

TECHNICAL WRITING

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CHOICE OF WORDS...

- H. W. Fowler in his book *The King's English*:
 - Prefer the familiar word to the far fetched;
 - Prefer the concrete word to the abstract;
 - Prefer the single word to the circumlocution;
 - Prefer the short word to the long;
 - Prefer the Saxon word to the Romance.

USE OF FAMILIAR WORDS...

- Communication would be much easier with simple words:

Difficult	Simple
Endeavour	Try
Ascertain	Find out
Terminate	End
Demonstrate	Show
Utilize	Use
Antiquated	Old
Experimentation	Test
Mechanisms	Machines

USE CONCRETE WORDS...

- It is not only word but words put together for specific expressions:

Abstract	Concrete
A piece of art	A painting/statue
Significant rise	(45%) rise
The majority	(68%)
Near/foreseeable future	By (Friday evening)
Labor saving device	Machine that does work of ten workers
Substantial gain	(20%) increase

USE CONCRETE WORDS...

- Can be achieved without 'opinion words'
- 'opinion words' are subjective and not exact
 - For example:
 - High
 - Low
 - Big
 - Small
 - Several
 - Often/very often
 - Most/least

USE OF SINGLE WORD...

- ◉ Circumlocutions can confuse; single word can achieve

After his retirement he took up a job for honor, not caring for any emoluments.

After his retirement he took up an honorary job.

He always uses words with several meanings and interpretations.

He always uses ambiguous words

USE SHORT WORDS...

- Short words communicate better than long ones:

Long Words	Short Words
During the preceding year	Last year
Definitive action...	Final action...
Incontrovertible evidence	Proof
...acceleration...	...speeding up...

PREFER SAXON WORD TO ROMANCE...

- Romance words are not for general audience:

Romance	Saxon
Corpse	Dead body
Animate	Living
Loquacious	Talkative
Belligerent	Warlike
Anarchy	Lawlessness
Pusillanimity	Cowardice
Centennial	100 th anniversary
Contiguous	Bordering/adjoining

USE ACTIVE WORDS...

- Active: doer performs the action
- Passive: doer receives the action
- Passive is used for explaining experiments or unknown doer

Passive: your efforts are highly appreciated by the management

Active: the management highly appreciates your efforts.

P: the matter will be looked into by the inspection team

A: The inspection team will look into the matter.

P: Your letter was received yesterday.

A: We received your letter yesterday

AVOID UNNECESSARY CAMOUFLAGED VERBS

- Less effective than the writer desires:

Through proper **utilization of our resources we can effect elimination of poverty in next ten years.**

By properly using our resources we can eliminate poverty in next ten years.

The **establishment of a placement cell in our institute has been accomplished with the help of some well-known company.**

With the help of some well-known companies our institute has established a placement cell.

Fog index...

- Fog index reflects complexity of a structure/sentence.

$(AWS + \text{no. of complex words}) \times 0.4 = \text{fog index}$

- AWS=average words per sentence

- A complex word is of 3 or more syllables.

Fog index (cont...)

- ◉ Teacher: 4
- ◉ Professionals: 6
- ◉ Course books: 7-8
- ◉ Novels: 10
- ◉ Classics: 13-14
- ◉ Doctors: 15
- ◉ Government documents: 20-22
- ◉ Indian Constitution/advocates to clients: 30
- ◉: 35+
- ◉ Students: 9-10

SENTENCE CONSTRUCTION...

- Keep sentences short
- Keep sentence content limited
- Economize on words
- Avoid surplus words
- Avoid cluttering phrases
- Avoid roundabout construction
- Avoid unnecessary repetition
- Determine emphasis in sentences
- Maintain sentence unity
- Adhere to rules of grammar

Keep sentences short...

- ◉ Separate independent clauses joined by **'and'** or **'but'**
- ◉ Make new sentences out of **'which'** clauses

Compare...

- To assist in addressing the ongoing problem of employees in buildings A and B arriving late to work, the company has purchased several electric carts to transport those who work in building A from the parking structure to their building every five minutes, and those in building B will be transported by a bus, which is scheduled to leave the parking structure at 7:30 a.m., 7:45 a.m., and 8:00 a.m.

This sentence can easily be written as...

- We have found a solution to the ongoing problem of employees in buildings A and B arriving late to work. For those who work in building A, you will be transported from the parking structure by electric carts. The carts run every five minutes. Those in building B will be transported by bus. Buses will leave the parking structure at 7:30 a.m., 7:45 a.m., and 8:00 a.m.

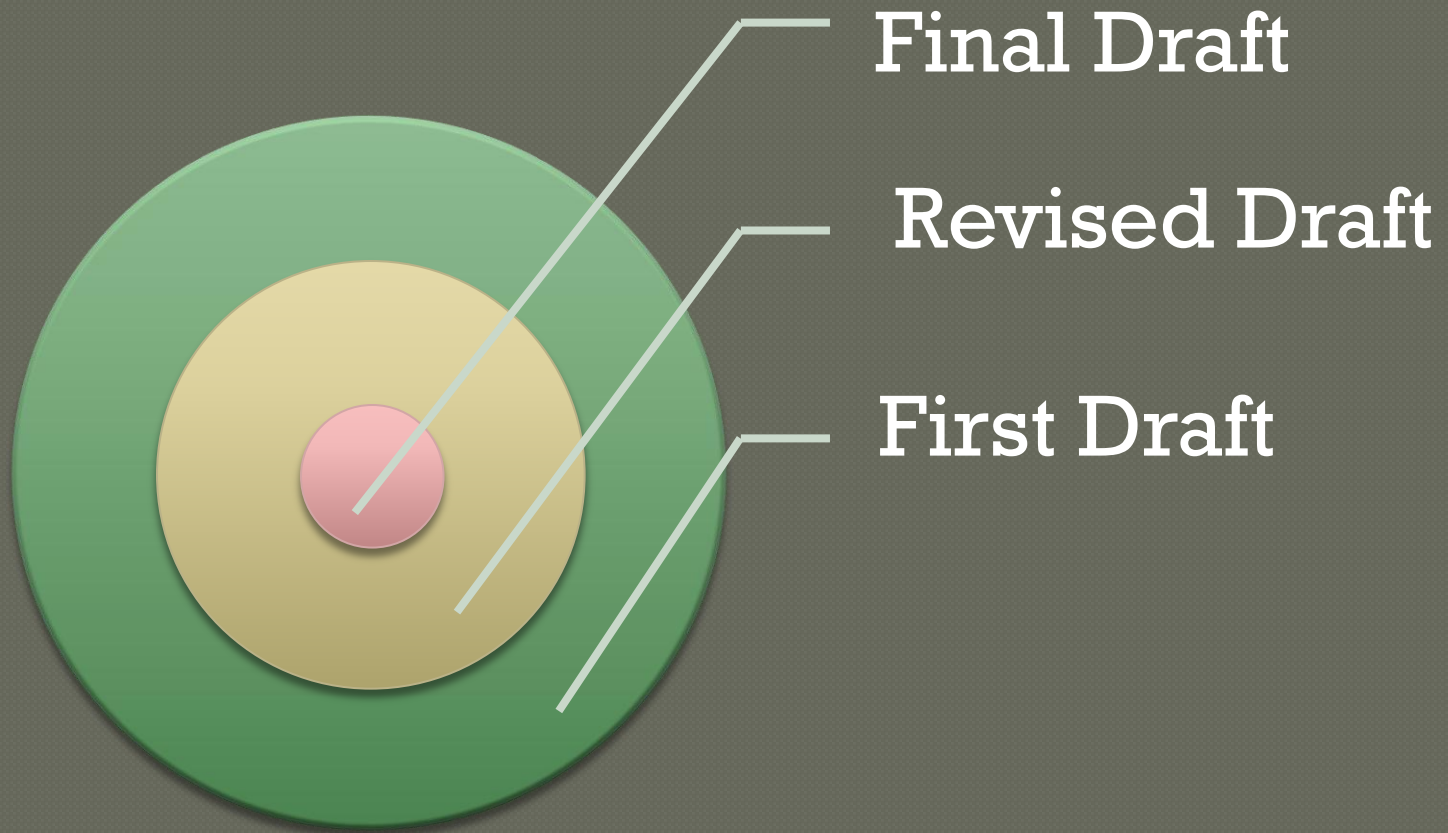
Determine emphasis in sentences

- Make outline
 - Number outline
 - Letter outline
 - Word outline
 - Phrase outline
 - Sentence outline
 - Paragraph outline

Writing challenges

Information Channel	Information Richness
Face-to-face conversation	High
Videoconferencing	High
Telephone conversation	High
E-mails	Medium
Handheld devices	Medium
Blogs	Medium
Written letters and memos	Medium
Formal written documents	Low
Spreadsheets	Low

Hit the Bull's eye



Writing is a process...

- ⦿ Good writing doesn't happen overnight. It requires planning, drafting, evaluating, revising and editing.
- ⦿ Learning and improvement requires:
 - Self-review
 - Peer-review
 - Expert's feedback
 - Practice
- ⦿ No shortcuts

Good technical writers practice...

- Planning
- Clarity
- Brevity
- Simplicity
- Word choice
- Active voice
- Committing to writing as a process

Thank you
Happy writing