

Writing Styleguide

Abbreviations

Avoid abbreviations except where the abbreviated form is more commonly used than the full term (for example, “a.m.” and “p.m.”). For common abbreviations such as “e.g.,” “i.e.,” and “etc.,” use English equivalents.

Abbreviation	English equivalent
e.g. (exempli gratia)	for example
i.e. (id est)	that is
etc. (et cetera)	and so on, and so forth

If you choose to use these abbreviations, use lower case and separate the abbreviation from the following text with a comma (e.g., like this).

Acronyms

Minimize the use of acronyms as much as possible. They confuse novices, and sometimes even experts forget what they mean. When you do use them, spell them out the first time—for example, “Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP).” Use small caps to format acronyms.

To form the plural of an acronym, add “s” (for example, PCBs).

Affect and effect

The verb “affect” means to influence or produce a change, while the verb “effect” means to bring about.

Example

The changes to the Act will affect three departments.

They effected many changes in the organization.

“Effect” is usually used as a noun, and means the result.

Example

We felt the effects of the stock market crash.

Among and between

Use “between” to describe the direct relationship or comparison of two or more items. Use “among” when the relationship is less direct. In other words, use “between” when the relationship of the items is individual; use “among” when the relationship is collective.

Example

You can choose between steak, chicken, and fish.

John was among the candidates chosen.

And/or

“And/or” is often used in legal applications. Avoid using it where either “and” or “or” will do.

Because and since

Avoid using “since” to mean “because”—it’s ambiguous. Use “because” to refer to a reason. Use “since” to refer to the passage of time.

Example

Because we installed a new system, we can quickly respond to the public.

Since we installed the new system, our response rate has improved by five minutes.

Between

See *Among and between*.

Can and may

Use “can” to describe actions or conditions that are possible. Use “may” only to describe situations where permission is being given. If either “can,” “could,” or “may” apply, use “can” because it’s less tentative.

Example

You can submit the form upon completion. (**Correct**)

You may submit the form upon completion. (**Implies that you have permission to submit the report**)

Use “may” only when you really need to be tentative.

Example

If you submit the form within two weeks, you may receive approval faster.

Clichés

A *cliché* is an expression that has lost its originality and impact through overuse. Examples of clichés include “busy as a bee,” “light as a feather,” “with regard to” and “all things considered.” Avoid clichés “like the plague!”

Colloquialisms

Colloquialisms are conversational or slang expressions like “cutting-edge technology.” Avoid them as much as possible.

If the slang expression is acceptable, don’t enclose it in single quotation marks—just use it. If the expression is not acceptable, avoid it altogether.

Example

It was 'cutting-edge' technology.
(**Avoid**)

It was cutting-edge technology.
(**Preferred**)

Comprise

"Comprise" means to include or maintain. The whole comprises the parts rather than the reverse. Never use "comprised of."

Example

The department comprises several workgroups. (**Correct**)

Several workgroups comprise the department. (**Incorrect**)

The department is comprised of several workgroups. (**Incorrect**)

Contractions

Contractions are contracted forms of words with the missing letters represented with an apostrophe, such as "you'll" and "don't." They give your writing a more conversational tone—to the reader they sound more like natural speech.

Contractions are widely used in most business writing. Because they are a mark of informal writing, you may want to avoid them in formal documents.

Be consistent in substituting an apostrophe for deleted letters. Avoid uncommon contractions, and don't create any new ones of your own.

Don't use a contraction with a noun to replace "is" (for example, "our network's connected"). Don't make a contraction from a noun and a verb (for example, "the supervisor'll review your work").

Dates

Avoid using abbreviations for months. Don't use "th" or "nd" after a date. Only use a comma when the day is included.

Example

Nov. 10th, 1997 (**Avoid**)

November 10, 1997 (**Preferred**)

November 1997 (**Preferred**)

Desire, wish, need, and want

Use "need" instead of "desire" and "wish." Use "want" when the reader's actions are optional (that is, they may not "need" something but may still "want" something).

Example

If you need to confirm receipt of your application, call the branch office.

Select the books you want and sign them out in the register.

Different

Use “different from” rather than “different than” when the next part of the sentence is a noun or pronoun (that is, two things are being compared).

Example

Form 123 is different from Form 124.

Effect

See *Affect and effect*.

Ensure and insure

“Ensure” means to make sure.
“Insure” refers to insurance.

Example

Ensure that the applicant has completed the necessary forms before continuing.

You can insure your house up to its market value.

Fractions

Express fractions in words or as decimals whenever possible. When you do use fractions, use figures for fractions greater than one (for example, “0.25 litres,” “3.3 metres,” “2½ days”). Spell out fractions less than one that are used alone (for example, “one-third inch,” “three-quarters finished”). But use figures when fractions are part of a compound term (for example, “¼-inch bolt”).

Gender inclusiveness

Avoid specifying gender. Here are some guidelines:

- Use gender-neutral titles when referring to people (for example, use “chairperson” or “chair” instead of “chairman”). Use generic nouns when referring to specific groups (for example, use “managers” to include both male and female managers).
- Avoid gender-specific pronouns (for example, “his,” “her,” “he/she”). You can:
 - address the reader as “you”
 - repeat the noun (for example, “managers”)
 - drop the pronoun altogether
 - make the noun plural and then use “they” or “their,” which are gender neutral
 - use a passive verb and omit the noun and pronoun
 - rewrite the sentence
- Avoid phrases that make assumptions about gender. For example, “delegates and their wives are invited to attend the breakfast meeting” implies that all delegates are male.
- Avoid always putting men first in phrases such as “men and women,” “boys and girls,” “his or hers.” Alternate the word order in phrases like these, so that neither women nor men always go first.

- Avoid using language that is not parallel, such as “men and ladies” (use “men and women”/“women and men”), “man and wife” (use “husband and wife”/“wife and husband”), and “Mr. and Mrs. John Doe” (use “Mr. John Doe and Mrs. Jane Doe” or “Jane and John Doe”).
- Never refer to adult women as “girls,” “gals,” or “ladies” in situations where you would call men “men.”
- Don’t use “lady,” “woman,” or “female” as adjectives (for example, “lady doctor,” “woman lawyer”) unless gender is relevant. If gender is relevant, use the noun “woman” (for example, “she is the first woman to walk on the moon”) or the adjective “female” (for example, “she is the first female astronaut to walk on the moon”).
- Avoid stereotypical words and phrases (for example, “like a man,” “women’s work,” and “ladylike”).

Insure

See *Ensure and insure*.

Italics

Use *italics* when referring to document titles and section references and when introducing new terms.

Its and it’s

Use “it’s” as a contraction for “it is” (for example, “it’s the right thing to do”). Use “its” as a possessive pronoun (for example, “the store is known for its low prices”).

Me, myself, and I

Use the pronoun “I” as a subject. Use “me” as an object. Use “myself” when the person receiving the action is the same as the person doing the action.

Examples

John and me share the computer.
(**Incorrect**)

John and I share the computer.
(**Correct**)

It was a valuable experience for her friend and I. (**Incorrect**)

It was a valuable experience for her friend and me. (**Correct**)

I cut myself. (**Correct**)

The waiter gave my sister and myself some good tips. (**Incorrect**)

The waiter gave my sister and me some good tips. (**Correct**)

Measurements

When writing for a Canadian audience, express measurements in metric, unless imperial or some other measurement is conventionally used (for example, “5 feet 11 inches tall”).

Follow these conventions for describing measurements:

- Use figures for all measurements—even if the number is under 10 (for example, 5 metres).
- Spell out the names of metric units (for example, “25 grams”). Use symbols (for example, “25 g”) only in tables.
- For two or more measurements, repeat the unit of measure (for example, “3.5-inch or 5.25-inch disk”).
- When the measurement is used as an adjective, use a hyphen to connect the number to the measurement unit (for example, “2-inch binder”).
- Express dimensions in figures (for example, “3.5 inches by 10 inches”).

See also *Fractions and numbers*.

Money

Don’t add a decimal point or zeros to a whole dollar amount in a sentence.

Example

The first option costs \$1.50, the second costs \$2.00, and the third costs 75¢. (**Avoid**)

The first option costs \$1.50, the second costs \$2, and the third costs \$0.75. (**Preferred**).

Note that amounts less than \$1 are expressed as “\$0.75,” not as “75¢.”

In a column, if any amount contains cents, add a decimal point and two zeros to all whole dollar amounts.

Myself

See *Me, myself, and I*.

Names

Be consistent when naming organizations, position titles, document titles, and so on. Capitalize names and use them consistently throughout the document.

Need

See *Desire, wish, need, and want*.

Notes

Note: To draw the reader’s attention to something of special importance, create a note like this one.

Paragraphs

Keep paragraphs short—no longer than four or five sentences if you can. Longer paragraphs are visually intimidating to the reader.

Try to limit each paragraph to one topic, unless you are linking related points. Start a new paragraph when you change topics or shift your focus.

Leave a space between paragraphs. Avoid indenting the first line of a paragraph—this convention is not commonly used in business publications.

Parallelism

If two or more ideas are parallel, express them in parallel form. Balance single words with single words, phrases with phrases, clauses with clauses.

Example

Frequent absences can result in suspension or even being terminated.
(**Not parallel**)

Frequent absences can result in suspension or even termination.
(**Parallel**)

Balance parallel ideas in a series or items in a list.

Examples

The department is responsible for creating annual reports, budgets, and financial planning. (**Not parallel**)

The department is responsible for creating annual reports, budgets, and financial plans. (**Parallel**)

White space is important for the following reasons:

- breaks up visual impact
- visual separation of sections (**Not parallel**)
- visually separates sections (**Parallel**)
- focusing attention (**Not parallel**)
- focuses attention (**Parallel**)
- content is broken into smaller chunks (**Not parallel**)
- breaks content into smaller chunks (**Parallel**)

Passive voice

See *Voice*.

Percent (%)

Spell out the word percent. Use the symbol in tables, on business forms, and in statistical or technical information. Be consistent—don't mix the word percent and the symbol %. In sentences that begin with a percentage, spell the number out.

Example

Price reductions range from 20 to 50 percent.

Forty percent of the population...

Person

Person refers to the point of view or perspective you take when writing: first person (“I” or “we”), second person (“you”), or third person (“he,” “she,” or “they”). This styleguide is written in the second person, because it addresses the reader as “you.”

Singular and plural forms of personal pronouns

Person	Singular	Plural
first	I, me, my, mine	we, us, our, ours
second	you, your, yours	you, your, yours
third	he, him, his she, her, hers it, its	they, them, their, theirs

Use the “I” or “we” point of view, which emphasizes the writer, when writing correspondence or reports about personal experience—for example, when describing your group’s actions or ideas.

Example

We have decided not to upgrade our computer system.

Use the “you” point of view, which emphasizes the reader, when giving advice or instructions. For example, when writing a procedure manual, use the second person and the imperative form (that is, tell the reader what to do).

Example

Complete the form, then submit it to your supervisor.

Use the third person, which emphasizes the subject, when describing what other people have done or should do.

Example

Writers should decide on a point of view and stick with it.

Point of view

See *Person*.

Possessives and plurals

Form the possessive case of singular nouns by adding an apostrophe and an “s”—even if the word ends in an “s.”

Example

- the Ministry’s responsibility
- Burns’s poetry

For plural nouns ending in “s,” form the possessive case by adding an apostrophe.

Examples

- Workers’ Compensation Board
- ministries’ budgets

For plural nouns not ending in “s,” form the possessive case by adding an apostrophe and an “s.”

Examples

- children’s stories
- women’s programs

Instead of using old-fashioned Latin-style plurals, use English-style plurals. The Latin-style plurals are not wrong, just a bit stuffy.

Old-fashioned	Preferred
formulae	formulas
appendices	appendixes
addenda	addendums
indices	indexes

Prepositions

A preposition links a noun or pronoun to another word or phrase. Prepositions often express relationships—for example, “with,” “to,” “since,” “at,” and so on.

Although some writers avoid dangling prepositions, sometimes they help avoid awkward sentence constructions.

Example

Where are you going to?

(**Considered incorrect by some**)

To where are you going? (**Awkward**)

Where are you going? (**Better**)

Presently

Avoid using “presently” as it’s often taken to mean “now” rather than its actual meaning “soon.”

Pronouns

A *pronoun* is a word that represents a noun—for example, “he,” “it,” “who,” “they,” and so on. The noun a pronoun represents is its *antecedent*.

Use pronouns sparingly. When used too often or incorrectly, they can be ambiguous and can slow reading speed because the reader has to go back to see which noun they represent.

Make sure pronouns agree with their antecedents. If pronoun references are not clear, repeat the noun or restructure the sentence.

Examples

Thank the writer for their interest.
(**Incorrect**)

Thank the writer for her interest.
(**Correct**)

Thank the writers for their interest.
(**Correct**)

If you drop the plate on the glass table, it might break. (**Ambiguous**)

If you drop the plate on the glass table, the plate might break. (**Clear**)

If you drop the plate on the glass table, the table might break. (**Clear**)

The plate might break if you drop it on the glass table. (**Clear**)

See also *Gender inclusiveness*.

Sentences

Keep sentences short and simple. Try to limit them to one idea. The longer the sentence, the more difficult it is to grasp. If it's longer than 30 words, consider rewriting it. Don't link unrelated ideas together with "and" or use semicolons.

Structure your sentences using a simple subject-verb-object sentence order. By sticking to this order, you avoid using the passive voice, use fewer words, and your sentence is easier to understand.

Example

Applicants (**subject**) appreciate (**verb**) honesty (**object**).

Try not to start sentences with "it" and "there"—these constructions are often vague and wordy, and can usually be restructured to be much more direct.

Examples

It was not our intention to break the rules. (**Avoid**)

We did not intend to break the rules. (**Preferred**)

There may be resistance to the plan. (**Avoid**)

Some people may resist the plan. (**Preferred**)

There are several options in this proposal. (**Avoid**)

This proposal presents several options. (**Preferred**)

Spacing after a period – Use a single space to separate the end of one sentence from the beginning of the next. Word processors automatically put in the required spacing at the end of sentences. Pressing the space bar twice will result in twice the required spacing.

Since

See *Because and since*.

Spacing

Don't use hard spaces (the space produced when you press the space bar) to centre or position text—use tabs, indents, or centred alignment.

Use a single space to separate the end of one sentence from the beginning of the next. As a general rule, you should never have two consecutive spaces in a document.

Spelling and usage

When writing for a Canadian audience, use Canadian, not American, spelling (for example, “colour” not “color,” “centre” not “center”). If in doubt, refer to *The Canadian Oxford Dictionary*.

That and which

“That” introduces a restrictive clause—a clause that must be there for the sentence to make sense. A restrictive clause often defines the noun or phrase preceding it. “Which” introduces a non-restrictive, parenthetical clause—a clause that could be omitted without affecting the meaning of the sentence.

Example

The car was travelling at a speed that would endanger lives.

The car, which was travelling at a speed that would endanger lives, swerved onto the sidewalk.

Use “who” or “whom,” rather than “that” or “which,” when referring to a person.

Their and there

“There” is an adverb used to indicate a place or position other than “here.” “Their” is the possessive form of “they.” Use the plural pronoun “their” only when the noun it’s representing is plural.

Examples

Your manual is over there.

Their manual needs to be updated.

Contact each employee to clarify their options and rights. (**Incorrect**)

Contact all employees to clarify their options and rights. (**Correct**)

Then and than

“Then” refers to a time in the past or the next step in a sequence. “Than” is used for comparisons.

Time

When referring to specific times, use numerals and the abbreviations “a.m.” and “p.m.” with lower-case letters and periods.

Examples

3:30 p.m.	9:00 a.m.	4:45 p.m.
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Underlining

Use underlining sparingly—it slows reading speed. Don’t use it to emphasize parts of the text. If something is very important, give it a separate heading, put it in a text box, or create a note (see *Notes*).

Verbs

Use the active voice and strong verbs whenever you can. Make sure the verb agrees with the subject of the sentence.

Voice – Use the active voice whenever possible. Using the active voice helps maintain the preferred subject-verb-object sentence order. You also avoid introducing the auxiliary verb required by passive verb forms.

Example

The form is completed by the applicant. (**Passive voice**)

The applicant completes the form. (**Active voice**)

Tense – Match the different verb tenses to different types of documents and to the logical time relationships described.

Example

The applicant will complete the form. (**Future tense**)

The applicant completes the form. (**Present tense**)

Complete the form. (**Imperative form, present tense**)

The applicant completed the form. (**Past tense**)

Strong verbs – Use direct, active verbs. Avoid combining weak, vague verbs such as “be” or “do” with the noun form of a verb. Watch out for verbs that end in “-ion” strung together with prepositions (for example, change “creation of the document” to “creating the document”).

Examples

Our research could be of help to you in making a decision. (**Weak**)

Our research could help you make a decision. (**Strong**)

We did a calculation of the total. (**Weak**)

We calculated the total. (**Strong**)

Agreement – Make sure that the noun and verb in your sentences agree with each other—that both are singular or both plural.

Example

Power (**noun, singular**) from back-up generators and emergency lighting are (**verb, plural**) routinely maintained as part of the fire plan. (**Incorrect**)

Power (**noun, singular**) from back-up generators and emergency lighting is (**verb, singular**) routinely maintained as part of the fire plan. (**Correct**)

When using an “either/or” sentence format, make sure the verb agrees with the part of the subject closest to the verb.

Example

Either the lock or the barred windows is likely to reduce thefts. (**Incorrect**)

Either the lock or the barred windows are likely to reduce thefts. (**Correct**)

Voice

See *Verbs*.

Want

See *Desire, wish, need, and want*.

Which

See *That and which*.

Who and whom

Use the pronoun “who” as a subject. Use the pronoun “whom” as a direct object, an indirect object, or the object of a preposition.

Example

Who owns this?

To whom does this belong?

Wish

See *Desire, wish, need, and want*.

Your and you’re

“Your” is the possessive form of you. “You’re” is the contraction of “you are.”

Example

This is your coat.

You’re in charge today.

Dictionary of Plain English

The following list contains unnecessarily difficult words and phrases, word-wasting idioms, compound prepositions, overly formal phrases, and gender-specific words and phrases, along with their plain English or gender-inclusive alternatives.

Instead of...	Use...	Instead of...	Use...
a great deal of	much	appear	seem
a large number of.....	more	apprise	inform
a little less than.....	almost	approximately	about
a majority of	most	as a general rule	generally
a number of	several, many, some	as a matter of fact	in fact (or omit)
a period of several weeks	several weeks	as a means of.....	to
a small number of	a few	as of now	now
a sufficient number.....	enough	as to whether.....	about whether
accomplish.....	do	as to.....	about
accorded.....	given	ascertain	find out
according to the law.....	legally	assist, assistance.....	help
accordingly	so	at a later date.....	later
accumulate	gather	at all times.....	always
acquaint.....	tell	at an early date	soon
acquire	get	at hand.....	here
activate	begin, start	at present.....	now
add an additional.....	add	at regular intervals of time	regularly
additional	added	at that point in time	then
adequate number of.....	enough	at the conclusion of	at the end of
administer	manage, give	at the present time	now
admit of	allow	at the rear of.....	behind
advert	refer	at the time that	when
advise.....	write, tell	at this time, at this point in time.....	now
affirmative.....	yes	at which time.....	then
afford an opportunity	allow, permit	attains the age of	becomes
afforded	given	attempt (as a verb).....	try
aggregate.....	total	based on the fact that	due to/because
all of a sudden.....	suddenly	beyond a shadow of doubt	no doubt
all of the.....	all the	bottom line.....	result
allocate	give, divide	bring to a conclusion	conclude
along the lines of.....	like	brought to a sudden halt	halted
alternatives	choices	businessman.....	businessperson, professional
ameliorate	improve	by means of.....	by
anticipate	expect	by reason of	because of
apparent	clear	by the time that.....	when

Instead of...	Use...	Instead of...	Use...
by the use of.....	by	effect.....	make
by virtue of.....	by, under	effectuate	bring about, carry out
by way of illustration.....	for example	elect	choose, pick
calculate.....	compute	eliminate	remove, strike out
came to a stop.....	stopped	elucidate	explain
category.....	kind, class, group	employment	work
cause it to be done.....	have it done	encounter	meet
cease.....	stop	encourage.....	urge
chairman.....	chair, chairperson	endeavour (verb).....	try
check into.....	check	ensuing.....	following
cognizance.....	knowledge	ensure.....	follow
come to an end.....	end	enter (on a form).....	write
commence	begin, start	enter into a contract with	contract with
commitment.....	promise	equivalent	equal
communicate	write, tell, talk, telephone	evince	show
compensation.....	pay	excessive number of	too many
complete (verb).....	finish, fill out	execute	sign
comply with	follow	exhibit a tendency to.....	tend to
conceal	hide	expedite.....	hasten, hurry, speed up
concerning the matter of.....	about, concerning	expend.....	spend
conduct an investigation.....	investigate	expiration.....	end
consequence.....	result	explicit.....	plain
consequently.....	so	facilitate	make easy, help
constitute	make up	failed to	did not
construct	build	feasible	possible
consummate.....	bring about, complete	few in number.....	few
contiguous to	next to	fewer in number	fewer
contingent upon.....	if	finalize.....	end, finish
continue	keep up	fireman.....	fire fighter
contribute	give	for a period of.....	for
cost the sum of.....	cost	for the duration of	during
customary practice.....	practice	for the purpose of	for, to
deem.....	consider, think	for the reason that.....	since, because
demonstrate.....	show	foreman	supervisor, lead
desire.....	want	formulate.....	work out, devise, form
despite the fact that.....	although, even though	forthwith	immediately
detailed information	details	forward.....	send
determine.....	decide	frequently.....	often
dialogue.....	discussion, conversation	from the point of view of	for
disclose.....	show	from time to time.....	occasionally
discontinue	stop	give authorization	authorize
disseminate.....	send, distribute	handyman.....	caretaker, repairer
does not operate to	does not	hence	so
donate	give	hereafter	after this takes effect
draw to a close	end	herein	here
due to the fact that.....	because, although, even though	hereinafter	future, following
during such time as.....	during, while	heretofore.....	before this takes effect, until now
during the course of	during	hopefully	I hope
during the period from.....	from	hostess.....	host
during the time that	during, while	housewife	homemaker
during which time.....	while	I would appreciate it if you would.....	please
edifice.....	building	if at all possible.....	if possible
		if that were the case.....	if so

Instead of...	Use...	Instead of...	Use...
implement	carry out	inquire	ask
in a position to	can	inside of	inside
in a satisfactory manner	satisfactorily	institute	begin, start
in accordance with	by, under, on	insufficient.....	not enough
in accordance with	by/under	interrogate.....	question
in addition to.....	also/besides	is able to.....	can
in an effort to	to	is authorized to	may
in as much as	since, because	is binding upon.....	binds
in back of.....	behind	is defined as.....	is
in case.....	if	is empowered to	may
in close proximity.....	near, close	is entitled.....	is called
in connection with	with, about, concerning	is unable to	cannot
in consideration of the fact.....	because	issue	give
indicate.....	show, tell, say	it is apparent that.....	apparently
in excess of	more than	it is clear that.....	clearly
in favour of	for	it is directly	will
initiate	begin	it is evident that.....	evidently
in lieu of.....	instead of, in place of	it is my intention to	I will
in light of the fact that	because	it is obvious that.....	obviously
in many cases.....	often	it is often the case that	often
in most cases	usually	it is probable that.....	probably
in order to.....	to	it is the duty	will
in other words.....	or, that is	it shall be lawful	may
in possession of	have	it will be necessary.....	will need to
in reference to	about, concerning	it would appear that	apparently
in regard to.....	about, concerning	keep an eye on.....	watch
in relation to.....	about, concerning	last of all.....	last
in respect to.....	about, concerning	law passed	law enacted
in short supply	scarce	loan (as a verb).....	lend
in such a manner as to	to	locality	place
in terms of	in, of	locate.....	find
in the absence of	without	location	place
in the amount of.....	of, for	mailman.....	letter carrier
in the course of.....	during, while	maintenance	upkeep
in the event that	should, if, when	major portion of.....	most of
in the first place.....	first	majority of	most
in the instance of	for	make application to	apply
in the interest of	for	make contact with.....	see, meet
in the majority of instances ..	usually, generally	make the acquaintance of.....	meet
in the matter of.....	about	man (as a verb).....	staff, operate
in the nature of	like	man/man (as a noun)	humans, people, individuals
in the near future	soon	man-days/hours.....	worker-days/hours
in the neighbourhood of	about	mankind.....	people, humans, humankind
in the possession of.....	has, have	man-made.....	synthetic, artificial, hand-made
in the proximity of.....	about, nearly	manner	way
in the vicinity of.....	around, near, close to	manpower	workers, workforce, staff, employees
in this case	here	materialize	appear
in view of the fact	because	maximum.....	most, largest, longest, greatest
indicate.....	show	middleman.....	go-between, facilitator, intermediary
inform.....	tell	minimum	least, smallest
initial	first		
initiate	begin, start		
input	comments, opinion		

Instead of...	Use...	Instead of...	Use...
modification	change	preserve.....	keep
modify	change	prior to	before
month of July	July	prior.....	earlier
moreover	how, next	prioritize	rank
necessitate	need	proceed	go, go ahead, start
negative	no	procure	buy, obtain, get
negotiate	make	prohibited from.....	may not
nevertheless.....	but, however	promulgate.....	make, issue
newsman.....	reporter, journalist	prosecute its business	do business
no later than June 30.....	before July 1	provided that	if
notwithstanding the fact that	although, even though	provision of law.....	law
objective	aim, goal	purchase (as a verb)	buy
obligate	bind	pursuant to	under
obligation	debt	range all the way from.....	range from
obtain	get	receipt of	receive
occasion (as a verb)	cause	refer back	refer
of a technical nature	technical	regarding.....	about
of no mean ability.....	capable	reimburse.....	repay
of the opinion.....	believe	relative to.....	about
on a daily basis.....	daily, every day	remainder	rest
on a few occasions	occasionally	remuneration.....	pay, wages, salary, fee
on a weekly basis	weekly, every week	render.....	make, give
on account of.....	because	repairman	repairer, technician
on an ongoing basis.....	continually	reported to the effect.....	reported
on and after July 1	after June 30	represents	is
on behalf of	for	require.....	need
on his/her own application....	at his/her request	reside.....	live
on or before June 30.....	before July 1	residence	home
on the basis of.....	by, from, because of	respecting.....	about
on the grounds that.....	because	retain.....	keep
on the part of.....	by	revise downward	lower, decrease
once in a while	occasionally	said, same, such.....	the, this, that
ongoing.....	continuing	salesgirl, saleslady	sales clerk/person/ representative
optimum.....	best, greatest, most	salesman	sales clerk/person/ representative
or, in the alternative	or	sections 20 to 94 inclusive	sections 20 to 94
output.....	product	seldom if ever.....	rarely
owing to the fact that.....	because	shall.....	will
parameter	boundary, limit	shows a preference for	prefers
participate	take part	since the time that	since
pending	until	solely	only
per annum, per day, per foot	a year, a day, a foot	specified	named
per centum.....	percent	spokesman	spokesperson
period of time.....	period, time	started off with	started with
personnel	people, staff	stewardess	flight attendant
pertaining to.....	of, about	strategize	plan
peruse	read	submit	give, send
policeman.....	police officer	subsequent to.....	after, later
portion.....	part	subsequent.....	next
possess	have	subsequent(ly)	later
prepared to offer.....	can offer, offer	substantial	big, large, great, significant
presently	soon	sufficient number of	enough

Instead of...	Use...	Instead of...	Use...
sufficient.....	enough	transmit.....	send
summon.....	send for, call	transpire.....	happen
sustain.....	suffer, keep going	under circumstances in which	although, even though
terminate.....	end, stop	under the provisions of.....	under
that is to say.....	that is	until such time as	until
the fact that.....	(omit)	utilization	use
the foregoing	the, this, that	utilize, employ.....	use
the fullest possible extent ...	mostly, completely	verbose.....	wordy
the manner in which	how	viable	possible
the only difference being that	except that	visualize.....	imagine
the present time.....	now	voluminous	bulky
the question as to whether.....	whether, the question	waitress	waiter, server
there is no doubt but that ..	doubtless, no doubt	watchman	security guard
this is a person who	this person	weatherman	weather forecaster, meteorologist
this is a subject that	this subject	with a view to	to
this is a topic that.....	this topic	with reference to	for, about, concerning
this is an (instance, case, situation) which	this (omit)	with regard to.....	for, about, concerning
through the use of.....	by	with respect to.....	for, on, about
thus.....	so, that way	with the exception of.....	except
to be sure.....	of course	with the object of.....	to
to the extent that.....	if, when	with the result that.....	so that
tradesman	trades person	workman.....	worker

About the Author

Duncan Kent has worked as a journalist, technical communicator, documentation consultant, and writing instructor since graduating with a Master of Arts degree from the University of British Columbia in 1976. In 1990, he was awarded the designation of Certified Management Consultant (CMC) by Canada's governing body of management consultants.

Duncan is a founding member of the Canada West Coast chapter of the Society for Technical Communication

(STC) and has served as the chapter's President. For more than 12 years he has taught technical writing at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, British Columbia, and is a member of the Advisory Board to the university's Writing and Publishing Program. His writing workshops have been offered in almost every province and territory in Canada, and in-house to more than 50 government and private-sector organizations.

Since 1990, Duncan Kent & Associates Ltd. has provided a full spectrum of technical communication services. With specialists in writing/editing, document production, instructional design, and web site creation, the firm has guided the development of more than 180 manuals, courses, help systems, and web sites.

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