

Effectiveness Survey for Writing

Choose several samples of your communications and use this survey to score your effectiveness.

Assessment – answer yes or no to the following questions:

1. Do your sentences average fewer than 30 words?
2. Do your paragraphs average fewer than five sentences?
3. Do your paragraphs contain just one idea?
4. Do you state your main purpose for communicating early and clearly?
5. Do your acknowledgments and other communications have more second-person references than first or third person?
6. Are your sentences free from adverbs or other intensifiers --- e.g., almost all -ly words, very, so, too? Example: she *ran quickly* vs. she *sprinted*.
7. Does your writing avoid industry jargon?
8. Are your communications free from phrases commonly seen in ads or appeals – e.g., these unprecedented times, now more than ever, pivot?
9. Do you keep verbs as verbs and not nouns? Example: “the director maintains oversight” vs. “the director oversees.” (Check for words that end in -tion or -ment.)
10. Do you state concepts in positive rather than negative terms? Example: “If you fail to submit the form, you will be disqualified” vs. “If you submit the form, you will be eligible.”

If you answered yes

0 or 1 time – Congrats! You’re doing all the right things.

2 or 3 times – Wouldn’t hurt to have a refresher course but you’re on the right track.

4 or more times – You might be losing readers by confusing or boring them. Time to get some training!

Quick and easy assessment is your readability score at or lower than (choose one)

- a. Flesch-Kincaid Reading Ease – 70 to 80 (<https://readabilityformulas.com/flesch-reading-ease-readability-formula.php>)
- b. Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level – 7 to 8 (<https://readabilityformulas.com/flesch-grade-level-readability-formula.php>)
- c. Gunning Fog Score – 7 to 8 (<https://readabilityformulas.com/gunning-fog-readability-formula.php>)

