Tip Sheet: Use Clear Communication Principles

Use these tips when you start writing your article.

Use active voice. Active voice makes statements clearer. In changing passive to active, you might need to add a subject.

Passive Voice

Several potential changes to industry practices that might reduce egg-associated salmonella infections were identified.

Active Voice

Researchers found several possible changes to industry practices that might reduce egg-associated salmonella infections.

Use short sentences that express only one idea per sentence. Shorter sentences are better for conveying complex information. They break up complex ideas into smaller pieces, which are easier to understand.

Before

In this multi-state survey of restaurants that prepare egg entrees during all hours of operation, high-risk egg-preparation practices such as improper cold storage of shell eggs before cooking, pooling of eggs, and improperly washing and sanitization of utensils were common.

After

We conducted a multi-state survey of restaurants that prepare egg dishes. We found that high-risk egg-preparation practices were common. They included improper storage of eggs before cooking, pooling of eggs, and improper cleaning of utensils.

Keep subjects and verbs close together. Structure sentences to start with the subject followed quickly by the verb. Keeping subjects and verbs close together makes it easier to follow the sentence.

Before

Participants in the study, after their initial evaluation and the completion of their blood work, will submit their symptom journals.

After

Study participants will turn in their symptom journals after their initial evaluation and blood work.

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Write short paragraphs. Long paragraphs discourage readers. Even one sentence paragraphs are okay if they are clear and accurate.

Make sure your paragraphs have topic sentences. A topic sentence is the first sentence in a paragraph that explains what the rest of the paragraph is about. A topic sentence also keeps your document organized and clear for readers who skim for information.

Example: Researchers have linked eating fresh produce to outbreaks of foodborne illness.

Use transition words.

Transition words help bridge gaps between paragraphs. They tell your audience if a paragraph expands on or contrasts with the previous paragraph.

- Examples of transition words that show you're expanding on an idea are "**in addition to**" and "**for example**."

- Examples of transition words that show you're contrasting with the last paragraph are "**however**" and "**on the other hand**."