

Writing simply and effectively

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GLOBAL



REGIONAL



NATIONAL



COUNTY



VILLAGE

Outline

- Why write short
- Best writing practices
 1. Organize your text
 2. Prune ideas and shorten sentences
 3. Pay attention to verbs
 4. Revise, polish, and proofread
 5. Visualize your final product

Why do we write the way we do?

- You need to “warm up”
- You say the same thing several different ways since you’re not sure which is best.
- It takes you a while to figure out what you’re saying.
- Things happen chronologically, so you tend to think and write that way.

Why write simply and effectively?

- Poor writing
 - Wastes time
 - Fails to get a message across
 - Makes us a poor source of information

The tighter you write, the more persuasive you will be.

1. Organize your text

“People who think well,
write well.”

- David Ogilvy

Common pitfalls

- The beginning is too broad
- The writer takes a detour
- The writer lacks a sense of audience
- Clutter hides a clear focus



Techniques for Organizing Your Text

- Make an outline, with bullet headlines for each message you want to get across
- Organize points by most important to least important
- Begin boldly
- Make sure ideas flow logically

As you write, ask yourself

- What's my point?
- In a sentence, what am I trying to say?
- Have I taken a detour?
- Have I squeezed in extra stuff?



Example – Quick Win News

INTRODUCTION OF REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH MODULES IN STUDENTS' CURRICULA: SOON A REALITY IN TELMAR

Telmar, like other countries in Narnia, is facing issues related to unwanted teenage pregnancies in schools, resulting in dropouts and academic failures, abortions and suicide of thousands of girls. Targeting the authorities in charge of Education, Partner X has made the problem a priority in 2015 as part of its advocacy project Advance Family Planning (AFP), funded by AFP Baltimore, with the technical support of Partner Y. However, those authorities did not respect their commitment due to the socio-political unrest of the country. The multiple advocacy meetings conducted were not very successful.

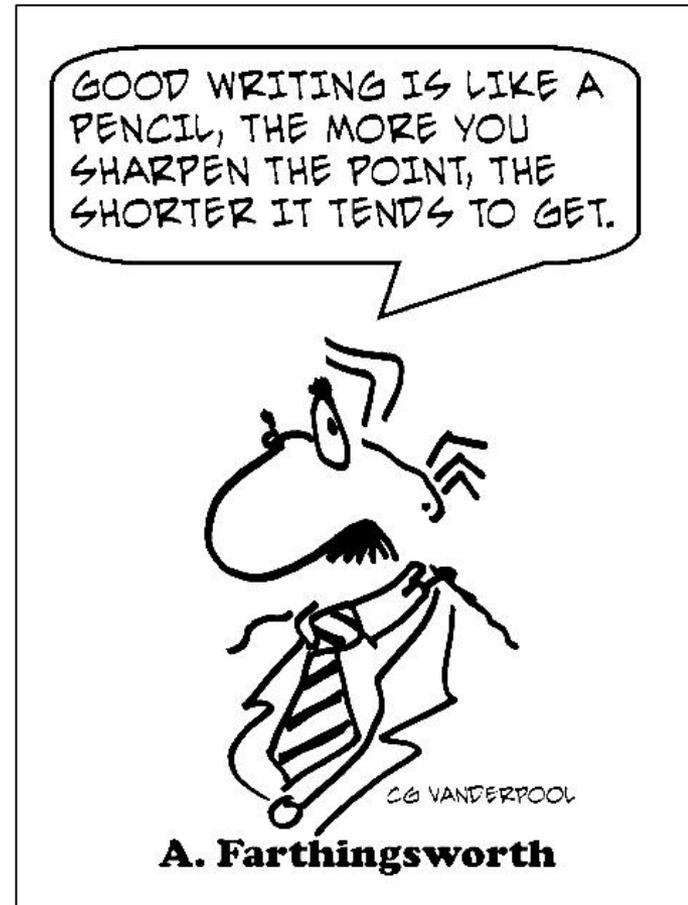
2. Prune ideas. Shorten sentences.

“Brevity comes from selection
and not compression.”

- Donald Murray

Prune ideas

- Select the most important piece of information to share
- Ask yourself, what information can I afford to leave out?



Quick Exercise

- Find the headline...

Example – Quick Win News

That commitment was materialized by the inclusion of one of our recommendations: the integration of SRH modules in the training curricula of students **by the Government Prime Minister in his policy statement to the parliamentarians on Friday, February 5, 2016.**

Why is this significant?

Shorten sentences

- Use short, familiar words
- One sentence per idea
- Use transitional words or phrases to show how ideas are linked
- Avoid jargon
- Say what you mean
- Vary sentence length

Deconstructing Jargon

Avoid or Define

- Contraceptive prevalence rate
- Fertility rate
- Unmet need for family planning

Use

- Percentage of people using contraceptives
- Average family size or number of children per woman
- Estimate of women who would like to prevent or delay pregnancy but are not using contraception

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TELMAR PARLIAMENT PRIORITIZES INTEGRATING SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH EDUCATION INTO STUDENT CURRICULA

In an agenda-setting policy statement to Parliament on February 5, 2016, Telmar's Prime Minister recommended integrating sexual and reproductive health modules into curricula for students aged 10-24. A majority of the country's parliamentarians then voted to prioritize it on the Prime Minister's agenda. More than four months in the making, this advocacy win represents a remarkable step forward in expanding access to family planning information for young people in Telmar.

3. Pay attention to verbs

“No verb means no action. No action means nothing for the reader to see. Nothing to see means no fire in the brain and no reason to dive deeper...”

- Roy Peter Clark, *How to Write Short*

Headlines

- Locally-driven Family Planning Progress in Tanzania: 2012-2014 (version 1)
- Following through on Tanzania's Locally Driven Family Planning Progress (2012-2014) (v2)
- Tanzania Leads the Way on Family Planning, Health and Development: Following through on Progress (v3)
- Investing in Family Planning for Tanzania's Health and Development (final)

Passive vs. Active Voice

Passive Voice

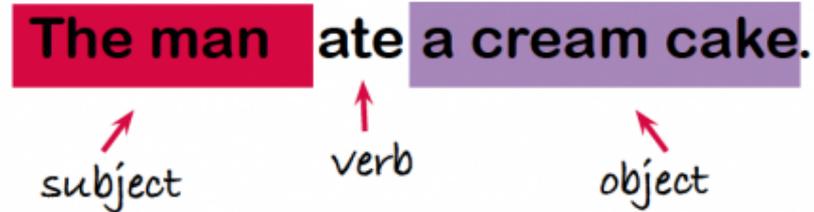
- Vague
- Slows down understanding
- Evasive

Active voice

- Clear and direct sense of who did what



Subject-Verb-Object



Targeting the authorities in charge of Education, Partner X has made the problem a priority in 2015 as part of its advocacy project Advance Family Planning (AFP), funded by AFP Baltimore, with the technical support of Partner Y. However, those authorities did not respect their commitment due to the socio-political unrest of the country.

4. Revise, polish, and proofread

“To be a good self-editor, you have to read your writing like you’ve never seen it before.”

- SW

PEANUTS

those years in Paris were to be among the finest of her life.



3-2

Looking back, she once remarked, "Those years in Paris were among the finest of my life." That was what she said when she looked back upon those years in Paris



where she spent some of the finest years of her life.



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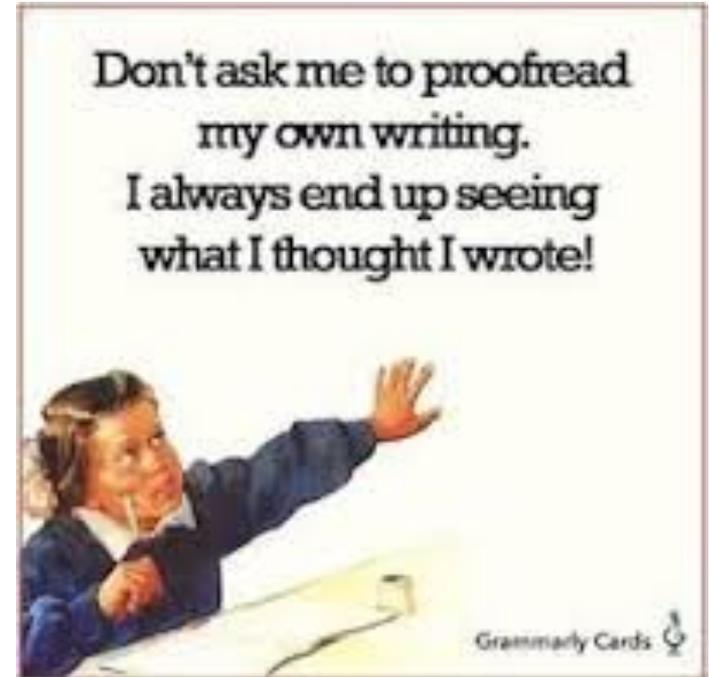
I THINK THIS IS GOING TO NEED A LITTLE EDITING...



SCHULZ

Self-editing

- Put yourself in the place of someone who knows nothing about your work
- Try to anticipate the kinds of wrong assumptions such a person might make
- Simplify, but not at the risk of clarity



Best practices

- Scrutinize each word through drafting and revision
- Identify and preserve stronger elements
- Find and trim weaker elements
- Try not to edit something on the same day you write it
- Get someone else to read it

Editing tips

- Delete words that mean little or nothing [*very, quite, kind of*]
- Delete words that repeat the meaning of other words [*various and sundry*]
- Delete words implied by other words [*terrible tragedy*]
- Replace a phrase with a word [*in the event that becomes if*]

Aim for a word count

Type of content	Word count
Email	<200
Breaking News	200-350
Advocacy Brief	300-400
Blog post	400-750
Case Study	1,000-1,500

Example – Quick Win News

Targeting the authorities in charge of Education, Partner X has made the problem a priority in 2015 as part of its advocacy project Advance Family Planning (AFP), funded by AFP Baltimore, with the technical support of Partner Y. However, those authorities did not respect their commitment due to the socio-political unrest of the country. The multiple advocacy meetings conducted were not very successful.

On December 15, 2015, with the return to normal political situation, Partner X set up a multisectoral committee to think through the issue of unwanted teenage pregnancies in schools.

Example – Quick Win News

Beginning in October 2015, Advance Family Planning local partner X prioritized addressing the issue with the technical support of Partner Y.

Partner X began advocacy activities during a time of socio-political unrest in the country. Initial advocacy meetings were ~~not very~~ unsuccessful. But by mid-December, with a return to normalcy, Partner X moved quickly, organizing a multi-sector advocacy committee to think through ~~the issue of~~ addressing unwanted teenage pregnancies in schools.

5. Visualize your final product

“Writing tight involves more than leaving out words...it also involves laying out words – laying them out on the page, the physical presentation of your writing.”

- William Brohaugh

Best practices

- Make a relaxed visual environment where information can be easily scanned and understood
- Use white space
- Use sidebars, subheads, footnotes, paragraphing, checklists, graphs, images, quotes
- Use **bolding** to call out key words or phrases

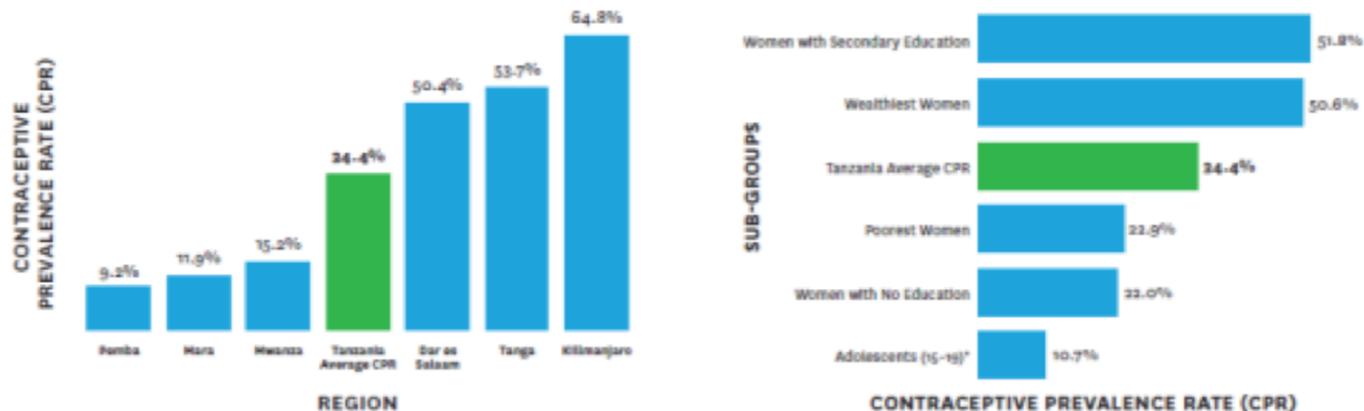
WHY FAMILY PLANNING?

1 Simple Answer to 5 Major Global Challenges

degradation, such as deforestation, drought and flooding, which compound hunger and nutritional issues.

5. Family planning promotes women's empowerment

Figure 1: Contraceptive Prevalence Rates Vary Widely in Tanzania



*CPR calculated for all women. Other sub-groups and regions calculated with married women only.
Source: Tanzania Demographic and Health Survey 2010

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3. women to increase the time between pregnancies. Evidence has long shown that babies born less than two years apart are more likely to die than those born at an interval of at least two years.²
4. Family planning protects and preserves the environment by minimizing problems of environmental

method. Eighty-five percent of married adolescents and 60% of unmarried adolescents do not practice family planning. As a result, 44% of 19-year-olds surveyed in 2010 were either mothers or pregnant with their first child⁶ and many others resort to unsafe abortion.⁷ Increasing access to contraceptive information, services and supplies for everyone would avert tens of thousands of unintended pregnancies, abortions, and maternal and child deaths.

Final Thoughts

- You need more time, not less, to write something good and short
- Focus, focus, focus
- Revise, polish and proofread everything
- Read, study and collect great examples

“It’s not what you say,
it’s what people hear.”

- Frank Luntz, *Words That Work*

Citations

- “[How to Write Short: Word Craft for Fast Times](#)” by Roy Peter Clark
- “[10 Tips on How to Write Shorter](#)” by Josh Burnoff
- “How to Write Clearly and Effectively” by SkillSoft, Johns Hopkins University

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