



Business and Scientific Writing

INSTRUCTOR: DANIELLE HEUER

Coaching writers to improve readability and effectiveness

- Leadership and communications coach
 - Providing consulting services and training solutions to Fortune 500 companies globally
- 10+ years experience coaching writers
 - Business/Email Writing
 - Technical/Scientific/Medical Writing
 - Publication Writing
 - Resume Writing



Objectives

- Identify writing that motivates a positive reader response.
- Apply a focused strategy for writing.
- Use a technique to overcome writer's block and to focus content.
- Use strategies for emphasizing the key points.
- Organize and format content for action.
- Review tips for ensuring clarity.

What are your goals when writing at work?

Providing an answer

Persuading

Share an idea

Educating others

Sharing expertise

Building relationships

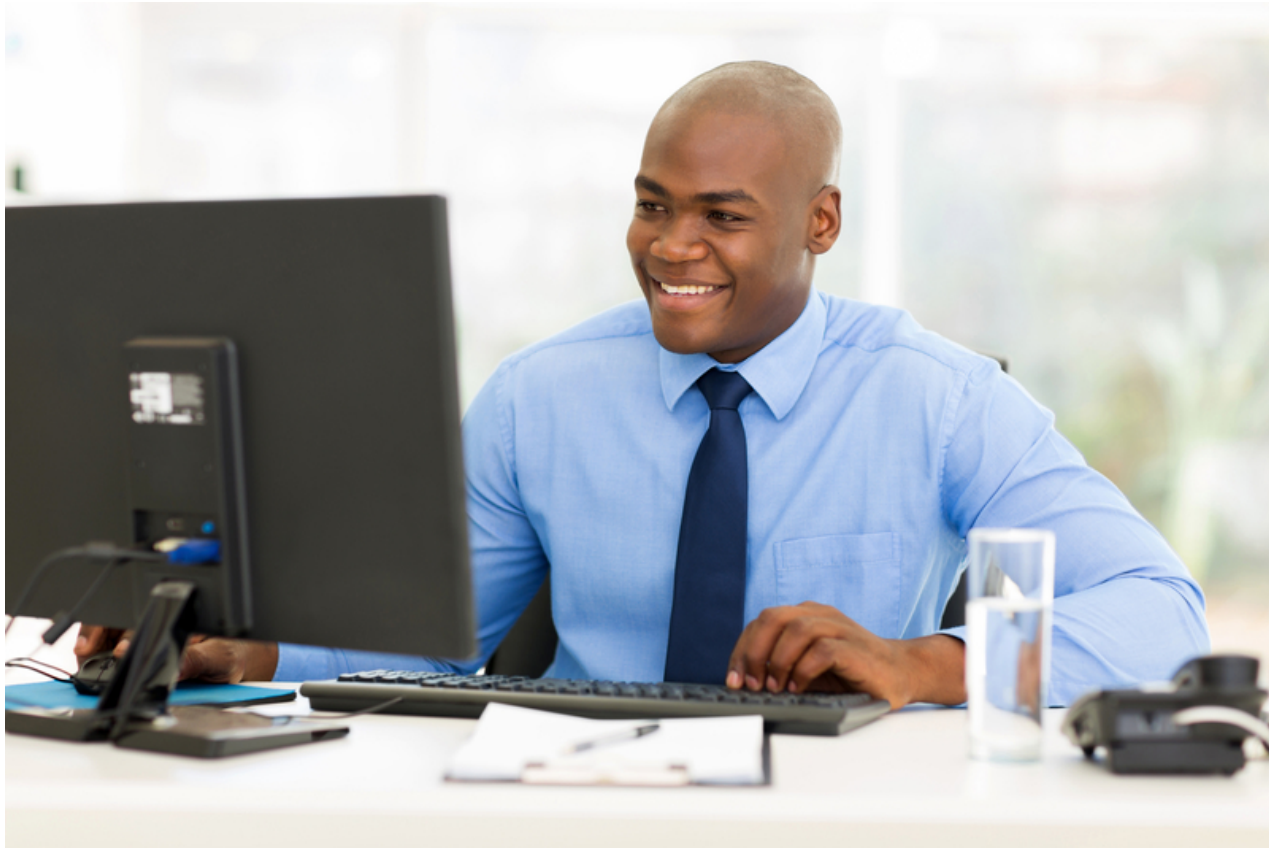
Providing critical information for decision making

Confirming compliance

Presenting a strong professional image of yourself



Should one of our goals be to motivate a positive reader response?



Your writing could be the key to make you
more visible at work.



Communication skills gaps are hitting organizations at all hiring levels

The 2015 Association for Talent Development (ATD) survey found the following skills gaps across organizations and positions

- 62%: communication/interpersonal skills
- 58%: managerial/supervisory skills
- 58%: critical thinking and problem-solving skills
- 51%: leadership/executive-level skills
- 50%: process improvement/project management skills
- 41% technical skills

Employ a writing strategy to increase effectiveness and improve efficiency

PREPARE



POSITION



POLISH

Before you write, PREPARE by focusing on the 3 Rs

Reader

- Who are your readers?
- What do you know about the reader(s) background?

Reason

- Why are you writing? What do you want the reader to do?

Relevance

- How much content does the reader need to be successful?
- What is the most important piece of information for the reader?

Be clear on your 3 R's before you write or risk sharing your rambling thoughts

W
R
I
T
I
N
G

I am somewhat concerned by an email that I received from Beth Frankel at 5:07 pm today with a copy of your email to me requesting the data based upon the xyz assay that I did not have nor do I have your original email?

S
A
M
P
L
E

The below email was the last email that I have from you on this. I don't believe that I received this follow up request. I would assume that you have accidentally emailed it to someone else?

Beth also advised me that you have been trying to call me all week without a return call regarding this data. I received a voicemail earlier in the week. But I was out at a training, so I couldn't return your call until after 5 and I figured your were not in the office and was going to return the call on Monday morning as I always try to return all of my calls.

The data summary you requested is below and the database has been updated with the results.

What 'R' did this writer focus on?

REACTING

Be clear on your 3 R's before you write

Reader	Reason	Relevance
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expertise in your area?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Purpose – think verb?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What content does the reader need?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Type of reader?<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expert• Executive• External	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Image goals?<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To convey credibility• To ensure comfort level• To build a relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is the most important content for the reader?• What content does your reader NOT need?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Preferred style of your reader(s) – is your reader direct? Does your reader prefer shorter messages?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Short term/long term goals – what do you want your reader to do immediately after reading your document or email? Long term?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What pieces of content support your purpose?<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Timelines• Recommendations• Diagrams

What was the writer's purpose?

I am somewhat concerned by an email that I received from Beth Frankel at 5:07 pm today with a copy of your email to me requesting the data based upon the xyz assay that I did not have an email?

To provide the missing data?

The below email was the last email that I believe that I received this follow-up request. I would assume that you have accidentally emailed it to someone

To understand what happened with the miscommunication?

Beth also advised me that you have been trying to call me all week without a return call regarding this data. I couldn't return your call until the week. But I was out at a training, so I couldn't return your call until after 5 and I figured you were not in the office and was going to return the call on Monday morning as I always try to return all of my calls.

To apologize for not being as responsive as he should have been?

The data summary you requested is below and the database has been updated with the results.

Revision Option 1

Hi Lori,

Beth Frankel asked that I contact you regarding your database request. I realize you have called and emailed me on this request. Please accept my apology as I was out most of the week in training.

Below is the data summary you requested and the full data report has been entered in the database.

Thank you for your patience.

Regards,

Revision Option 2

Hi Lori,

Attached is the data summary and report you requested. Beth advised that you were waiting for it. I hope she told you that I was out this week in training.

Regards,

Employ a writing strategy to increase effectiveness and improve efficiency



Have you ever felt this way when you were trying to write?



Dump the ideas out so that they don't distract you from your goals

Handwrite notes

Need to consider the effects on the global team – not all policies
⇒ across cultures

Oct 14 – deadline for changes in US, want global teams on board within 3 months

Training dept needs outline by Jul 1

Create a typed list or outline of ideas

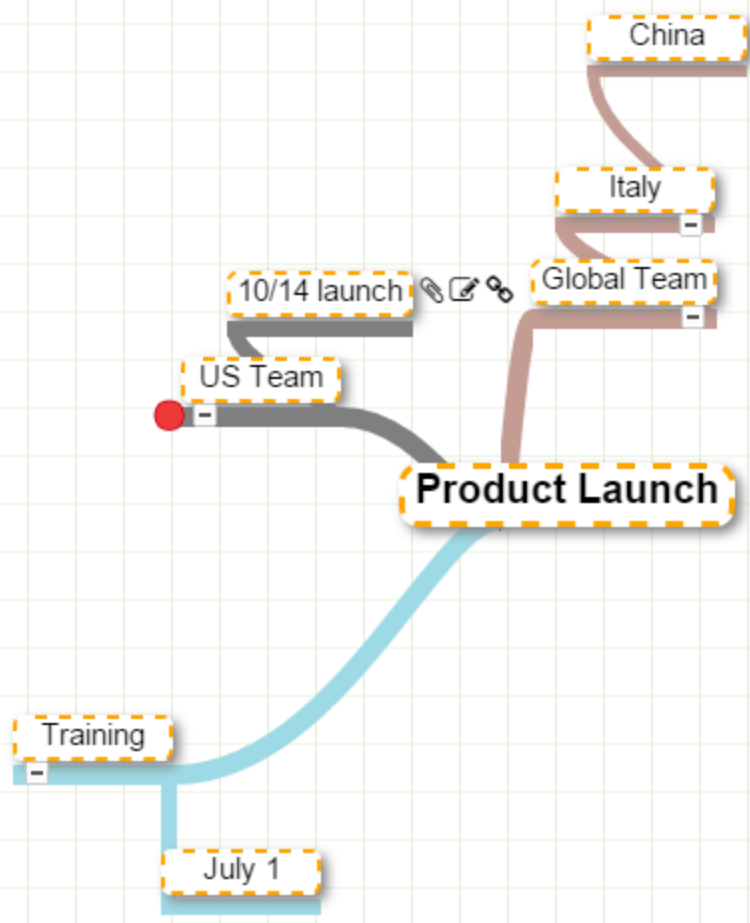
Global team needs
US deadline
Policies are country specific – need team to address so we are successful

Oct 14 –US deadline
Global team by 1/14

Provide training with outline by 7/1

Try a Mind Map





Inspector

Hide Border Style: **Dashed** ▼ Inhe

Border Color: Inhe

Background: Inhe

Font face: **Sans-serif** ▼ Inhe

Font size: **A-** **A+**

Font style: **B** / U S Inhe

Font color: Inhe

Line width: **-** **+**

Branch color: Inhe

Connect: **Connect**

Attachment: **Attachment**

Image: **Add/Change Image**

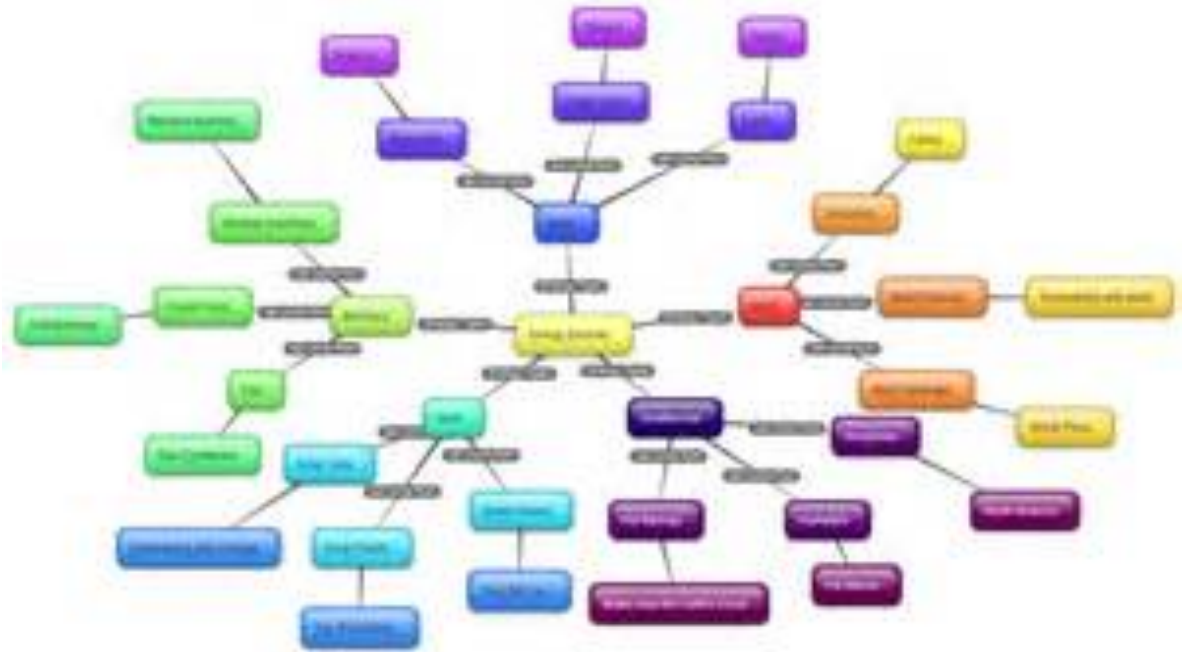
Navigator

There are other free mindmapping tools to check out

Mindmeister

Freemind

Xmind



Get to the main point!



What was the main point here?

I am somewhat concerned by an email that I received from Beth Frankel at 5:07 pm today with a copy of your email to me requesting the data based upon the xyz assay that I did not have nor do I have your original email?

The below email was the last email that I have from you on this. I don't believe that I received this follow up request. I would assume that you have accidentally emailed it to someone else?

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The data summary you requested is below and the database has been updated with the results.

THE EFFECTS OF INCREASED ATMOSPHERIC CARBON DIOXIDE

Environmental Research Associates, Inc.

The report examines the effects of increased CO₂ concentrations in the earth's atmosphere. The shifting of local weather patterns, the mechanisms of the greenhouse effect, and the sources and sinks of CO₂ are also discussed. A list of possible remedies to the problem concludes the report.

Summary

Carbon dioxide accumulation in the atmosphere is the most dangerous pollution problem today. This excess of CO₂ will cause an increase in the mean global temperature which should be detectable shortly before the end of this century. This warming is caused by the greenhouse effect. CO₂ allows incoming radiation from the sun to enter the atmosphere. The heat from the earth's surface, which must radiate in the infrared region of the spectrum, is absorbed by CO₂ and water vapor, thereby raising the atmospheric temperature. The greenhouse water-vapor coupling provides a strong positive feedback mechanism. Fossil-fuel use increases at an exponential rate of 4.3% annually. This should cause a doubling of CO₂ concentrations by between the year 2020 and the year 2075. This doubling of atmospheric CO₂ will cause an increase in the mean global temperature of about 30° to 50° C. Warmer temperatures will cause a shift in atmospheric circulation patterns. This will cause local weather patterns to change. The results for the United States could be intensive drought, increased tropical storm activity, and a rise in the sea level caused by melting of the polar ice caps. To lessen the severity of the problem, fossil fuel consumption must be curtailed and alternate energy sources developed. Also, a global reforestation program should be undertaken to provide a large biotic sink for CO₂ in the new few decades.

Position your main point up front and then organize remaining content

**Emails, report sections,
meeting minutes**

**Procedures/SOPS/
Protocols**

Most important
to least
important

Sequence

Chronology

Tables

Headings

Formatting can help focus your main point

- Break paragraphs in email at 3-4 lines and in reports at 5-6 lines.
- Use headings liberally.
- Use specific headings that focus the reader.
- Choose a font that is easily read on screen like Arial or Tahoma.
- Maintain a 12 point font in emails and reports and 24 point font in the body of a slide.

Employ a writing strategy to increase effectiveness and improve efficiency

PREPARE



POSITION



POLISH

After you write, make time to polish for correctness in grammar, readability, and tone

Grammar

- Comma confusion
- Semi-colon addiction
- Usage errors

Readability

- Words/sentence
- Reading ease
- Grade level
- Active/Passive

Tone

- Requests versus commands
- Words to avoid
- Greetings and closings

Complex sentences are killing clarity.

- Never use two **words** when you can use one.
- Use plain English instead of complicated **words**.

Use words that drive readers to your main point.

- ❑ Cascade this to the people and see what the pushback is.

**What is this sentence doing that is driving the reader
AWAY from the main point?**

Could the writer have written this instead:

- ❑ Please forward to the marketing team and ask for feedback on the new timelines.

Words that get in the way

Redundancy

- ❑ Past history
- ❑ Future plans
- ❑ Very unique
- ❑ Basic essentials
- ❑ Month of May
- ❑ Advanced planning
- ❑ Assemble together

Inflated Language

- ❑ Paucity = Scarce
- ❑ Facilitate = made easy or instruct
- ❑ Utilized = use
- ❑ Incentivize = motivate
- ❑ Necessitates = needs

Zombie Nouns*

- ❑ Compensation = compensate
- ❑ Modification = modify
- ❑ Reorganization = reorganize
- ❑ Proliferation = proliferate
- ❑ Formation = form/format
- ❑ Indication = indicate

“The secret to good writing is to strip every sentence to its cleanest components.”

William Zinnser –

Author, *On*

Writing Well



Long, complex sentences are still killing clarity!

If you have received this email, it is because I would like to take the time to make sure we are preparing you as best as possible to succeed training within the context of this environment. 36 words

Potential revisions:

The training department wants to ensure that all field personnel are prepared for this new equipment launch. (17 words)

To prepare all field staff for the new equipment launch, the training department is offering the following workshops. (18 words)

The training department wants to ensure a smooth rollout of the Connected Customer launch. To ensure you are prepared, please follow the steps below. (12 words/sentence avg)

Separate thoughts into individual sentences and beware of over using the comma or the word “which”

To achieve this goal, the Semantic Web community has proposed and developed new standard Web languages such as RDF (the Resource Description Framework) and OWL (the WEB Ontology Language), which provide enhanced capability for resource description and knowledge representation going far beyond the context presentation capabilities of HTML language and data tagging capabilities of the SML language. (59 wds)

Long sentence revision steps

- Remove unnecessary, clutter words.
- Insert punctuation at logical breaks in thought.
- Consider adding a transition to add logic if you create multiple sentences from the original.

Long sentences are everywhere!

These results demonstrate the capacity of an elicited endogenous immune response to destroy large, established tumors and elucidate essential characteristics of combination immunotherapies that are capable of curing a majority of tumors in experimental settings typically viewed as Intractable. (39 wds)

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Use strategies that allow readers to “access information” quickly

- Write focused subject lines that include actions.
- Place your main point early in your message.
- Organize content so readers can “grab and go.”
- Use formatting to make documents visually appealing.
- Cut clutter and excessive, inflated words from your writing that are distracting. (Think verbs)
- Keep sentences short and to the point.

Assessing the readability of your document

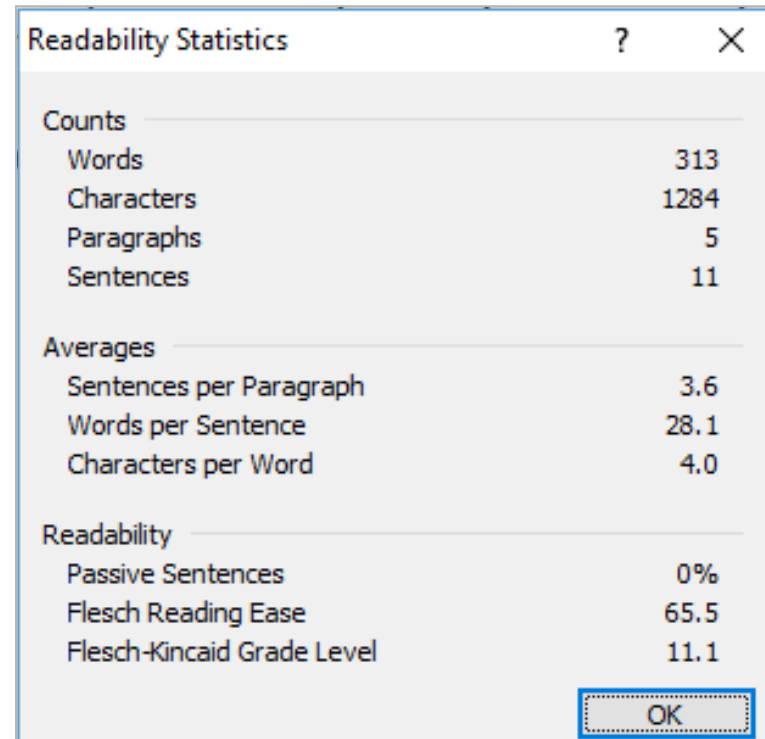
- ❑ Walk away from it and come back – how does it sound?
- ❑ Ask a colleague to read it – how did your colleague think it sounded?
- ❑ Use a readability tool – get an objective opinion on how it will land on your readers.

MS Word Readability Statistics

If you don't use MS Word – use: <https://readability-score.com/>

What scores do we want to get?

- ❑ **WPS** 15-20 words
 - ❑ **Passive** > 30%
 - ❑ **Ease** 50-70
 - ❑ **Grade** 8-10
- User manuals/product inserts = 5
 - Hemingway's Old Man and The Sea = 4
 - General public = 7
 - Romance novels = 5
 - USA Today = 8-10
 - The New Yorker = 10
 - Time of India = 15
 - John Grisham, Stephen King = 7



Readability Statistics	
Counts	
Words	313
Characters	1284
Paragraphs	5
Sentences	11
Averages	
Sentences per Paragraph	3.6
Words per Sentence	28.1
Characters per Word	4.0
Readability	
Passive Sentences	0%
Flesch Reading Ease	65.5
Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level	11.1

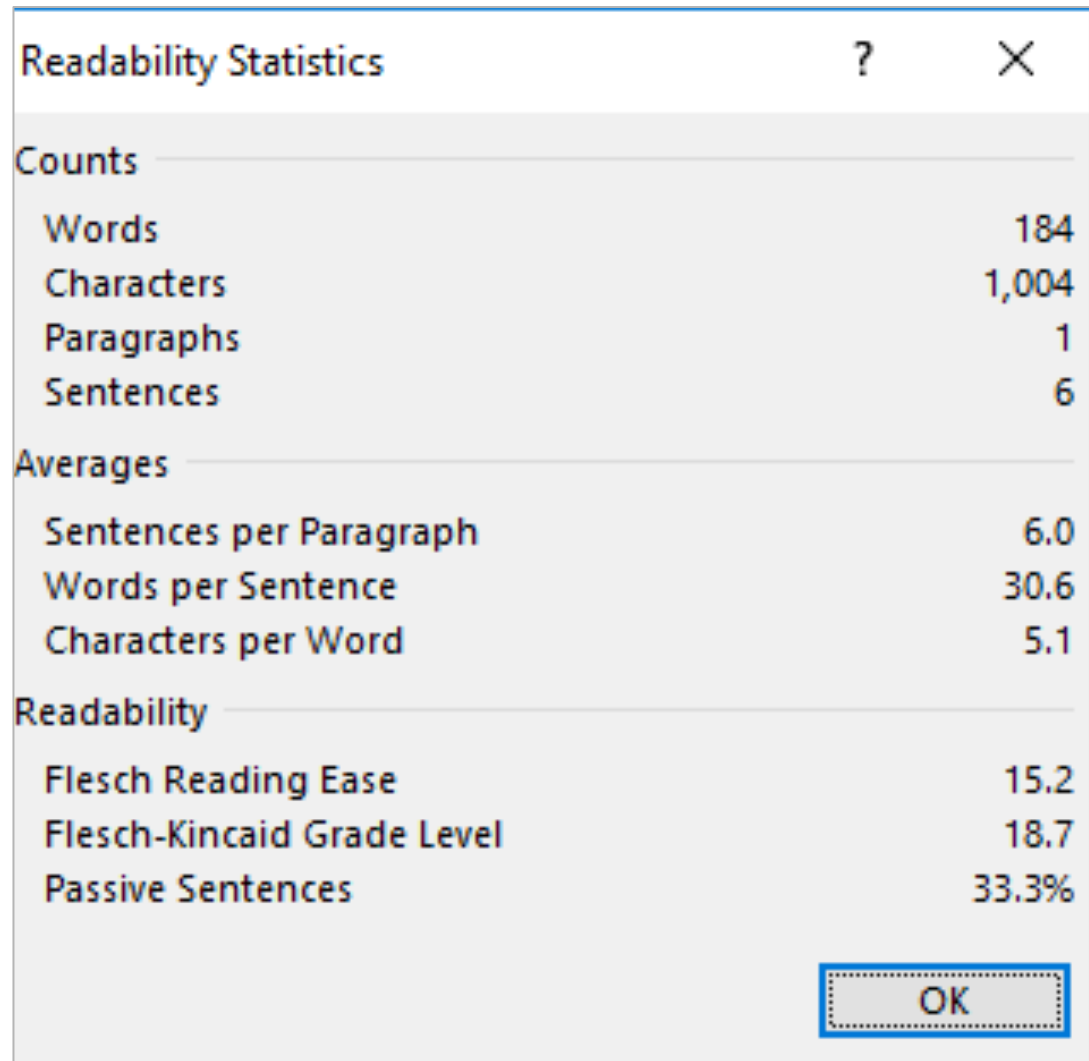
A Score of a 100 = reading level of a 4th or 5th grader

“To place before the general public the grand results of scientific work”

- IN the search for compounds active against human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), we have found that members of a novel series of tetrahydro-imidazo[4,5,1-jk][1,4]-benzodiazepin-2(1H)-one and -thione (TIBO) derivatives inhibit the replication of HIV-1 (refs 1, 2), the main aetiological agent of AIDS, but not of HIV-2 (ref. 3), or of any other DNA or RNA viruses. In five cell systems, HIV-1 is inhibited by TIBO derivatives in nanomolar amounts, which are 10^4 – 10^5 times lower than the cytotoxic concentration. The unprecedented specificity of these compounds may be due to an interaction with a reverse transcriptase-associated process. By contrast, AZT (3'-azido-2',3'-dideoxythymidine), which is used for the treatment of AIDS, and DDC (2',3'-dideoxycytidine) and DDI (2',3'-dideoxyinosine), whose clinical application is being assessed, inhibit both HIV-1 and HIV-2 at concentrations that, depending on the cell systems, are 2 to 4 orders of magnitude below their cytotoxic concentration^{5–8}. TIBO-derivatives are new chemicals unrelated to any other antiviral agents. We believe that they are the most specific and potent inhibitors of HIV-1 replication studied so far.

Do you want to motivate positive reader results?

- Read
- Access key points
- Understand



The screenshot shows a dialog box titled 'Readability Statistics' with a question mark icon and a close button (X). The dialog is divided into three sections: 'Counts', 'Averages', and 'Readability'. Each section contains a list of metrics and their corresponding values.

Counts	
Words	184
Characters	1,004
Paragraphs	1
Sentences	6

Averages	
Sentences per Paragraph	6.0
Words per Sentence	30.6
Characters per Word	5.1

Readability	
Flesch Reading Ease	15.2
Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level	18.7
Passive Sentences	33.3%

An 'OK' button is located at the bottom right of the dialog box.

If your goal is clear, focused writing - active voice is your best choice

Active voice

Area managers completed their end-of-year performance reviews and will upload them to the system by Friday.

- Who did what

Clear
Focused
Action - oriented

Passive voice

End-of-year performance reviews were completed by area managers and will be uploaded to the system by Friday.

- What was done by whom

Detached
Impersonal
Clunky

Polish for tone before hitting send

Negative tone email

With the deadline for the proposal being this Friday and no draft produced as of yet, I will take over this project.

Considering how large this client is, your lack of attention to their request shows your inexperience with this line of work.

Use these strategies to avoid negative tone

- ❑ Avoid words like: you, don't, can't, won't, no, unfortunately, cannot, couldn't, fail, lack, refuse.
- ❑ Write for the future – solve a problem, suggest a solution, move forward.
- ❑ Include greetings and closings.
- ❑ Consider using passive voice as a tone strategy
- ❑ Share what you CAN do instead of replying with what you CANNOT do.
- ❑ Give the business reason for request.
- ❑ Know when to pick up the phone.

New strategies for resume writing

Create a visually appealing look

Color blocks, different font colors, and formatting can create a visually appealing look and make it easier to read.

Be unique and authentic

If you are interested in graphics consider including icons on your resume.

Describe how you added value

“Implemented effective business relationship building approaches effectively and revitalized the company’s clientele which resulted in 30% enhancement in revenue.”

Think key words

Key words placed up front make sense since we know readers will skim.



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www.johndoe.com

socialite/johndoe



About me

Curabitur eget orci id enim dignissim hendrerit. Nunc at varius dui, quis vulputate nibh. Vivamus dui metus, hendrerit a finibus ac, congue ac sem. Mauris justo elit, placerat nec, vehicula ac, consectetur eu magna. Suspendisse non efficitur velit, non congue leo. Nunc vulputate ex quis erat faucibus, ut rutrum leo etiam. Proin scelerisque nibh justo, eu viverra ipsum, accumsan in. Ut lacus massa fells, quis congue sapien sagittis sit amet. Morbi condimentum ante suscipit tellus rhoncus, ac eleifend ipsum ultrices. Nulla orci dolor, gravida vitae commodo eget, laoreet ac ligula.

Professional Skills

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Curabitur cursus tempor vestibulum. Etiam neque nunc, pellentesque vel dolor ac, euismod mollis orci. In hendrerit et malesuada fames ac ante ipsum.

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Efficitur

Quam

Donec

Aliquam

Languages

English

German

Spanish

Personal Skills

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Vivamus ligula odio, bibendum eu tristique vel, semper quis ipsum. Phasellus blandit laoreet laoreet. Etiam tristique nunc mi.

Pellentesque eget fells vulputat, vehicula turpis quis, partitor lectus. Donec malesuada, dui eu luctus auctor, diam est congue velit, ut pharetra tortor augue eu.

Venenatis

Aenean

Proin

Consequat

Hobbies

Basketball

Cycling

Jogging

Timeline

Commodo High School

1996

2010

Fusce Sodales Company

Nunc id porta ris, eget malesuada augue. Quisque sit amet lectus fermentum fells sollicitudin fringilla nec. Pellentesque habitant morbi tristique senectus et netus et malesuada fames ac turpis egestas ut, a finibus ex.

Nullam non ullamcorper neque, ut gravida enim, in dapibus magna non ligula efficitur mollis. Phasellus porta, tellus sed faucibus pharetra, elit lectus venenatis orci, eu ullamcorper nunc diam in enim, aenean non facilis enim.

Curabitur College

2000

2012

Phasellus Porta Company

Vestibulum fringilla, neque et facilis laoreet, libero nunc ultrices augue, ac elementum magna orci nec ante. Nam vitae dolor faucibus nibh, fermentum vitae nunc id hendrerit maximus nibh.

Tellus sed faucibus pharetra, elit lectus venenatis orci, eu ullamcorper nunc diam in enim, aenean non facilis enim integer sodales dignissim orci, in laoreet quam, elementum eget pellentesque rutrum.

Inceptos University

2004

2014

Accumsam Company

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Euismod Masters

2008

2015

Vivamus Company

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Cover letter strategies

Why should they read it?

It's short and structured – 3-4 paragraphs

Intro paragraph addresses company and role

Body addresses “why you”

Closing paragraph asks for interview and thanks

Why this position?

Include details about the company being a good fit

Include the position in intro paragraph

Why you?

Share a particular work accomplishment or something you are proud of

Use content from the posting to describe your attributes

The cover letter should not be “cut and pasted” from resume.