; verb, to bring about	comprise	to include or consist of
aggravate	make worse or intensify	consul	foreign representative
annoy	disturb or irritate	council	a group
all ready	everyone is prepared	counsel	advice, to give advice
already	adverb, by specific time	contemptible	base, worthless, despicable
all together	collectively or in a group	contemptuous	expressing contempt or disdain
altogether	wholly or entirely	continually	closely recurrent intervals
alright	not acceptable spelling	continuously	without pause or break
all right	satisfactory	credible	believable
allusion	indirect reference	creditable	deserving credit or honor
delusion	false belief	credulous	ready to believe anything
illusion	a false impression	disinterested	impartial or objective
alumni	men graduates or group of men and women graduates	uninterested	indifferent
alumnae	women graduates	eligible	qualified to be chosen
among	used when more than two alternatives	illegible	unable to read
between	used when only two alternatives	emigrate	to leave a country to settle in another
amount	qty that can't be counted/measured in units	immigrate	to enter a country to settle there
number	quantity counted and measured in units	eminent	noted or renowned
anxious	worry or fearfulness	imminent	impending
eager	keen desire	enervating	weakening
apt	suitable, quick to learn, natural tendency	invigorating	stimulating
liable	legally responsible	ensure	guarantee
likely	refers to the probable, probability	insure	obtain insurance for
as	a subordinate conjunction	exceptional	out of the ordinary
like	a preposition	exceptionable	objectionable
avocation	hobby	farther	expresses distance
vocation	customary employment	further	expresses degree
beside	preposition, next to or near	fewer	refers to numbers; countable items
besides	adverb, in addition; preposition, addition to	less	refers to mass; items can't be counted
bi-	occurring every two (units of time)	formally	in a formal manner
semi-	occurring twice (during the time period)	formerly	in the past
bring	action toward the speaker	hanged	to execute; criminals are hanged
take	action away from the speaker	hung	suspended or nailed up; pictures are hung
can	ability	healthy	possessing health
may	permission	healthful	conducive to health
capital	city or money	wholesome	healthful as applied to food or climate
capitol	a building	imply	to hint at or suggest
		infer	to draw a conclusion based on evidence

incredible	unbelievable, improbable	practical	useful, sensible
incredulous	skeptical, doubting	practicable	feasible; a person cannot be practicable
ingenious	clever or resourceful	principal	adjective, foremost; noun, main person
ingenuous	innocently frank or candid	principle	noun, precept or idea
instance	example	raise	to lift or cause to be lifted
instant	moment of time	rise	to move to a higher position
incident	event or an occurrence	respectively	in the order given
later	after the usual time	respectfully	full of respect
latter	to designate the second of two things mentioned	set	to put or to place
lay	to place	sit	to occupy a seat
lie	to recline; to stretch out	shape	condition of being
likely	a favorable probability	condition	state, situation
liable	legally responsible	sometime	at some unspecified time
apt	a natural fitness or tendency	some time	a period of time
lose	a verb	sometimes	now and then
loose	primarily an adjective	specie	coin
luxuriant	abundant growth	species	a kind or variety
luxurious	pertains to luxury	stationary	in a fixed place
may be	a modal verb	stationery	writing paper, envelopes
maybe	perhaps	than	conjunction of comparison
moneys	currency	then	adverb, at that time
monies	amount of money	their	third person plural pronoun, possessive
morale	refers to a spirit or a mood	there	adverb or interjection
moral	refers to right conduct	they're	contraction of they are
persecute	to afflict or harass	verbal	applies to that which is communicated in words, spoken or written
prosecute	to pursue until finished or to bring legal action against a defendant	oral	applies only to that which is spoken
		who	refers to people
		which	refers to things

WORDY WORDS AND PHRASES

Many people use certain words and phrases because they think it makes them appear learned or they think padding emphasizes or rounds out a passage. Don't force your reader to trudge through a dictionary. Also, many needless phrases are introduced by prepositions like *at*, *on*, *for*, *in*, *to* and *by*. They don't give sentences impressive bulk; they weaken them by cluttering the words that carry the meaning. So prune such deadwood as *to the purpose* (to), etc. The longer it takes to say something, the weaker you come across. Pages 81-87 list big words or phrases and simpler ones to try.

DOUBLEHEADERS. *The Word* by Rene J. Cappon details how to avoid writing a project’s *importance and significance* when importance will do. Even a person’s *success and achievement* is okay with just success. Pairs of words with similar meanings add needless bulk. Whatever the differences are between *test and evaluate*, for example, they aren’t worth calling attention to if you just want to give a general idea. When you’re tempted to use two words, try one to say it all. Thomas Jefferson said: “The most valuable of all talents is that of never using *two* words when *one* will do.”

aid and abet	each and every	ready and willing
beck and call	fair and just	right and proper
betwixt and between	few and far between	safe and sound
bits and pieces	irrelevant and immaterial	shy and withdrawn
blunt and brutal	nervous and distraught	smooth and silky
bound and determined	nook and cranny	success and achievement
clear and simple	null and void	sum and substance
confused and bewildered	part and parcel	test and evaluate
disgraced and dishonored	pick and choose	various and sundry

REPETITIVE REDUNDANCY. Not every noun needs an adjective. Not every adjective needs an adverb. Not every writer has gotten the message. Keep your pencil from adding modifiers to those nouns that need no additional voltage. *Serious danger, stern warning, deadly poison, grave crisis* are examples; the nouns operate better without the modifiers.

absolutely conclusive	entirely absent	old antique
advance planning	erupt violently	opening gambit
agricultural crops	exact counterpart	organic life
anthracite coal	fellow colleague	original founder
ascend upward	few in number	original prototype
assemble together	first beginning	passing fad
awkward dilemma	founder and sink	past history
basic fundamental	free gift	patently obvious
big in size	from whence	personal friend
bisect in two	fuse together	personal opinion
blend together	future plan	pointed barb
both alike	gather together	present incumbent
capitol building	general public	protrude out
chief or leading or main protagonist	grateful thanks	real fact
close proximity	habitual custom	recall back
coalesce together	hired mercenary	recoil back
collaborate together or jointly	hoist up	recur again or repeatedly
complete monopoly	individual person	short in length or height
completely full	invited guest	shuttle back and forth
completely unanimous	irreducible minimum	single unit
congregate together	join together	skirt around
connect together	knots per hour	small in size
consensus of opinion	large in size	tall in height
continue to persist	lonely hermit	two twins
courthouse building	meaningless gibberish	temporary reprieve
current or present incumbent	merge together	true facts
descend downward	mutual cooperation	ultimate outcome
divisive quarrel	necessary need	universal panacea
doctorate degree	new innovation	violent explosion
end result	new record	visible to the eye
endorse (a check) on the back	new recruit	vitality necessary
	old adage	

SIMPLER WORDS AND PHRASES

<i>Instead of</i>	<i>Try</i>	<i>Instead of</i>	<i>Try</i>
a great deal of	much	antithesis	opposite, contrast
a minimum of	at least	anxiety	fear
a number of..... days.....	some, many, few	any or	any
a period of (2 days).....	for	apparent.....	clear, plain, visible
abandon	give up	apparently	seemingly, clearly
abet	help, assist, aid	appear	seem
abeyance (hold in).....	delay, postpone, wait	appellation.....	name
abridge	shorten, condense	append.....	add, attach
abrogate	do away with, abolish, cancel, revoke	applicable	which applies, proper, correct, suitable
accelerate	speed up, hasten	application.....	use (noun)
accept	take, receive	appreciable	many
accommodate.....	make fit, make room for, allow for	appreciate	value
accompany.....	go with	apprise.....	tell, inform
accomplish.....	carry out, do, complete	appropriate	proper, right, apt, suitable, pertinent, relevant (or delete it), fit
accomplish (a form)	fill out, complete, produce, fill in, make out, prepare	approximately	about, nearly, almost
according to (an instruction)	per	are desirous of.....	want to
accordingly	so, then, therefore	are in receipt of	received
accrue.....	add, gain	as a matter of fact.....	in fact
accumulate.....	gather, amass, collect	as a means of.....	to
accurate.....	correct, exact, right	as a result of.....	because
achieve	do, make	as against.....	against
achieve the maximum	get the most from, excel	as and when.....	as, when (not both)
acquire	get, gain, earn, win	as at present advised	as advised
activate.....	start, drive, put into action, turn on	as of (this date)	by (today), today
active consideration (to give).....	consider	as prescribed by	under, per
activities.....	actions	as to whether	whether, if
actual.....	real, true	ascertain	find out, learn, make sure
actual emergency	emergency	assert	claim, declare
actual facts	facts	assimilate	absorb, digest, join, include
actuate.....	induce, move, drive, impel	assist, assistance.....	aid, help
additional	added, more, other, further	at a later date.....	later
address	speech, speak of, speak to, deal with (a problem)	at a much greater rate.....	faster, more quickly
adequate.....	enough, plenty	at all times.....	always
adjacent to.....	next to	at an early date	soon
advanced plans	plans	at present	now, currently, presently
advantageous	helpful, useful, favorable, beneficial, good	at such time	when
adverse to.....	against, opposed to	at the present time.....	currently, at present, now
advise.....	recommend, tell, inform	at the time of	when
advised (keep me).....	informed (or "inform me")	at this juncture (time).....	now
affirmative (answer in the)	agree, assent to, say "yes"	at this time.....	now
affix.....	put, stick, attach, place, add	at your earliest convenience	as soon as you can
affix a signature.....	sign	attached herewith is	here's
afford an opportunity.....	allow, let, permit	attached please find	here's, attached is, enclosed is
after the conclusion of.....	after	attain.....	reach, gain, achieve
agency	office	attempt	try
aggregate	all, total, sum, combined, whole, entire	attempts to.....	tries
aircraft	military plane	attention is invited to	note, see
all of.....	all	attired	dressed
allegation	charge, claim, assertion	augment.....	add, increase, extend, enlarge, expand, raise
alleviate	ease, relieve, lessen	authored	wrote
allotment	share, portion	authoritative	valid, official
along the lines of	like, similar to	authority.....	sanction, control, guidance
alter, alteration.....	change	authorize	allow, let, permit, empower, prescribe
alternative	choice, option, substitute	autonomous	independent
amalgamate.....	merge, combine, unite, mix	avail yourself of.....	use
ambient	surrounding	availability	presence, use
ameliorate	better, improve	based on the fact that	because
and/or	and, or (use whichever fits; if both fit, use both)	be acquainted with	know
annually	yearly	be cognizant of.....	know
antedate.....	precede	be of assistance to	assist, help, aid
anticipate	expect, foresee	befall	happen, occur
antipathy	dislike, distaste	behest	request, order
		behoove.....	(avoid this pompous term)
		benefit	help

The Tongue and Quill

<i>Instead of</i>	<i>Try</i>
bestow.....	give
betterment.....	improvement
biannual.....	twice a year
biennial.....	once in 2 years
bilateral.....	two sided
bona fide.....	real, genuine, sincere
brief (in duration).....	short, quick, brief
brook (interference).....	allow
burgeoning.....	increasing, growing
by means of.....	by, with
by virtue of.....	because, by, under
came to an end.....	ended
cannot.....	can't
capability.....	ability
capable.....	able
care should be taken.....	be careful, take care
category.....	class, group
characteristic.....	trait (n), typical of (adj)
characterize.....	describe, portray
circuitous.....	roundabout
classify.....	arrange
close proximity.....	close, near
cognizant of.....	aware of, know, understand, comprehend
coincidentally.....	at the same time
collaboration.....	(see "cooperation")
colloquy.....	discussion, talk
combine.....	join
combined.....	joint
comes into conflict.....	conflicts
commence.....	begin, start
commensurate.....	equal to, to agree with
commensurate with.....	corresponding to, equal to, to agree with, according to
communicate verbally.....	talk, discuss, say, tell
compensate (compensation).....	pay
comply (with).....	follow, carry out, meet, satisfy
component.....	part
comprehend.....	grasp, take in, understand
comprehensive.....	all-inclusive, thorough
comprise.....	form, include, make up, contain
comprised of.....	made up of, consists of
concerning.....	about, on
conclude.....	close, end, think, figure, decide
conclusion.....	end
concur.....	agree, approve
condition.....	state, event, facts
conduct (verb).....	carry out, manage, direct, lead
confront.....	face, meet, oppose
conjecture.....	guess
connection.....	link, tie
connotation.....	meaning
consensus of opinion.....	agreement, verdict, general, view
consequently.....	so, therefore
consider.....	look at, think about, regard
considerable (amount).....	large, great
consolidate.....	combine, join, merge
constitutes.....	is, forms, makes up
construct.....	build, make
consult.....	ask
consummate.....	finish, complete
contained in.....	in
containing.....	has, that have, etc.
contains.....	has
contemporaneously.....	at the same time
contiguous.....	next to, near, touching
continue.....	keep on
contractual agreement.....	agreement, contract
contribute.....	give
cooperate.....	help

<i>Instead of</i>	<i>Try</i>
cooperate together.....	cooperate
cooperation (in).....	jointly, with
coordination.....	staff action, relate, agree, conform
couched.....	phrased, worded
course of time.....	time
criteria.....	standards, rules, yardsticks
criterion.....	standard, norm
currently.....	now (or leave out)
de-emphasize.....	play down
decelerate.....	slow down, reduce speed
deem.....	think, judge, hold, believe
deficiency.....	defect, shortage, lack
definitely.....	final
definitize.....	make definite
delegate authority.....	empower, assign
delete.....	cut, drop
delineate.....	draw, describe, portray, outline
delinquent.....	late
demeanor.....	manner, conduct
demise.....	death
demonstrate.....	prove, show, explain
depart.....	leave
depict.....	describe, show
deprivation.....	loss
deprive.....	take away, remove, withhold
derive.....	receive, take
derogatory.....	damaging, slighting
descend.....	go down
designate.....	appoint, choose, name, pick, assign, select
desire.....	wish, want
detailed.....	more, full
deteriorate.....	run down, grow worse
determination.....	ruling
determine.....	decide, figure, find
detrimental.....	harmful
develop.....	grow, make, take place
dialogue, dialog.....	talk, discussion
dichotomy.....	split, separation
difficult.....	hard
dimension.....	size
diminish.....	drop, lessen, reduce, decrease
disadvantage.....	drawback, handicap
disallow.....	reject, deny, refuse
disclose.....	show, reveal, make known
discontinue.....	drop, stop, end
disseminate.....	issue, send out, pass out, spread, announce, get out
distribute.....	spread, share, allot
divulge.....	make known, reveal
do not.....	don't
donate.....	give
downward adjustment.....	decrease
due in large measure.....	because, due to
due to the fact that.....	because of, hence, since, due to
duplicate.....	copy
duration.....	time, period
during such time.....	while
during the periods when.....	when
echelon.....	level, grade, rank
edifice.....	building
educator.....	teacher, trainer
effect (verb).....	make, cause, bring about
effect an improvement.....	improve
effectuate.....	carry out, put into effect
elaborate (on).....	expand on, develop
elapsed (time has).....	passed
elect.....	choose, pick
elementary.....	simple, basic

<i>Instead of</i>	<i>Try</i>
elevated.....	height, altitude
elicit	draw out, bring out, prompt, cause
eliminate	cut, drop, end, remove, omit, delete
elimination.....	removal, discarding, omission
elucidate.....	explain, clarify
emanates	emits, comes from, gives out
emphasize	stress, point out
employ	use
enable.....	let
encompass in	include, enclose
encounter	meet, find, meeting
encourage.....	urge, promote, favor, persuade
end product.....	result, product, outcome
end result	end, result, outcome
endeavor	try, effort, action
enhance.....	increase, raise, heighten, improve
ensue.....	follow, result
ensure.....	make sure, see that
enumerate	count, list
envisage.....	picture, view, have in mind, regard
equally as.....	as
equanimity	poise, balance
equitable	fair, just
equivalent	equal
eradicate.....	wipe out, remove, destroy, erase
erroneous	wrong, mistaken
especially	chiefly
essential	basic, necessary, vital, important
establish.....	set up, prove, show, make, set, fix
estimate.....	conclude, appraise, judge
evaluate.....	check, rate, test, fix the value of, measure, analyze, think about, price
evaluation	rating
eventuate.....	result
every effort will be made	(I/you/we/they) will try
everybody, everyone	each, all
evidence.....	fact
evidenced.....	showed
evident	clear, plain, obvious
evinced.....	show, display, express
evolution.....	change, growth
exacerbate.....	make more severe, violent or bitter; to make worse; to aggravate
examination	checkup, test, check, search, questioning
examine	check, look at, test, study, inspect, look into
exceed.....	go beyond, surpass
exceedingly.....	notable, extremely, very
excessive.....	too much, too many
execute.....	sign, perform, do act
exercise (authority).....	use
exhaustive.....	thorough, complete
exhibit.....	show, display
exigency.....	urgent demand, urgent need, emergency
exorbitant.....	too much, abnormal
expedite	hurry, rush, speed up, fast, quick, hasten
expeditious.....	fast, quick, prompt, speedy, exercise care, watch out, take care, use care
expend	pay out, spend, use
expendable.....	normally used up or consumed, replaceable
expenditure	(see "expense")

<i>Instead of</i>	<i>Try</i>
expense.....	cost, fee, price, loss, charges
experience has indicated.....	experience shows, learned
experiment	test, try, trial
expertise.....	expert opinion, skill, knowledge
explain.....	show, tell
expostulate	demand, discuss, object
extant.....	existing, current
extend.....	spread, stretch
extensive	large, wide
extenuating.....	qualifying, justifying
external.....	outer
extinguish.....	quench, put out
fabricate	construct, make, build, invent
facilitate	ease, help along, make easy, further, aid
factor	reason, cause
failed to	didn't
familiarity	knowledge
familiarize	inform, learn, teach
fatuous numskull.....	jerk
feasible	possible, can be done, workable, practical
females	women
final	last
finalize	complete, finish, conclude, end
firstly.....	first
foe	enemy
for example	such as
for the purpose of.....	for, to
for the reason that	because, since
for this reason	so
for your information	(usually not needed)
forfeit	give up, lose
formulate.....	make, devise, repair
forthcoming.....	coming, future, approaching
forthwith	at once, right away
fortuitous.....	by chance, lucky, fortunate
forward.....	send
fragment.....	piece, part
frequently	often
fullest possible extent	as much as possible, fully
function	act, role, work
fundamental	basic, main, primary
furnish.....	give, send, provide, supply
furthermore	besides, also
future date	sometime, later
gained from the following	obtained, learned, source
gainsay	deny, dispute, contradict
generate	produce
germane.....	relevant, fitting, related
give consideration to.....	consider
give encouragement to.....	encourage, urge (see "encourage")
give feedback	respond
give instructions to.....	instruct, direct
give rise to.....	raise, cause, bring about
goes without saying	(unnecessary)
govern	rule
habituate.....	accustom, make use to, adapt, adjust
has the ability	can
has the capability	can
has the capability of.....	is capable of, can, is able to
have the need for.....	need
have to.....	must, need to
held a meeting.....	met
henceforth	until now
hereby.....	by this
herein	here (often unnecessary)
heretofore	until now

The Tongue and Quill

<i>Instead of</i>	<i>Try</i>
hiatus.....	gap, lapse
higher degree of	more
hitherto.....	up to now, until now
hold in abeyance.....	suspend, delay, wait
homogeneity	unity, agreement
hopefully.....	I hope
however	but
identical	same
identification.....	name, designation
identify.....	find, name, show, point out, recognize
if and when	if, when (not both)
ilk	sort, kind
illustrate	show, make clear
immediately	at once, now, promptly, quickly
imminent.....	near
impact	affect (verb), effect (noun)
impacted	affected, changed, hit
impediment.....	block, barrier
imperative.....	urgent
impetus	drive, power, force
implement.....	carry out, do, follow, complete, fulfill
implication.....	impact meaning, effect
important	major, greater, main
impugn.....	assail, attack, criticize
impulse	drive, push, thrust
in a manner similar to.....	like, in the same way, as
in a number of cases.....	some, often, at times
in a position to	can
in a satisfactory manner	satisfactorily
in a situation in which	when
in accordance with.....	by, under, per, according to
in accordance with the.....	AFI 37-XXX requires, authority contained in AFI 37-XXX
in addition to	also, besides, too, plus
in an effort to	to, so that, so
in case of.....	if
in close proximity.....	near, nearby, close
in compliance with the	as directed, as requested, request
in conjunction with.....	with, together
in connection with.....	in, with, on, about
in favor of	for
in its entirety.....	all of it
in lieu of.....	instead of, in place of
in order that	for, so, so that
in order to	to
in process of preparation	being prepared
in recent past.....	lately
in reference to.....	regarding, about, on, concerning
in regard to.....	about, concerning, on
in relation to.....	about, concerning, on
in respect to	regarding, about, concerning, on
in sufficient time.....	early enough, soon enough, far enough ahead
in the amount of.....	for, of
in the course of	during, in, when
in the event of.....	if
in the event that	if, in case
in the immediate future	soon
in the majority of instances	the time (case)
in the matter of	in, on
in the nature of.....	like
in the near future	soon
in the negative	no, denied, disapproved
in the neighborhood of	about, around
in the time of	during
in the vicinity of	near, around
in view of.....	since
in view of the above	so, since, therefore

<i>Instead of</i>	<i>Try</i>
in view of the fact that	because, as
in this day and age	today, nowadays
in this instance	here (often necessary)
in-depth	(avoid if possible) thorough, complete
inaccurate	wrong, incorrect
inadvertently	accidentally, mistakenly
inasmuch as.....	since, because
inaugurate	start, begin, open
inception	start, beginning
incident to	pertaining, connected with
incidental.....	related, by chance
incombustible.....	fireproof, (it) will not burn
incorporate	blend, join, merge, include, combine, add
increase	rise, grow, enlarge, add to
increment	increase, gain, amount
incumbent upon	must
indebtedness.....	debt
indefinite.....	vague, uncertain
indeterminate	vague, uncertain
indicate.....	show, write down, call for, point out
indication	sign, evidence
individual (noun)	person, member
individually	each, one at a time, singly
ineffectual	futile, useless, ineffective
inexpensive	cheap, low-priced
infinite.....	endless
inflammable	(it) burns, flammable, burnable
inherent	basic, natural
inimical	hostile, unfriendly, opposed
initial (adjective).....	first
initially	first, at first
initiate	start, begin, act
innate.....	basic, native, inborn
innuendo	hint
input (provide).....	data, thoughts. comment on, advise, respond
insignificant	slight, trivial, unimportant
insofar as	since, for, because
insomuch as	since
instance	case, example
instantaneously	instantly, at once, suddenly
institute (verb).....	set up, start
integrate	combine
interface	connect, talk, coordinate, join, work together, merge, joint, point of contact, frontier, junction, common boundary
interpose no objection.....	don't object
interpose objections to	disapprove, disagree with, do not concur with, object to
interpret	grasp, explain, understand
interrogate	question
investigate.....	examine, study
irrespective (of the fact that).....	regardless
is dependent upon	depends on
is in receipt of	receives, got
is responsible for obtaining	obtains
is responsible for selection	selects
(is) symptomatic of.....	shows
it is.....	(leave out)
it is essential.....	must
it is important to note that.....	note
it is obvious that	clearly, obviously
it is possible that	may, possibly
it is recommended.....	I, we recommend
it is requested	please, request
jeopardize.....	endanger

<i>Instead of</i>	<i>Try</i>
jurisdictional authority	control
justification	grounds, reasons
justify	prove
juxtaposition (in)	alongside, next to
knowledge	experienced, well-trained
legislation	law
limitations	limits
limited number	few
locate	find
location	place, scene, site
magnitude	size, extent
maintain (maintenance)	keep, support (upkeep)
majority	greatest, longest, most
make a decision	decide
make a reply	reply
make a request	request, ask for
make a statement	state
make an adjustment	adjust, resolve
make every effort	try
make provisions for	provide, do
mandatory	must, required
manifest (to be)	clear, plain
manufacture	make, build
materialize	appear, take form
materially	greatly
maximal	highest, greatest
maximize	increase
maximum	most, greatest
meets with approval	is approved
mention	refer to
metamorphosis	change
minimal	least, lowest, smallest
minimize	decrease, lessen, reduce
minimum	least, lowest, small
mitigate	lessen, ease
mode	way, style
modify	change, moderate, qualify
monitor	check, watch, oversee, regulate
multitudinous	populous, large (crowd)
more specifically	for example
most unique	unique
negligible	small, trifling
neophyte	new, novice
nevertheless	however, even so, but
nebulous	vague
necessitate	cause, need, make, require, cause to be
not infrequently	often
not later than	by, before
not often	seldom
notwithstanding the fact that	although, nonetheless, nevertheless
notification	announcement, report, warning
notify	let know, tell
numerous	many, most
objective	aim, goal
obligate, obligatory	bind, compel
observe	see
obtain	get
obviate	prevent, remove, rule out
obvious	plain, clear
of great importance	important
of large dimensions	large, big, enormous
of late	lately
of no avail	useless, no use
of the opinion (to be)	to believe, think
often times	often
on account of	because
on behalf of	by, for, representing
on the basis of	based on

<i>Instead of</i>	<i>Try</i>
on the grounds that	because
on the part of	for
operate	run, work
operation	action, performance
operational	working
optimize	improve, strengthen
optimum	greatest, most favorable, best
option	choice, way
opus	work
organization	makeup, work site
orifice	hole, vent, mouth
originate	start, create, begin
outlook	view
outstanding (debt)	unpaid, unresolved
over the signature of	signed by
overlook	view, sight
parameters	limits, factors, boundaries
paramount	superior, supreme, principal, chief, outstanding
partake	share, take part in
participate	take part
particularize	(avoid using) state in detail, specify, itemize
patently	evidently
peculiar to	unusual
penitentiary	prison
per annum	each year, a year
perform	do, act, produce, complete, finish
period of time	period, time
periodic	cyclic, recurring
periphery	confines, limits, perimeter
permit	let
pernicious	deadly, harmful
personnel	people, staff
pertaining to	about, of, on
pertinent	to the point
peruse	read, study
phenomenon	fact, event
pictured	shown, imagined
place	put
plaudits	praise, applause, approval
plethora	(pompous) excess, too much
point in time	time, now, then
point of view	(usually unnecessary)
portend	predict, mean
portent	sign, omen
portion	part, share, lot
position	place
positively	(often unnecessary)
possess	have, own
posterior	end, rear
postpone	put off, delay
postulate (verb)	claim, assert, suggest
posture (on an issue)	view, position, attitude
potential (adjective)	possible
practicable	possible, workable
practically (done)	almost, nearly
precept	order, command, principle, rule of action
precipitate (adjective)	rash, sudden, hasty, abrupt
preclude	prevent, shut out
predicament	fix, dilemma
predicated on	based on
predominant	dominant, main, chief
predominantly	mainly, chiefly, mostly
preeminent	chief, outstanding, foremost, first
preliminary to	before
premier	first, leading
preparatory to	before
prepared	ready

The Tongue and Quill

<i>Instead of</i>	<i>Try</i>
preponderantly.....	mainly, chiefly
presently	now, soon
preserve	keep
prevail upon.....	persuade
prevalent	widespread
primary	first, chief
prime.....	best
prior to	before
previous to	before
previously	before
probability	chance, likelihood
problematical	doubtful
procedures	rules, ways
prioritize	(no such word) rank, rank in order
preventative	preventive
previous	earlier, past
proceed	do, go on, try
procure.....	get, gain
proficiency.....	skill, ability
profound	deep
programmed.....	planned
prohibit	prevent, forbid
project (ed) (verb).....	planned
promulgate.....	announce, issue, set forth
proportion	share, part, size, amount
proposal	plan, offer
prototype.....	first or original, model, pattern
provide.....	give, say, supply, furnish
provide for.....	care for
provided that.....	if
provides guidance for.....	guides
provisions (of a law).....	terms
proximity	nearness, distance
purchase.....	buy
purport	claim, mean
pursuant to	to comply with, in, under, per, according to
purvey	supply, provide, sell
purview	range, scope
quantify.....	count, measure, state the amount
rationale	reason
reach a decision	decide
reason for	why
reason is because	because
recapitulate	sum up, summarize, report
recipient	receiver
recommend	propose, suggest, advance
recommendation	advice, thought, counsel, opinion
reduce	cut
referred to as.....	called, named
reflect.....	show, say
regarding.....	about, of, on
regardless.....	in spite of, no matter
reimbursement.....	payment, repayment
reiterate	repeat
related with.....	on, about
relating to.....	about, on
relative to.....	on, about, for
relocation	move
remain	stay
remainder.....	the rest, what remains
remedy	cure
remittance	payment
remove	take away, take off, move
remuneration.....	pay, payment
render.....	give, make, report
repeat again.....	repeat, do again
replete	full, filled
represent	stand for, depict
reproduce, reproduction	copy
request	ask, please

<i>Instead of</i>	<i>Try</i>
require	must, need, call for
requirement	need
requisite.....	needed
reside.....	live
retain	keep
return.....	go back
review.....	check, go over
rudiments	first steps, basics
salient	main, important
salutary.....	good, healthy
sans.....	without
satisfactory	fine, good, good enough
saturate	soak, fill
scant	little, only
scrupulous.....	careful
scrutinize.....	study carefully, look into
segment	part
seldom ever	seldom
selection	choice
serves to	acts, helps, works
significance	meaning, point, importance
significant	main, great, major, marked,
signify	mean, show (verb)
similar to	like
sine qua non.....	essential
situated	placed, located, situation, work assignment, state
small in size	small
so as to	to
solicit.....	ask for
solitary	lone, single
somewhat	(usually padding)
specifications	terms, details, conditions
specify.....	list
square in shape.....	square
state (verb).....	say
statutory	legal
still remains.....	remains
stimulate.....	stir, arouse
stipend.....	salary, payment, fee
strict accuracy	accuracy
subordinate (verb).....	to lower, subdue
subordinate commands	their commands
subsequent to	after, later, next
submit.....	offer, give, send
substantial	large, real, strong, much, solid
substantiate	prove, support
substitute (verb).....	replace
succor	help, aid
succumb	die, yield
such	similar, like
such as.....	like, that is
sufficient	enough, ample
subsequently	after, later, then, next
stringent	tight, strict
subject	the, this, your
subject to examination.....	check, examine, verify
sufficiently in advance.....	early enough
sum total.....	sum, total
superfluous.....	extra, too much, useless
supervise	manage
supposition.....	belief, thought, idea
surmise	think, guess, suppose
susceptible to	open to, subject to
symptom	sign
synthesis.....	merging, combining
synthesize.....	put together, group, assemble
tabulation	table
take action	act
take appropriate measures	please
take necessary action	act

<i>Instead of</i>	<i>Try</i>	<i>Instead of</i>	<i>Try</i>
take necessary steps.....	do	upward adjustment.....	raise, increase
technicality	detail, fine point	usage	use
technique	way, method	utilize, utilization	use, employ
tender (verb)	offer, give	validate.....	confirm
tentative	uncertain	value.....	cost, worth
terminate	end, stop	variation	change
terrible disaster	disaster	velocity.....	speed
that	(leave out)	vend.....	sell
that aforesaid	(usually unnecessary) given or said above	verbatim	word for word, exact
the fact that	(usually unnecessary) that	veritable	(padding—usually unnecessary)
the following	this, these	very	(usually unnecessary)
the foregoing	these, those, (something) above	very far	distant, remote
the fullest degree possible	fully, as much as possible	very hot	torrid, scorching, fiery
(the) provisions of	(leave out)	very large	enormous, immense, huge, spacious,
the question as to whether	whether		vast
the undersigned is desirous of	I want	very last.....	last
(the) use of	(leave out)	very least.....	least
thence.....	from there	very near	adjacent, close
therapy	treatment	very pretty.....	gorgeous, beautiful
there are	(leave out)	very quiet	still, silent
there is	(leave out)	very small.....	tiny, puny
thereafter.....	after that, afterwards, then	very strong	powerful, potent, forceful
thereby	by that, by it	very stupid	dense, moronic, idiotic, stupid
therefore.....	so	very weak	exhausted, frail, flimsy, inadequate
therein.....	in (usually unnecessary)	via.....	in, on, through, by way of
thereof.....	of, its, their	viable.....	workable, capable of growing or developing (does not mean: feasible, advisable, workable, achievable, effective or practical)
thereon	on (usually unnecessary)	vicinity of	close, near
thereto	to that, to it	vicissitudes.....	ups and downs, changes, difficulties
thereupon	at once	vie.....	compete
thirdly	third	virtually	almost
this office	us, we	visualize	see, imagine, picture
this point in time.....	now	vitiate	weaken, spoil, impair, debase
thither.....	there	voluminous	bulky, large
through the use of.....	by, with	warrant	call for, permit
thus	so	whence	from where
thwart.....	frustrate, block, stop, hinder	whenever.....	when, each time
time period/frame	time, period, span	whereas	since, while
timely basis.....	promptly, fast, quickly	whereby.....	by which
to be aware of	know	wherein.....	in which, where
to effectively direct.....	to direct	wherever	where
to the extent that	as far as, so much that	wherewithal.....	means
transcend.....	go beyond	whether or not.....	whether, if
transformation	change	will be effected	will be done
transmit	send	will make use of.....	will use
transparent	clear	with a view to.....	to, for
transpire	happen, occur	with due regard for (or to)	for
transport.....	carry, move	with reference to	on, about
transverse.....	crosswise	with regard to	about, on, regarding, concerning
trauma	shock	with the exception of	except, except for, but
true facts	facts	with the purpose of	to
type	(leave out)	with the result that	so
ultimate	final, end	within the purview of.....	under
ultimately.....	in the end, finally	withstand.....	stand, resist
under advisement.....	(avoid) being considered	witnessed.....	saw
under separate cover.....	(usually necessary)	/	and, or
underprivileged.....	poor, deprived		
understand	know		
unintentionally.....	by mistake, mistakenly, accidentally		
until such time as.....	until, when		
upgrade	improve		
upon	on		

We've been looking a lot at how to write clear and concise sentences—what to do and what to avoid. Before we leave this section on effective sentence writing, there are two more areas we need to cover that have an impact on readability—sentence length and using questions.

SENTENCE LENGTH

The purpose of words on paper is to transfer thoughts in the simplest manner with the greatest clarity. You should avoid long, complicated sentences over 20 words (average is 17 words). Break up long, stuffy sentences by making short sentences of dependent clauses or by using lists. Short sentences increase the pace; long ones usually retard it. The key is to vary your pattern since constant use of either form can be monotonous.

ASK MORE QUESTIONS

Use questions now and then to call attention to what you want. You're actually reaching out to your reader when a sentence ends with a question mark. In a longer communication, a question can definitely be a welcome change. Can you hear how spoken a question is?

Well, that's it—the general guidance for writing your first draft. You now have some great guidance on using the three part structure (introduction, body and conclusion) and writing effective paragraphs and sentences. As promised earlier in this chapter, under Drafting Basics, we briefly mentioned “writer's block.” We didn't give you any solutions, but we're going to give you some now. When you sit down to start on your first draft, don't waste time staring at a blank screen or paper—try some of the tips on page 89.

ADVICE ON OVERCOMING WRITER'S BLOCK

If you occasionally suffer from writer's block, you're not alone—even experienced writers have a hard time getting started. Before we get to some cures, exactly what is writer's block? It's a temporary inability to get words on paper (or on the computer). Like many other problems, it has a life cycle—denial, despair, acceptance and recovery. What leads to writer's block, anyway? There are five fears that can cause it: fear of failure, fear of rejection, fear of success, fear of offending and fear of running dry (out of ideas). So now that we know what writer's block is and what causes it, what can we do about it?

In most cases we just need a gentle nudge to get us back on track. In her book *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Creative Writing*, Laurie E. Rozakis, PhD, provides several suggestions on how to overcome writer's block. Here are some of her ideas, as well as some of our own:

- ◆ Brainstorm or “free write” to get your creative juices flowing. Just get the words down as fast as they come, preferably on the computer so they will be easy to edit. Spill your brains, don't worry about punctuation—just get it down. Stick pretty close to your outline. Don't revise. Don't polish. If your outline is comprehensive, you may only need to string the ideas together with brief transitions. If your outline is a series of key words in a logical pattern, you'll have to fill in the larger blanks.
- ◆ Start wherever you want. Don't feel you need to start with the introduction; some writers do that section last. The key here is to just start writing. Try starting with the part that's easiest to write.
- ◆ On a similar note, try writing just the topic sentences for each paragraph. Once you do this, the other, support sentences will start really flowing.
- ◆ Avoid procrastination. Waiting until the last minute just increases your “blockage”!
- ◆ If page length, word count, or some other constraint is holding you back, forget about it on the first draft. You can reshape later, once you have something to revise.
- ◆ Tell your ideas to a friend.
- ◆ Briefly do some mindless activity—but only briefly!
- ◆ Try changing your writing mode—if using the computer, try writing longhand and visa versa.
- ◆ Use visuals, like pictures or diagrams, to show what you mean. This can help ignite your ideas and thoughts. Then, you can write them.
- ◆ Develop rituals or routines to get in the mood for writing—a cup of coffee, an early arrival at the office, etc.
- ◆ If you work in a crowded or noisy office, try using earplugs to cut down on noise and distractions. It may sound strange, but it really works!

SUMMARY

Writer's block is very common and usually very temporary and curable. There are lots of ways to overcome it. Hopefully, the tips here will help you. Always remember—writing should be fun, not frightening!

Congratulations! The most difficult task is over—you've successfully written the dreaded first draft. Take a break and step back from your draft. When you come back, you'll be ready to revise and edit it.

