

1. Use Strong Verbs, Avoid Nominalizations

Transform nominalizations (i.e., long nouns like implementation, necessity, coordination) into verbs (e.g., implement, need, co-ordinate) to create more active ways phrasing.

Ask yourself “who (or what) is doing the action?” and try to present the action in the form of a strong verb (a verb other than “is/are” or “has/have”).

WEAK	BETTER
The information received is an indication of strong interest but is insufficient for the <u>justification</u> of the <u>implementation</u> of the program.	The information indicates strong interest but does not justify implementing the program.

2. Identify a Clear Actor

Use human agents to make your sentences more clear and engaging. When revising, ask yourself “who’s doing what?”

WEAK	BETTER
There is an indication of strong interest in our program, but it is insufficient for the justification of the implementation of the program.	We know that many researchers are interested in this program, but we still do not feel justified in implementing it.

3. Active voice

Use active voice (where the subject performs the action) by placing the doer of the action before the verb. The active voice makes your writing more clear, concise, and lively. ****Note that some faculties, the sciences in particular, prefer the passive voice.**** Use passive voice when you don’t want to focus on the agent (doer) of the action, or when you want to highlight who receives the action.

WEAK	BETTER
The client’s file was reviewed and a determination was made about eligibility for benefits.	We reviewed the client’s file and determined that he was eligible for benefits.

4. Revise for conciseness

Get rid of “it is” and “there are” sentence openings.

WEAK	BETTER
It was easy for the committee to make a	The committee easily came to a decision.

decision.	
There are many ways in which we can improve the program.	We can improve the program in many ways.

5. Use parallel structure for similar items or actions

Use parallel structures in headings and lists by using the following formats:
 “not only ___ but also ___”; “either ___ or ___”; “both ___ and ___”.

WEAK	BETTER
The most important steps are to interview the client, planning the intervention, and to monitor the results.	The most important steps are interviewing the client, planning the intervention, and monitoring the results.

6. Keep subjects and verbs close together

Don’t overload the subjects of sentences. Note: In the following examples, the sentence subjects are in bold and the verbs are underlined.

WEAK	BETTER
Students’ motivation for going to university, their learning styles, their study habits, their time management skills, their reading and writing skills, and their preparation for university-level study all <u>affect</u> their performance in university.	Several factors <u>affect</u> students’ performance in university. These factors <u>include</u> their motivation for going to university, their learning styles, their study habits, their time management skills, their reading and writing skills, and their preparation for university-level study.

7. Sentence Order and Chronology

Place new information near the end of sentences. Begin sentences with a link back to the "old" or previously provided information.

When appropriate, begin sentences with a logical transition (e.g., however, therefore, in this case, as in the previous example), but do not overuse this strategy [See strategy #8 as well].

WEAK	BETTER
Recently, several cases of internet bullying have come to light. A mother impersonated a young man and developed an online relationship with a young woman who later committed suicide.	Recently, several cases of internet bullying have come to light. In one case , a mother impersonated a young man and developed an online relationship with a young woman who later committed suicide.

8. Topic Sentence, Focus Paragraph

For focus and coherence, edit carefully for the links between sentences (as suggested above) or try to keep the subject of the paragraph consistent from sentence to sentence, as in the following example.

Example:

Aquifers are beds of sand and gravel in glacial deposits or bedrock formations which contain groundwater. Aquifers can exist as small localized occurrences or can extend for many kilometres and be up to 30 metres thick. Major aquifers include the Ravenscrag Formation in southern Saskatchewan, the Judith River Formation to the west, and the Swan River Formation in the north. These aquifers in particular are very extensive and are reliable long-term water supplies. (Sask. Environment, *Water*, n.d.)

9. Vary Sentence Structure & Length

- Aim for varied sentence length, with an average length of around 22 words. Read your work aloud to check for sentence rhythm, clarity, and effectiveness.
- Avoid passages with two or more short sentences (e.g., 15 words or less) in a row. A series of short sentences will make your writing appear choppy.
- Aim for relatively few sentences that are over 35 words. Always check that these long sentences are clear and grammatical.

10. Informative Titles and Headers

WEAK	BETTER
Final Report	Recommendations for Improving Comtech's Website