Overview of Style

Definition of Style

The features of one’s writing that show its individuality – separating it from the writing of others and shaping it to fit the needs of particular situations.

Importance of Tone

Expression of an attitude in your writing
- Casual
- Objective
- Persuasive
- Enthusiastic
- Serious
- Authoritative
- Friendly

Writing Clear Sentences

Sentence Terms

The most important sentence parts are the…
- Subject
  - the person doing the action or the thing being discussed
- Verb
  - the action or state of being

Four main types of sentences:
- A simple sentence contains one main clause
- A compound sentence contains two or more clauses connected by conjunctions
- A complex sentence includes one main clause and at least one dependent clause
- A compound-complex sentence contains at least two main clauses and at least one dependent clause
Writing Clear Sentences

Guidelines for Sentence Style
- Place the Main Point Near the Beginning
- Focus on One Main Clause in Each Sentence
- Vary Sentence Length but Seek an Average Length of 15 – 20 words

Being Concise

- Put Actions in Verbs
- Shorten Wordy Phrases
- Replace Long Words with Short Ones
- Leave Out Clichés
- Make Writing More Direct by Reading It Aloud
- Avoid “There Are,” “It is,” and Similar Constructions
- Cut Out Extra Words

Being Accurate in Wording

- Distinguish Facts from Opinions
- Include Obvious Qualifying Statements When Needed
- Use Absolute Words Carefully

Using the Active Voice

- What Active and Passive Mean?
- When Should Actives and Passives Be Used?
Using the Active Voice

- Use the active-voice when you want to...
  - Emphasize who is responsible for an action
  - Stress the name of a company, whether yours or the reader’s
  - Rewrite a top-heavy sentence so that the person or thing doing the action is up front
  - Pare down the verbiage in your writing

Using the Passive Voice

- Use the passive-voice when you want to...
  - Emphasize the receiver of the action or the action itself rather than the person performing the action
  - Avoid egocentric tones that result from repetitious use of “I,” “we,” and the name of your company
  - Break the monotony of writing that relies too heavily on active-voice sentences

Using Nonsexist Language

- Sexism and Language
  - The use of wording, especially masculine pronouns like “he” or “him,” to represent positions or individuals who could be either men or women

Using Nonsexist Language

- Techniques for Nonsexist Language
  - Avoid Personal Pronouns Altogether
  - Use Plural Pronouns Instead of Singular
  - Alternate Masculine and Feminine Pronouns
  - Use Forms Like “He or She,” “Hers or His,” and “Him or Her”

Using Nonsexist Language

- Techniques for Nonsexist Language
  - Shift to Second-Person Pronouns
  - Be Especially Careful of Titles and Letter Salutations

Plain English and Simplified English

- Plain English
  - Recommended for United States government documents
  - General guidelines: [http://www.plainlanguage.gov](http://www.plainlanguage.gov)
    - Audience awareness
    - Good document design
    - Effective use of headings
    - Clear organization
Plain English and Simplified English

- Plain English
  - Style recommendations
    - Use active voice
    - Put actions in strong verbs
    - Use you to speak directly to the reader
    - Use short sentences
    - Use concrete words
    - Use simple and compound sentences

- Simplified English
  - Designed for a global audience
  - English is a second language
  - Translating from English into other languages
  - Information sources
    - http://www.asd-ste100.org
    - http://www.userlab.com/SE.html

Plain English and Simplified English

- Plain English
  - Style recommendations
    - Use subject-verb structure
    - Make sure that modifiers are clear
    - Use parallel structure for parallel ideas
    - Avoid wordiness

- Simplified English recommends simplified sentence structure and limited vocabulary
  - Use only approved words
  - Use one word for each meaning
  - Use only one meaning for each word
  - Use active voice
  - Use strong verbs
  - Use articles or demonstrative adjectives
  - Avoid strings of more than three nouns
  - Use short sentences