

**The following guidance on writing standards is provided in accordance with NASA Procedural Requirements (NPR) 1450.10D, NASA Correspondence Management and Communications Standards and Style, Chapter 2.**

The following techniques and guidelines can help make your writing more organized, natural, and concise.

## **2.1 Organized Writing**

Format is important, but clarity is more important.

2.1.1. Follow the newspaper format. Open with the most important information and decrease to the least important. Avoid mere chronology.

2.1.2. Start fast, explain as necessary, then stop. Do not waste the opening--the strongest place in correspondence. Begin with the key sentence, if appropriate; if not, be sure it appears by the end of the first paragraph. Put summaries before details.

2.1.3. Arrange key points. Begin with a general statement of purpose.

2.1.5. Persuade vs. Inform. When writing to persuade rather than to inform, end strongly with a forecast, appeal, or implication.

## **2.2 Spoken Style**

2.2.1. Once you have a draft, read it aloud. It should sound like something you might say in person. Whether writing formally or informally, use language you would use in speaking. Do not use contractions in formal writing.

2.2.4. Focus on your readers' needs. Analyze your audience in light of your purpose. You should be able to answer these next questions before you begin to write:

- a. What is my purpose?
- b. Who are my readers?
- c. What are their interests?
- d. How much do they know already?
- e. What will make it easy for them to understand or act?

## **2.6 Write Short, Disciplined Sentences**

2.6.1. Readable sentences are simple, active, affirmative, and declarative. Short sentences will not guarantee clarity, but they are usually less confusing than long ones.

2.6.2. State only one main topic in each sentence.

2.6.3. Divide long sentences into two or three short sentences. Average 20 words or less when mixing long and short sentences.

2.6.5. Remove all unnecessary words. Strive for a simple sentence with a subject and verb. Eliminate unnecessary modifiers.

2.6.6. Place key ideas/**points** deliberately. 2.6.7. Place minor ideas/**points** in secondary clauses; do not make them the main subject of a sentence.

## 2.9 Use Active Voice

2.9.1. The active voice eliminates confusion by forcing you to name the actor in a sentence. Use a who-does-what order. Examples:

Passive (**least preferred**): The regulation [receiver] was written [verb] by the drafter [actor].

Active (**preferred**): The drafter [actor] wrote [verb] the regulation [receiver].

## 2.10 Use Action Verbs

2.10.1. Action verbs are shorter and more direct and make the sentence clearer.

### DO NOT SAY

give consideration to

give recognition to

is indicative of

### SAY

consider

recognize

shows, indicates

## 2.11 Use Plain Language Words

To make your writing clearer and easier to read and, thus, more effective--use simple words.

### DO NOT SAY

substantial part

because of the fact that since

call your attention to the fact that

for the period of

in many instances

### SAY

large part

because

remind you

for

often

2.11.4. Avoid redundancies. Do not use word pairs, if the words have the same effect or where the meaning of one includes the other. **Word pairs to avoid:**

any and all

authorize and direct

cease and desist

each and every

full and complete

order and direct

means and includes

necessary and desirable

2.11.8. Know the difference between "who, which, and that."

"Who" and "that" refers to people. Use "who" when referring to an individual. Use "that" when referring to a group.

"Which" refers to places, objects, or animals. "That" refers to either people or places, objects, or animals.

2.11.9. Expression of numbers: In general, spell out numbers that are ten or less in a sentence.

## **2.12 Acronyms**

2.12.1. Do not use acronyms more than necessary. Spell out an acronym the first time it appears, followed by the acronym in parentheses unless the acronym is common knowledge.

For more grammatical guidance, consult the full version of NASA Procedural Requirements (NPR) 1450.10D, NASA Correspondence Management and Communications Standards and Style.

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