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Ten Tips to Simplify Your Business Correspondence

By Linda Elizabeth Alexander

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You write to express, not to use every word in the dictionary. Here are ten tips for using those words to make your writing clearer.

1. Simplify language Avoid using big or vague words. Use fewer words, but make them count.
2. Shorten sentences Business people don't have time to read 10-page letters. Cut out run-on sentences. Eliminate extra words as long as it doesn't change the meaning. You can also combine a short and a longer sentence into one to remove extra words.
3. Use active voice Instead of, "A good time was had by all," say, "We had a good time." This changes the subject from "good time" to "we." It also puts emphasis on the verb, making the statement stronger.
4. Use present tense Stick to the present tense wherever you can. Also make sure you don't switch tenses in the middle of a sentence.
5. Use bullets where appropriate Since people have little time to read, put important points in a numbered or bulleted list. This makes it easier to scan so your readers get the meaning without reading every word.
6. Never use exclamation points in business writing! Unless you're writing an advertisement or an excited letter to a friend, skip the wow factor! It doesn't belong in a memo,

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report, letter, or other serious-toned business writing!

7. Eliminate jargon Avoid it at all costs if your audience will not understand it. It will be like a foreign language to them, and your point is to make your writing clearer – not more complicated.

8. Avoid fragments and one word sentences A fragment. Is an incomplete sentence. No subject or no verb. Really. A complete sentence has both a subject and a verb and contains at least two words. "She walked" is a sentence because it meets all three criteria.

9. Proofread your writing You know to use your spelling and grammar checkers. But you should also go over your writing yourself – the spell checker cannot distinguish between "to" and "too" or "their" and "there." It can't tell you if you said "and" where you meant "an." If possible, get somebody else to read it before handing it in. Two sets of eyeballs are better than none.

10. Avoid repetition and redundancy!

Use these tips every time you write and you will avoid ten common mistakes that cloud your writing.

Linda Elizabeth Alexander is a business writer and marketing consultant based in Longmont, Colorado, USA. Improve your writing skills at work! Subscribe to her FREE ezine. Write to the Point at laalexander@write2thepointcom.com or visit <http://www.write2thepointcom.com/articles.html>.

7 Tips to Simplify Your Life

By Barbara Myers

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1. De-clutter. Begin by grabbing an empty shopping bag. Walk around your home. Fill the bag with anything you don't use or love. Place the bag in your car and drop it off at a charitable organization. Repeat weekly.

2. Control your time. Reduce obligations. Learn to say no more often. Even one fewer activity per week

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can allow you some down time.

3. Do without. Stop impulse purchases. Each item you buy costs more than the purchase price. Consider upkeep costs in both time and dollars.

4. Pare down. Do you really need six spatulas or 30 pairs of shoes?

5. Have a weekly "no noise" day. Turn off the T.V.s and radios. Tune in to nature and your family.

6. Make a list. Split your current activities and tasks into two columns: things I enjoy and things I don't enjoy.

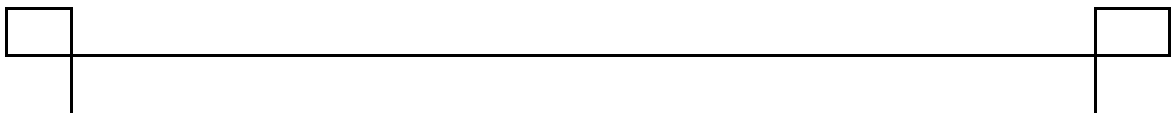
How can you reduce the second column and increase the first?

7. Organize everything. What takes up too much of your time? Simplify your routines, your paperwork, your wardrobe, your life.

Barbara Myers is a professional organizer and author. Free tips booklet and e-zine to help you take control of your time by organizing your life. Visit <http://www.ineedmoretime.com>



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