# Ways to Improve Your **Proposal Writing**

Nobody likes to read bad writing. It's hard work! If you're writing a grant or project proposal, use the tools on this page to make your message clear and effective.

Get an instant idea of how easy or difficult your text is to read by using a fog index. Try:

#### gunning-fog-index.com



Idea of fog index ratings

Wewsween Weekly 12 12-14
Guardian Weekly 12
13 Journal articles 714 Time Newsweek 11 Agenda 2030 16 Policies 16-18

### 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18+

Low fog index: plain language, wide readership, easy to read

High fog index:

complex words, long sentences, intellectual audiences, harder to

For your text to read well and sustain interest, aim for:

- General professional writing 10-15
- Project proposals 12-14

### you want to shock your re



#### ...don't use number

- ✓ Write "shocking" if you want your reader to feel shocked, "worrying" if you want your reader to worry,
- ✓ Grab attention by starting paragraphs with emotive lead-in sentences that relate to your central argument.
- ✓ Then back up your claims/opinions with data

several reasons.

## **Examples of lead-in sentences**

The upward trend in violence against women is **alarming**.

**Not even one quarter** of girls in X district follow secondary education. Natural population growth is **impossible for** 

Government attempts to transform youth employment have been unsuccessful.

# Some words that spark interest

high low limited widespread proven

suitable beneficial serious encouraging satisfactory

disturbing alarming shocking unsuccessful impossible

### Use inductive and deductive approaches to organise your ideas

#### **INDUCTIVE**

- 1) Start with data, evidence, examples
- 2) Present the main points
- 3) Put the conclusion at the end
- Scientific approach with conclusion last.
- Best for academics, scientists and 'oldfashioned' audiences.
- Makes readers read everything before your conclusion.
- Readers may draw their own conclusion as they're reading – it could be different from yours.

### **DEDUCTIVE**

- 1) Start with your conclusion
- 2) Present the main points
- 3) Back up main points with data, evidence, examples



- Readers see your conclusion first and therefore the meaning and importance.
- Helps busy readers grasp your message quickly.
- Saves readers time.
- Shows that you want your conclusions to be understood.
- Not helpful when giving bad news.

These approaches can apply to paragraphs or sections of your document.

The deductive approach helps you put the most important information first.

# Writing with style



- Know your audience before you write.
- Always have your reader in mind and
- what they want to know. Keep your writing simple and natural.
- Limit the jargon stick to known terminology. Put points you want to
- **beginning** of a sentence. Be clear and confident.

emphasise at the

- Don't write what you wouldn't normally say.
- Avoid slang, idioms and humour.
- Don't try to show off how much you know.
- Don't introduce unusual words.
- Avoid lengthy sentences - they're harder to remember.
- Don't write more than you need to.

# Colorful lightbulbs on light background by Zamurovic Brothers from Noun Project **USE THE ACTIVE VOICE**

# We speak mostly in the active voice, so

do the same with writing. It's more natural and easier to follow. Only use the passive voice if you have a good reason. Compare:

# The learnings from each project will be

shared by the project manager vs The project manager will share the learnings from each project Which is clearer, gives an impression of

ction and directly tells you who is responsible? **CHOOSE VERBS OVER NOUNS** 

# Ways to brighten up your writing

# **QUESTIONS**

Insert a question here and there. Questions break the narrative style and wake up the reader, e.g.

What are some of the challenges facing young women? What causes elephants to raid crops?

What have been the major benefits of renewable energy?

Make sure to answer the question immediately afterwards. But take care not to go wild and put in a question in every paragraph!

#### WRITE WITH CONFIDENCE If you're writing a report or a project proposal, **you** are the expert. You

need to be especially concrete and confident when writing about plans, findings and recommendations. Therefore, avoid these words as much as you can:

hope perhaps might may could quite possibly believe

Instead of "it is perhaps due to ..." write "it is due to ..." Instead of "it might take six months" write "it will take up to six months"

#### **AVOID WORDINESS** Choose short words and keep to the point. A good trick is to ask

yourself, "Would I say that?" If not, find a plainer alternative, e.g. constitute a serious constraint >> limit or weaken

utilise >> use accelerate >> speed up

from its inception >> from the start

high priority >> priority Delete phrases like "many will agree that", "as far as we are concerned",

"as you already know" - they don't carry any relevant meaning. \*\* Use the A-Z of Alternative Words by the Plain English Campaign

**BE GENDER-NEUTRAL** 

# Verbs = action, e.g.

participation >> participate

implementation >> implement modification >> modify

#### LISTS GET TO THE POINT Bulleted lists are useful for:

Highlighting information

#### Breaking up paragraphs Making your page visually interesting

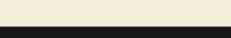
#### Use gender-neutral nouns, e.g. humankind, police officer, chair

Use plurals and the singular "they" or "their" to avoid gender bias.



### Targets for improving your fog index Vary the lengths of your paragraphs but try to keep under 200 words

- > Keep your average sentence length to around 15-18 words > Use short words where possible
- Cut out unnecessary words





Think of your reader, their style and their attention spans. If you don't say it, don't write it!

Be aware that your writing reflects who you are.

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copywritercollective.com/copywriting-tips-the-gunning-fog-index/

proposal or other writing? Get in touch with Sally at contact@omniawritingservices.com

Want more help with your

