

The more there is to read, the less your audience will want to read it.

Make sure your writing is short.



Keep sentences to 20 words or fewer



Keep paragraphs to **5 sentences or fewer**



National Center for Environmental Health Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry

Become a better writer:





No one wants to read a wall of words.

Most readers skim documents instead of reading every word. Help your readers get your main points.



Include a **short, clear main message** at the top of your document



Use short paragraphs and bulleted lists. Keep lists to **fewer than 7 items**, and don't use sub-bullets.



Use a relevant and specific heading for every 1-3 paragraphs

For example: "ATSDR Study Looks at Lead Contamination"

Instead of: "Overview"



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Become a better writer:





Passive voice is wordy, but active voice is concise and direct. Passive voice is formal, but active voice sounds more like speech (making it easier to understand).



Use passive voice only when the **subject is unknown** or of **less importance**.

Passive Voice: "About 500 homes were left without water as a result of the chemical spill."

Active Voice: "The chemical spill left 500 homes without water."



Strengthen your sentences further by **keeping the subject** and verb close together.



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