

Language Tips

Avoid needless words.

We use excess words in conversation all the time. That's fine. For resumes and cover letters, though, you want to be clear. Excess words slow comprehension. Here are some examples of common phrases and how to simplify them.

already existing
at the present time
basic fundamentals
completely eliminate
continue to remain
currently being
currently underway
empty space
had done previously
introduced a new

never before
none at all
now at this time
period of time
private industry
separate entities
start out
write out
still persists
mix together

Simplify phrases.

More complicated phrasing is weaker (harder to comprehend at a glance) than simpler phrasing.

Weak

gave an assessment
made arrangements for
made the decision
made the measurement of
performed the development of
is working as expected

Strong

assessed
arranged
decided
measured
developed
works as expected

Don't overuse pronouns.

Be especially careful with *it*, *this*, and *that*. Readers often have difficulty identifying the word these pronouns refer to.

Order the words in your sentences carefully.

Just like phrases, the most direct way to say something is often the best way to say it.

Weak Example

In low water temperatures and high toxicity levels of oil, we tested how well the microorganisms survived. This is indirect phrasing. The subject and verb of the sentence (the most important parts) are toward the end.

Strong Example

We tested how well the microorganisms survived in low water temperatures and high toxicity levels of oil. This is direct phrasing. The subject and verb are clear and up front. This makes comprehension easier.