

WRITE EFFECTIVE SENTENCES

Use active voice.

In active voice, the subject of the sentence does the action (e.g., *The evaluator reviewed the program*). In passive voice, the subject is being acted upon by the object (e.g., *The program was reviewed by the evaluator*).

In some situations, passive voice may be preferable to active voice:

- When the doer of the action is unimportant, obvious, or unknown
- When the writer wishes to emphasize the receiver of the action instead of the doer
- When the writer wishes to diminish the strong tone of active voice.

Be wary of combining active and passive voice in the same paragraph.

Eliminate filler words.

Filler words occupy the important subject/verb positions of a sentence with words that don't say anything (like "it is" or "there are") or that cite the source, rather than what the source found or did (like "We recommend that" or "He said that").

Eliminate other unnecessary words.

Reread your document after drafting it and ask yourself whether any words can be removed without changing your main point. Eliminating even one or two unnecessary words in a sentence makes the sentence clearer and easier to read.

Be concise.

Write shorter sentences. If your sentence is longer than 25 words, even after eliminating unnecessary words, consider writing two sentences or using bullets.

Keep the structure simple.

- Keep verbs as verbs—not "we made a determination..." but "we determined..."
- Limit use of prepositions. Try not to use more than four prepositions in a sentence.

Never use a longer word when a shorter word will do.

Get to the main point.

- Be as clear as possible. Think of your reader.
- Avoid jargon or other words that you may understand but your reader probably won't.

Organize related ideas through parallelism.

Emphasize the similarity among ideas by presenting them in the same grammatical structure.

Questions? Email us at info@quillassociates.com