



Writing for Scientific Professionals: It's All About the Audience, Structure, and Powerful Sentences

Region 2 – San Francisco Bay

A 1-day Class

Course Description

Are your most important points getting lost? Are your sentences especially dull or confusing (even for government writing)? If yes, then this short course is for you. We'll organize our thoughts into good document structure (through pre-writing and other techniques), and we'll put ourselves in the audience's shoes to better meet their needs. Not sure if you need this class? See if you can answer these questions:

1. What does the audience typically do when reading? And what should we, as writers, do about that?
2. How do you write a *good* summary statement and where do you put it?
3. How many words are too many for one sentence?
4. Can you name one, simple technique to improve your graphic layout?
5. What's wrong with this paragraph?
"Stormwater and urban runoff do not appear to play a significant role, but their actual contribution to pathogen load is not well understood and thus requires more study. Livestock accounts for very little (less than 3 percent) of the pathogen load. Instead, the river's main sources of pathogens are avian (40 percent), human (25 percent), and wild mammals (25 percent)."
(Hint: topic sentence)
6. What is the error (non-powerful writing) in the next sentence?
"A considerable amount of time was spent on public participation."
(Hint: extra words)

Bring a sample of your writing—you'll improve it after learning new skills.

This course teaches you to increase document clarity and to write powerful sentences, so you can prepare high-quality reports, letters, proposals, briefs, and more. We focus on practical skills that you can use immediately. Many real-world examples of strong and weak writing are the core of the training. We also reinforce skills with in-class writing and editing.

We'll spend most of the time on document organization and paragraph structure, and finish with powerful sentences. Please see the syllabus (at the end of this flyer) for more details.

Date and Time

April 18, 2007, Wednesday, 9 AM to 4 PM

Location

San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board
Room 1 (2nd floor)
1515 Clay Street, Suite 1400
Oakland, CA 94612
(510) 622-2300

Instructor

Theresa Schultz

To Register

On-line at <http://waternet/training/>

Contact If You Have Questions

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If you have special accommodation or language needs, please contact OEA, (916) 341-5880 or email Adrian Perez at aperez@waterboards.ca.gov at least 5 working days prior to the class. TTY/DD/Speech to Speech users may dial 7-1-1 for the California Relay Service.

Syllabus

Introduction

The Big Picture
Assess Your Writing Skills

Know Your Audience

Typical Reader Traits

Document Organization

Purpose of Organization
Benefits of Good Organization
Consequences of Bad Organization
Organizing Your Ideas

- Before you write, answer five essential questions.

Organizing Your Document

- Start with a good summary statement.
- Answer a potential question as soon as you raise it.
- State what the reader should do now.
- Include only relevant information.
- Use effective headings and subheadings.
- Use good graphic layout.

How People Read Government Writing

Paragraph Structure

Pre-writing

- Remember your audience.
- Choose and organize main ideas, then choose and organize concrete details for each main idea.

First Draft

- Discuss only one issue in a paragraph.
- Place the topic sentence at the beginning of a paragraph, and follow with supporting details.

Revisions

- Use a consistent term to identify a specific object or idea.
- Avoid unsupported general statements.
- Keep sentences and paragraphs at effective lengths.
- Use transitions.
- Edit, edit, edit.

Powerful Sentences

Overuse of Prepositional Phrases
Active Voice
Weak Noun-Verb Combinations
Long Introductory Phrases
Simpler Words
Redundant Phrases