



# Developing Your Voice

## Taking It To the Next Level



Bowker COMM 390

# Creating Credibility

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- ▶ **Be specific.**
- ▶ **Be definite.**
- ▶ **Be concrete.**
- ▶ Avoid overly emotional language.
- ▶ Report the details.
- ▶ E.g. A period of poor weather.
  - ▶ It rained every day for a week.
  - ▶ The intersection is inefficient.



Source: Strunk & White

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# Creating Credibility

- ▶ **Be confident.**
  - ▶ When speaking use a clear, strong voice that doesn't hesitate.
  - ▶ In writing, aim for the same thing.
- ▶ **Be trustworthy.**
  - ▶ Be honest, even if it means telling them something they don't want to hear.
  - ▶ Be professional.
- ▶ **Be believable.**
  - ▶ Show you understand the issues, especially the complex nuanced ones.
  - ▶ Explain anything unexpected.



# Specific

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- ▶ I've provided examples that could be viewed as suggestions but not necessarily. (weak)
- ▶ I've provided examples. (strong and clear)
  
- ▶ The Chief and Council studied some of their businesses.
- ▶ The Chief and Council, led by Sam Oliver, conducted an evaluation of the Economic Development Corporation's latest strategic plan.



# Homework

- ▶ Find a place in your report where you lack confidence.
- ▶ Rewrite it so that it is more believable – or take it out.



# Confidence & Credibility

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- ▶ Use plain language.
- ▶ Use short sentences.
- ▶ Avoid jargon.
- ▶ Don't over-hype.
- ▶ Cut out excess words.
- ▶ Be specific.
- ▶ Be concrete.



<http://confidentwriting.com/2007/07/the-ingredients/>

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**Use plain language.** Reduce the distance between your words and the thing you are describing. It is easier to understand and easier for your reader to make their own judgments. It will also help you get to the point.

**Use short sentences.** shorter sentences help readers to follow what you're saying, to form their own opinions. Not to get lost or worry about getting lost.

**Avoid jargon.** Jargon can be ambiguous whereas technical language is not.

**Don't over-hype.** Try and find the words that are as close to what you're describing as possible.

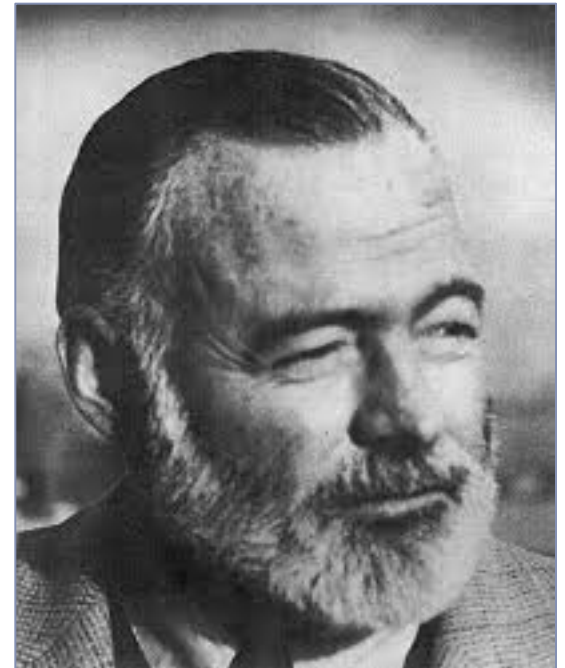
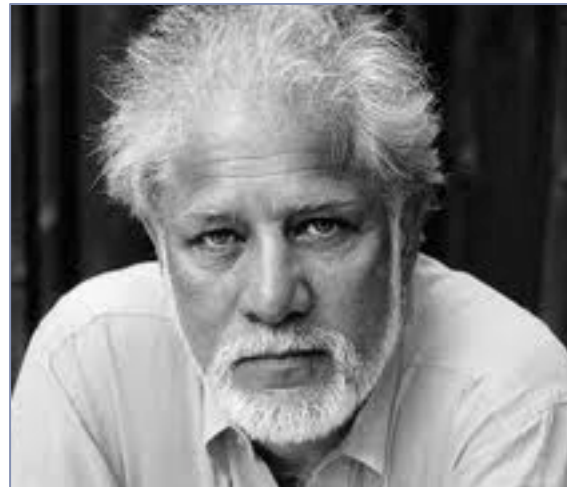
**Cut out excess words.** Too many extra words can look like a smokescreen.

**Be specific.** Cut the waffle.

**Follow through.** Follow through on your commitments. Apologize and explain if you can't.

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Impress them with your smart ideas, rather than your smart words.





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Use the *Active Voice*

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# Active Voice vs. Passive Voice

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- ▶ The **active voice** is the "normal" voice, the one we use most of the time. It is direct:

<b>active:</b>	<b>subject</b>	<b>verb</b>	<b>object</b>
	Cats	eat	fish.

- ▶ In the **passive voice** the subject receives the action – it happens *to* them:

<b>passive:</b>	<b>subject</b>	<b>verb</b>	<b>object</b>
	Fish	are eaten	by cats

- ▶ The **object** of the active verb becomes the **subject** of the passive verb:

	<b>subject</b>	<b>verb</b>	<b>object</b>
<b>active:</b>	Everybody	drinks	<b>water.</b>
<b>passive:</b>	<b>Water</b>	is drunk	by everybody.

- ▶ The **active voice** is the one most used in children's stories which are written to be direct and easy to understand.



# Use fewer words & shorter sentences.

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- ▶ **Take out anything that doesn't add to the meaning.**
- ▶ Shorter is easier to follow and easier to understand.
- ▶ For example:
  - ▶ Consumer demand is rising in the area of services. (wordy)
  - ▶ Consumers are demanding more services. (stronger)

- ▶ Just do it.



# Get to the Point

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*Business writing is intended to inform, not entertain.*

Be brief.

Be bright.

Be gone.



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Always use the best word available.

“Never use one big word when five little words will do.”

-- Roderick Haig-Brown



# Readings

**Read Chapters 2 & 3** in your text

and

The handout titled “**Clear, Concise & Direct Sentences**” (in Module 4 in the folder titled “Grammar and Writing Style”)



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# Telling Your Story

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# You ARE Telling a Story

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- ▶ A story is more compelling and more interesting than a report or a business letter.
- ▶ **The best stories are interesting right away because they promise something compelling or worthwhile.**



# Introduction: 10,000 Foot View

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- ▶ **Start with a general, high level view. This:**
  - ▶ Describes your idea in simple or broad terms
  - ▶ Helps your audience know what to look for
  - ▶ Indicates what is to come
  - ▶ Forces you to be clear on the direction





In 2-4 sentences, what is the story of this fort?





This is a tourist city, a beautiful city and the shared unceded and traditional territory of the Musquam, Tsleil-Waututh and Squamish peoples.





The Cowichan Valley economy is based on...





Ahousat is located on the west coast of Vancouver Island and...



# Conclusion: 100 Foot View

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- ▶ The conclusion sums up your main points and provides more detail than the introduction.
- ▶ It reminds the reader of what is important in your report and what you want them to remember after they are finished reading it.



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End

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