

SEVEN TIPS ON WRITING STYLE

1. Use a conversational tone of voice, one that is an informal prose style. For example, don't be afraid of using contractions.
 2. Quote someone else's conversation or statement. As one writer put it, "Curiosity is one of the strongest human motivations and we love to eavesdrop on other's conversations and thoughts."
 3. Use questions. Why make statements all the time when you can make the reader grapple with your question?
 4. Tell stories, give examples, use illustrations, create "word pictures."
 5. To add drama and momentum to your writing, use chronology or sequencing: "At 10 am...by noon we had."
 6. When using figures, amounts, distances, etc., try to round off or average. Make comparisons, for example, saying that this year's budget is twice as large as the budget a year ago.
 7. Add color and credibility to your writing by choosing the specific over the general. "We took the Amtrak Silver Streak" instead of "we took the train."
-

A WRITING STYLE CHECKLIST

- _ Are your sentences no longer than 14-16 words?
- _ In your first paragraph, limit the number of words with two or more syllables. The first 50 words are the most important and determine whether you keep or lose your reader.
- _ Avoid "Latinate" words (words that come from the Latin) and abstract words in general. The more concrete your writing, the easier it will be for your readers to see the picture.
- _ Write in the active voice using active verbs.
- _ "It is" and "there is" can almost always be cut out. The same with "that." Try it and see.
- _ Readers have trouble understanding negatives; they get confused. Try stating your sentence in the positive. If the message will not work without a negative, underline it, that way there's no mistake.
- _ Prepositional phrases can often be deleted and your sentence will lose nothing. Or try turning the prepositional phrase into a separate sentence.
- _ Cut out long verbs. Replace them with split verbs: cut out (instead of delete) break up, set up.
- _ Read your writing aloud. Good writing is talking on paper.

