

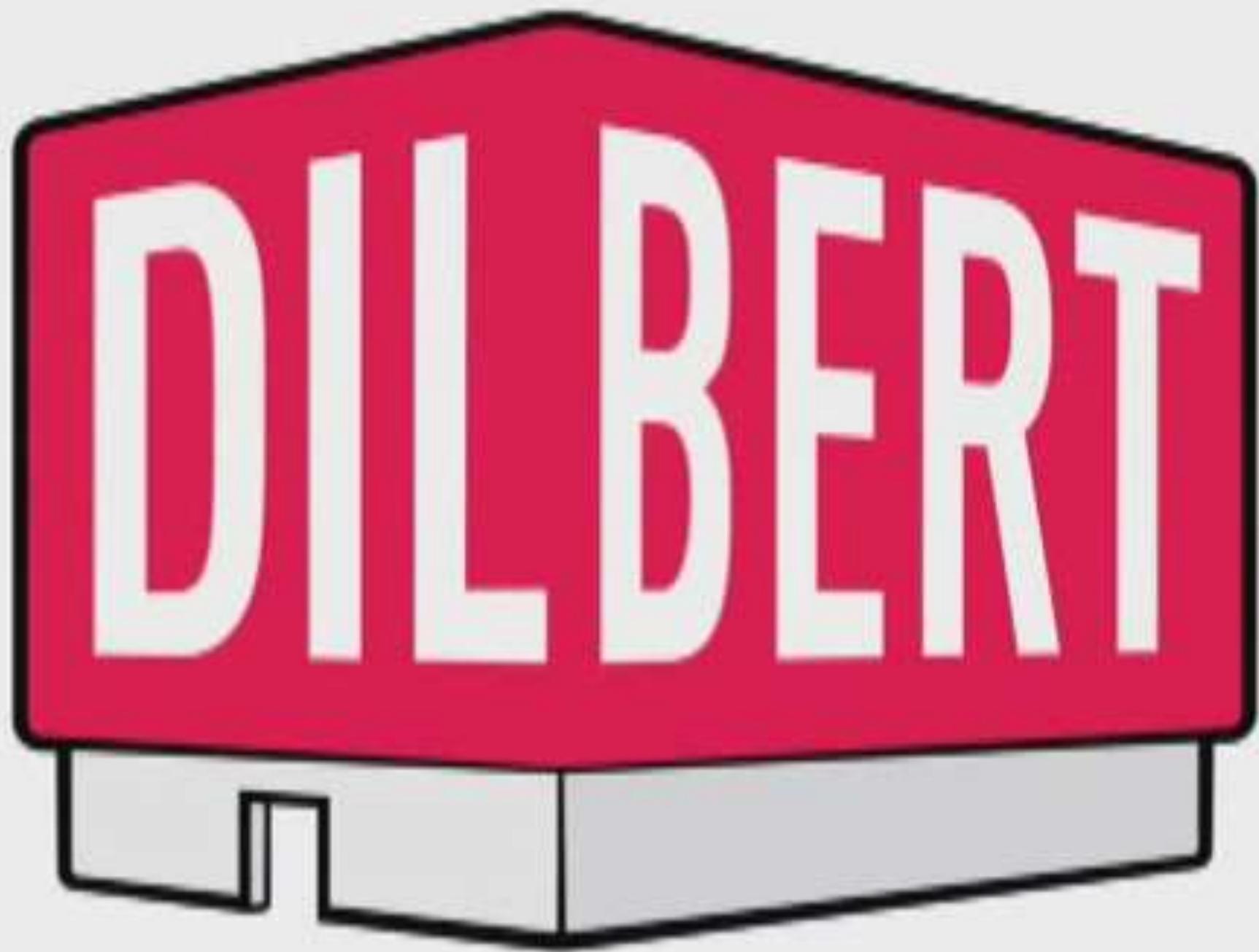
Trim and Tone Your Writing in 7 Easy Steps



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www.presencecommunications.com.au



by
**SCOTT
ADAMS**



Are you here because...

- the meaning of your message often gets lost in folds of fat writing? **or**
- your writing is sluggish... unappealing... lacking oomph and lustre? **or**
- you could be compromising credibility because your writing takes too long to get to the point, because it's weighed down with waffly words?



Today's Training

- Invigorate your writing
- Balance tone with intention
- Build strength and stamina into your syntax
- Coordinate commas, colons and other punctuation to clarify meaning
- 'Pace' your prose
- Flex the flow for faster reading
- Become an agile author

My Writing Fitness Plan



My Writing Fitness Plan to Trim & Tone My Writing in 7 Easy Steps

Step	Action	
 #1 Warm Up	<u>Start</u>	<u>Stop</u>
 #2 Tone Up	<u>Start</u>	<u>Stop</u>
 #3 De-Noun & Verbify	<u>Start</u>	<u>Stop</u>
 #4 Specify	<u>Start</u>	<u>Stop</u>
 #5 Clarify	<u>Start</u>	<u>Stop</u>
 #6 Tighten	<u>Start</u>	<u>Stop</u>
 #7 Tidy	<u>Start</u>	<u>Stop</u>

Why Fitter Writing is Favourable

Readers can:

- See what they need to know (easily, quickly)
- Understand what they read
- Use this knowledge to take the action that will meet their needs... and yours.

Writers can:

- Improve response rates and outcomes
- Encounter fewer complaints and delays
- Be more productive with the time and effort saved
- Boost your reputation and promotion prospects
- Support and enhance team performance

Time

Writer

Reader



Activity

What's the #1 most important thing I hope to gain from this training?

What stops my writing from kicking goals?

Warm Up

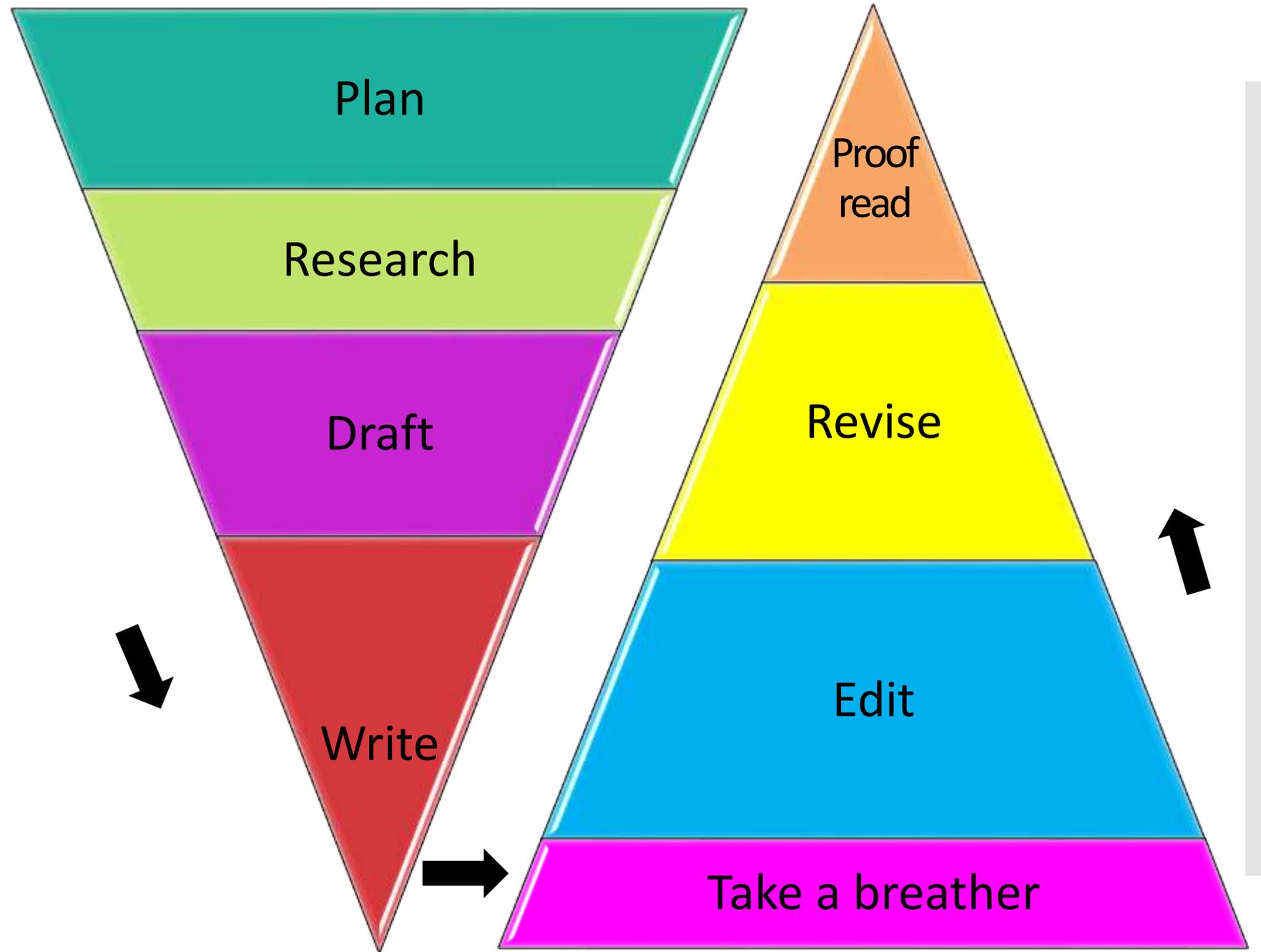
1



Ready, Set — Write!

- Prime yourself
- Pencil power
- WIRMI
What I Really Mean Is...
- Blah dumps
- Sticky note story board

Writing as a Process



Write With a Clear Purpose



WIIFM

What's in it for me?
(the writer)

What do I want to gain
from this transfer or
exchange of
information?

Write for the Reader

WIIFT

What's in it for them?
(the reader)

Why should they read
it and take the action
I want?



Tone Up

2



Importance of Tone

Mehrabian Principle

- **7%** of **meaning** conveyed by content (words, pictures, graphs)
- **38%** by tone
- **55%** by non-verbal cues



Impact of Tone

The readers' **interpretation** of our tone **influences** how they **respond** to us.

Tone

Tells how...

- *the writer feels*
- *the writer wants the reader to feel*
- *much the writer cares*
- *much the writer respects the reader and the situation*

Told by ...

- *the channel*
- *the language*
- *the amount of help the writer gives the reader*
- *the quality of the effort*

“It’s not what you said.
It’s how you said it.”

Tone Tellers

- Formality & Familiarity
 - *situation*
 - *relationship*
- Brand & Circumstance Tone
 - *friendly vs stern*
 - *brevity vs detail*
- Formatting
 - (*clear, cramped or cluttered*)
- House style
 - (*consistency and credibility*)
- Language
 - *words, jargon, slang*
 - *'Plain English' preferred*
 - *relationship*

Decisions based on:

Who is my reader? +

What is my purpose? +

What's the context?

An application for Justice of the Peace registration from you was received by the Department of Justice but it cannot be processed because you did not sign both pages and it was signed with a pencil. Sign and submit the form again otherwise it will not be processed. Do not use blue ink or pencil.

Thank you for applying to become a registered Justice of the Peace. As your signature is required on both pages for the application to be processed, please sign the enclosed form in the flagged places and return it to us. Remember to use a pen with black ink so the application can be completed successfully.

Positives & Negatives

- And/But
- She wasn't on time/She was late
- It's neither insignificant nor uncommon to see double negatives
- Don't fail to



Activity

Re-write the following message with a more positive, helpful tone.

The request for special leave was incomplete. The request has been denied. Do not resubmit the request without all the requisite information.

De-noun & Verbify



3

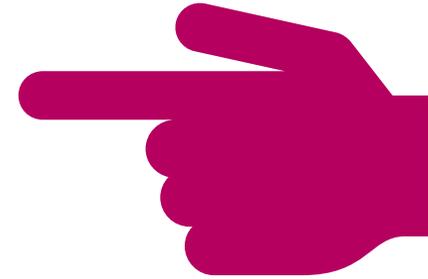
Active v. Passive

Use verb + adjective or adverb combinations instead of multiple nouns:

- Take care with making your decision/**Decide carefully.**
- Ensure the smooth operation of the program/**Ensure the program operates smoothly.**
- He used gestures to emphasise/**He gestured emphatically.**
- What we heard was songs that were full of joy/**We heard joyful songs.**

Passive Pointers

- ...ment
- ...tion
- There is/are
- ...of the
- ...by



Specify

4



Concrete v. Abstract

Some investigations of comprehension and recall. *Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior*, 11, 717-726.

What are they talking about?

The procedure is actually quite simple. First you arrange things into different groups depending on their makeup. Of course, one pile may be sufficient depending on how much there is to do. If you have to go somewhere else due to lack of facilities that is the next step, otherwise you are pretty well set. It is important not to overdo any particular endeavor. That is, it is better to do too few things at once than too many. In the short run this may not seem important, but complications from doing too many can easily arise. A mistake can be expensive as well. The manipulation of the appropriate mechanisms should be self-explanatory, and we need not dwell on it here. At first the whole procedure will seem complicated. Soon, however, it will become just another facet of life. It is difficult to foresee any end to the necessity for this task in the immediate future, but then one never can tell.



Concrete v. Abstract

Size

Shape

Colour

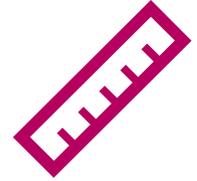
Shade

Make/Model

Time - am/pm, hours/minutes/days

Name

Map coordinates



How Much Detail?

- **Succinct:** Done!
- **Concise:** Alex did it.
- **Verbose:** There was confirmation that it was Alex who performed the action.

Clarify



5



Queensland Police Service



Yesterday at 11:58 pm · 🌐

A Labrador party was declared by police to be an out of control event tonight.

Out of control event, Labrad...

A Labrador party was declared by p...
mypolice.qld.gov.au

695 Likes 174 Comments





Daniel Purdie

A Labrador Party? You should be more worried about all the blind people left home alone.

9 hours ago · Like ·  171 · Reply

How Punctuation Changes Meaning

Dear Jack,
I want a man who knows what
love is all about.
You are generous, kind,
thoughtful. People who are
not like you admit to being
useless and inferior.
You have ruined me for other
men. I yearn for you.
I have no feelings whatsoever
when we're apart.
I can be forever happy – will
you let me be yours?

Jill



Dear Jack,
I want a man who knows what
love is.
All about you are generous, kind,
thoughtful people, who are not
like you.
Admit to being useless and
inferior.
You have ruined me.
For other men I yearn! For you I
have no feelings whatsoever.
When we're apart I can be forever
happy – will you let me be?

Yours
Jill



More Examples

Don't let him come in!

Don't! Let him come in.

She likes cooking, her family, and dogs.

She likes cooking her family and dogs.

Wanted: a man who can speak German to take charge of sheep.

Wanted: a man to take charge of sheep who can speak German.

Jan wrote the note on the back of an envelope while travelling from Brisbane to Sydney.

Jan wrote the note while traveling from Brisbane to Sydney on the back of an envelope.

Handy Hyphens

Susan decided to resign her employment contract.
Susan decided to re-sign her employment contract.

We were told a story about a man eating shark.
We were told a story about a man-eating shark.

Adam returned the stolen vehicle report.
Adam returned the stolen-vehicle report.

Was the father to be stabbed to death in the bar?
Was the father-to-be stabbed to death in the bar?

Punctuation & Grammar Help

- www.grammarly.com
- www.grammar-monster.com/
- <http://australiannationaldictionary.com.au/>
- www.quickanddirtytips.com/education/grammar/grammar-girls-editing-checklist
- <http://theoatmeal.com/tag/grammar>

6

Tighten

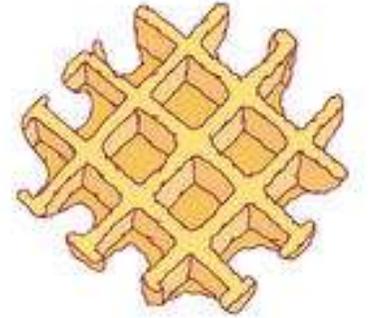


Plain English

- Reader focused, e.g. uses 'You' and 'Your' (second person pronoun forms)
- Organised logically
- Short sentences and paragraphs
- Everyday words with common meanings
- Formatting and design help navigation (e.g. white space, bullets, bold headings)

Waffles & Weasels

- In addition to (And)
- In order to (To)
- And furthermore (Plus)
- Notwithstanding the fact that (Since)
- In the vicinity of (Near)
- At this point in time (Now)
- In accordance with (With)



Redundancy & Tautology

Examples:

- reiterate again
- free gift
- \$10,000 dollars
- evening sunset/
morning sunrise
- close proximity
- evolve over time
- large in size
- very unique
- actual facts
- as well as also
- and plus
- ATM machine

Big & Buzzy

- engage in a dialogue with
- commensurate
- remediate and ameliorate
- drill down to take a deep dive and unpack the data



Which is More Compelling?

There are substantial challenges facing the future of the department's financial system. These challenges require radical new approaches and accessible technology to ensure an efficient future for all stakeholders.
(29 words)

Substantial challenges face the future of the department's financial system. Radical new approaches and accessible technology can mitigate these challenges.
(20 words)

Tidy



7

Editing & Proofing

MACRO - editing

- Structure, sequence, sections
- Sense
- Concept
- Logic
- Complete
- Tone
- Word limits

MICRO - proofing

- Spelling
- Grammar
- Punctuation
- Formatting
- Consistency
- House style
- Inclusions
- Numbers



Editing & Proofing

- Take a **break** after writing the draft.
- Use **inbuilt tools** (spell check, dictionary/look up, track changes, etc.).
- **Zoom** in when proofing on a screen.
- Proofread on **hard copy** when time and resources permit, and always when text is 250 words+.
- Mark changes in different **colours**.



Editing & Proofing

- Read through **a few times**, checking for something different, e.g. spelling first, then numbers, then capitalisation.
- Read it **aloud** – if it sounds strange, a word might be missing or misspelt.
- Read each paragraph **backwards**.
- Check these are clear: **who, what, where, when, how, why**
- Consider if the **structure** is appropriate, the **sequence** is logical, and the **signposts** are helpful.



Editing & Proofing

- Ask **someone else** to edit and/or proofread it.
- Use a sheet of paper/**ruler edge** under each line.
- Check for **repeated, overused** and **unnecessary** words.
- Double check common **tricky words** like accept/except, to/two/too, their/there, affect/effect.
- Ensure **abbreviations & acronyms** are only used when acceptable.

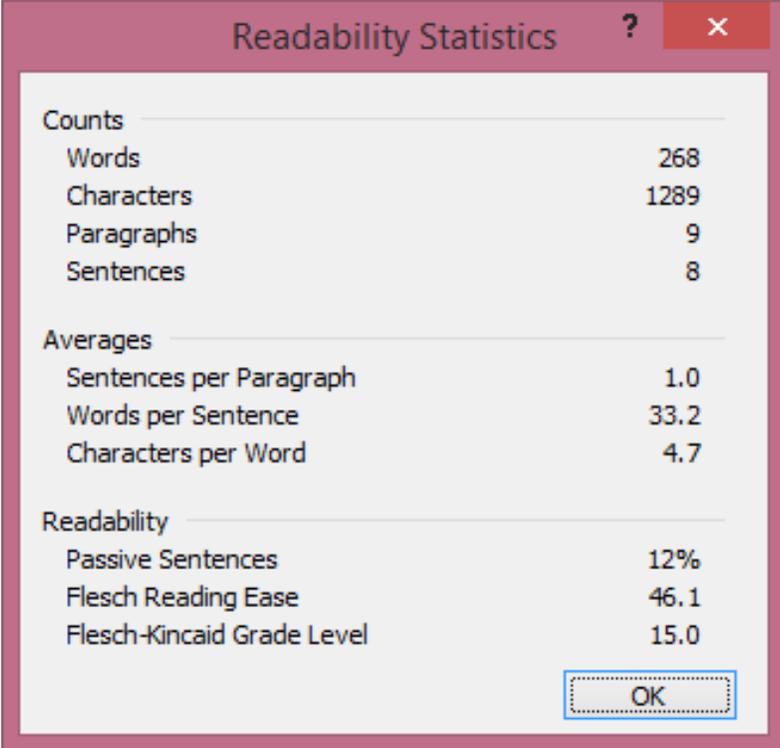


Editing & Proofing

- Check for **jargon** and **slang**.
- Look out for **inconsistent** and **unmatched** tense, case, number/plurals, gender neutrality, etc.
- Create your own proofreading checklist/**crib sheet**.
- Double and triple-check **numbers**, tables, website links, etc.
- Give it value – plan **enough time** and read with a fresh mind and eye.

Tech Tools & Other Time Savers

- In-house templates
- Crib sheets
- Style guides
- Spell checker
- Flesch Reading Ease
& Flesch-Kincaid
Grade Level



The screenshot shows a dialog box titled "Readability Statistics" with a question mark icon and a close button (X). The dialog contains three sections: "Counts", "Averages", and "Readability". Each section lists a metric and its corresponding value.

Counts	
Words	268
Characters	1289
Paragraphs	9
Sentences	8

Averages	
Sentences per Paragraph	1.0
Words per Sentence	33.2
Characters per Word	4.7

Readability	
Passive Sentences	12%
Flesch Reading Ease	46.1
Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level	15.0

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

Tech Tools & Other Time Savers

- Buzzsaw
- Hemingwayapp
- Credosity
- Wordcounttools.com

The image shows two screenshots of productivity tools. The top screenshot is from Credosity, displaying a dashboard with a 'Cred: 88%' score, a trial timer for 20 days, and two progress indicators for 'Readability' (4/5) and 'Professionalism' (9/10). The bottom screenshot is from Wordcounttools.com, showing a 'Keyword Density' analysis for the text 'The Department of Youth Justice has introduced a new innovation that is truly a game changer.' The analysis shows the top 20 words, with 'word' and 'like' being the most frequent at 4.9% each.

Credosity Dashboard:

- Cred: 88%
- Your trial has 20 days left. Go for it!
- Readability: 4/5
- Professionalism: 9/10
- Reading time: 00:00:52
- My statistics

Wordcounttools.com Keyword Density:

Top 20 words (excluding grammar words):

1. word - 3 times (4.9%)	2. like - 3 times (4.9%)	3. safe - 3 times (4.9%)
4. writer - 2 times (3.3%)	5. because - 2 times (3.3%)	6. front - 2 times (3.3%)
7. whole - 2 times (3.3%)	8. webinar - 2 times (3.3%)	9. go - 2 times (3.3%)
10. me - 2 times (3.3%)	11. now - 2 times (3.3%)	12. could - 2 times (3.3%)
13. public - 2 times (3.3%)	14. try - 2 times (3.3%)	15. want - 2 times (3.3%)
16. times - 2 times (3.3%)	17. yes - 2 times (3.3%)	18. myself - 2 times (3.3%)
19. always - 2 times (3.3%)	20. time - 2 times (3.3%)	

Check Your Pace

- **P**ositive vs. negative
- **A**ctive vs. passive
- **C**oncrete vs. abstract
- **E**nglish plain vs pompous



Recap

- The value of trim and toned writing
- Warmed up with priming and planning
- Practised writing in a friendly tone
- ‘De-noun-ed’ and ‘verbified’ to write with an active voice
- Specified and clarified
- Explored editing and proofreading
- Tightened and lightened
- ‘PACED’ our writing

Remember

- Swap nouns for verbs
- Aim for active voice
- Specify what you mean
- Be positive
- Clarify with punctuation and grammar
- Slice off redundant words and phrases
- Skip the large lexicons and busy buzzwords



Questions?



Training, advice and action plans
for building confident
communication capability

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