

Chapter 1 : The Official Habits of Mind Institute Website

Just as a diamond cutter uses precision in cutting to increase the clarity of a gemstone, writers should approach the writing and editing of their work in a similar fashion. PRECISION Precision refers to the idea of saying exactly what you mean.

However, many student writers get hung up on sentence-level expression, thinking that only elegant, erudite sentences will earn top grades. While it is true that some people can produce extraordinarily elegant and graceful prose, it is also true that anyone can learn to write effectively in ways that will persuade and satisfy readers. Producing and reading elegant writing is a pleasure, but what really matters in academic writing is precision. Focusing first or only on sentence-level issues is a troublesome approach. Doing so is like driving while looking only at the few feet of the road right in front of the bumper. Experienced drivers instead take in the larger scene and more effectively identify and avoid potential hazards with ongoing course corrections. Writing well is like that. That is, if you have a well-developed thesis and a carefully sequenced argument organized into cohesive and coherent paragraphs, many of the sentence-level issues take care of themselves. It can actually be a satisfying part of the process. One common metaphor notes that a good edit is like the last twist of a camera lens that brings the whole picture into focus. Your professors are much more likely to find a self-consciously highbrow writing style tedious than impressive. As the saying goes 2 , any fool can make simple things complicated; it takes a genius to make complicated things simple. My hope with this chapter is to help you see those habits for yourself and, most importantly, how your readers experience them. Convoluted or wordy prose may contain some insightful or intriguing ideas, but if you can render those ideas in clear and concise prose, then you will inevitably develop those ideas even further in the course of writing. They are not as interested in our ability to write Shakespearean prose as they are in our ability to absorb information, wrestle with it until we can comprehend it, and then convey that understanding logically in writing. Unsurprisingly, the hardest writing assignments I have had in college were the ones for which I was least prepared. I can try my darnedest to write beautifully, but if I have not put in the necessary time to actually read and reread the assigned material, I will have nothing meaningful to say and my professors will see straight through my bloviating. That being said, the writing process is actually a highly effective exercise for digesting material and developing a cohesive argument. Often it is not until I start writing that I realize the holes in my thinking and the areas that I need to go back and study more thoroughly. This chapter provides many great practical pointers for editing our papers in order to produce clear, refined arguments and should be returned to frequently. Peter Farrell The best way to achieve clarity and concision in writing is to separate the drafting process from the revision process. Highly effective writers routinely produce vague, tortuous, and bloated drafts, and are happy to do so. A snarly first draft is often a great achievement. One just needs to take the time to develop relevant ideas and make them clear to the reader. For that reason, I write this section of the chapter envisioning someone who has already cranked out a very rough draft and is now in the process of revising for clarity and concision. What makes a complex line of thinking easy to follow? The tricks of cohesion and coherence, discussed in Chapter 6 , are a big help. Williams and Bizup offer another key point. They provide this fanciful example: The character, though, is obviously Little Red Riding Hood and the action is walking. That example goes out of its way to be silly, but consider this example from a website offering free college papers: The idea of how much power the King had struck Parliament. After that, the Parliament and the people made the King sign the Magna Carta, which limits the amount of power the King has. The Magna Carta also affected the rights of the American colonies. It practically took away all relationships between the King and the colonies. After the relationship was broken, America broke off from England. Apparently, the author is claiming that the colonists in the s? The third sentence is refreshingly straightforward in structure though vague on details. The fifth and sixth sentences are fairly straightforward, but also incredibly vague: The last sentence essentially says that after the relationship was broken, the relationship was broken. If the author were to rewrite the passage to make the grammatical subjects match the characters, he or she would be prompted to clarify what exactly the king, the Parliament, the English populace, and the American colonists

did and to who, something which the author of the above passage may not actually understand. Writing clearly involves thinking clearly, and clear rigorous thinking is why your professors assign you writing in the first place. IgE-dependent allergic hypersensitivity reactions such as allergic asthma and food allergy involve mast cells which are typically regarded as troublesome cells as a result. Further, the allergic sensitization-processes also involves a role for mast cells. Recent findings show that their functionality is not only pro-inflammatory, but can on the contrary have suppressive or immunomodulatory effects in allergic inflammation. Further, it seems that mast cells are also able to play an additional role in the allergic sensitization-processes. Recent findings show that mast cell functionality is not only pro-inflammatory, but can on the contrary have suppressive or immunomodulatory effects in allergic inflammation. Both versions of the passage are consistently about mast cells, but the second version makes that consistency much more obvious to readers as mast cells are the main character of every sentence. That clear consistency allows us to devote more of our brain power to recalling technical terms like immunomodulatory and comprehending the key ideas. That makes it both easier and more interesting to read. In these two sentences, the character is a belief rather than a person or thing. However, the passage is still clear to the reader because it keeps the character consistent and explains what that character does creates nostalgia to who people at large. Imagine if the author wrote this instead: People feel nostalgic not about the internal structure of s families. The key point is this: Concision and grace Chapter 7 on introductions and conclusions notes the importance of concision, as those framing parts of the paper are often the most egregiously bloated. The general rule introduced there holds for any writing: As with clarity, the benefits of concision are intellectual as well as stylistic: Michael Harvey 9 notes that fluffy, wordy prose does not necessarily result from an underdeveloped writing process. Sometimes it reflects the context of academic writing: Concision leaves us fewer words to hide behind. Our insights and ideas might appear puny stripped of those inessential words, phrases, and sentences in which we rough them out. We might even wonder, were we to cut out the fat, would anything be left? As noted in the opening example of Chapter 4, effortful thinking is something most people naturally try to avoid most of the time. In some ways, too, the general structure of education conditions students to approach papers as blanks to be filled rather than open-ended problems to explore. One of the first things you will learn about writing in college is that you have to be concise. If you start to lose your reader, expect a bad grade. If you can incorporate concision, cohesion and grace into each paper you write, then good grades are sure to follow. Kaethe Leonard Many writing guides describe editing strategies that produce a vivid, satisfying concision. Look for words and phrases that you can cut entirely. Look for bits that are redundant: Look for opportunities to replace longer phrases with shorter phrases or words. Williams and Bizup 11 recommend changing negatives to affirmatives. Consider the negatives in this sentence: Good parallelism can also help you write shorter text that better conveys your thinking. For example, Stacy Schiff writes this in her best-selling biography of Cleopatra A goddess as a child, a queen at eighteen, a celebrity soon thereafter, she was an object of speculation and veneration, gossip and legend, even in her own time. Imagine if, instead, Schiff wrote this: Cleopatra was seen as divine when she was a child. She became the sovereign ruler at eighteen, and she became well known throughout the ancient world early in her reign. People speculated about her, worshipped her, gossiped about her, and told legends about her, even in her own time. In your studies, then, you will probably have to engage with important texts that violate almost all the advice given here. Consider the following example from Talcott Parsons, a sociological theorist noted for both his intellectual force and utterly impenetrable writing style. Communication through a common system of symbols is the precondition of this reciprocity or complementarity of expectations. The alternatives which are open to alter must have some measure of stability in two respects: This stability presupposes generalization from the particularity of the given situations of ego and alter, both of which are continually changing and are never concretely identical over any two moments in time. When such generalization occurs, and actions, gestures, or symbols have more or less the same meaning for both ego and alter, we may speak of a common culture existing between them, through which their interaction is mediated. Reciprocity, or complementary expectations, depends on a common system of symbols. The symbolic alternatives for alter must be stable, in that they are both realistic for alter and meaningful to ego. That is, actions, gestures, or symbols must have a shared and persistent

meaning for ego and alter even though ego and alter are in different situations and are constantly changing. When meanings are shared and persistent, we may say that the interaction between alter and ego is mediated by a common culture. But knowing how wordiness interferes with clarity can help you distill essential meanings from challenging texts. In many ways, writing well and reading incisively are two facets of the same cognitive skill set. Grace Academic writing is not wholly utilitarian. An elegant and apt turn of phrase is satisfying both to write and to read. Readers often find balanced sentences and phrases pleasing. This parallelism not only helps Schiff be powerfully concise, it quickly and vividly conveys the idea that Cleopatra led a remarkable life. Williams and Bizup 15 offer another example of an elegant sentence in which the two parts are balanced in their structure: A government that is unwilling to listen to the moderate hopes of its citizenry must eventually answer to the harsh justice of its revolutionaries.

The goal of academic writing is to present your research findings, your analysis of those findings, and your conclusions in a persuasive way to your readers. The need for precision and clarity of expression is one of the distinguishing marks of academic writing.

All I know is what I have words for. If one is sacrificed even in part, the other immediately suffers. To speak a true word is to transform the world. Watch your words; they become actions. Watch your actions; they become habits. Watch your habits; they become character. Watch your character; it becomes your destiny. But I can always control what goes on inside. But I see now I should have been more specific. You live in the midst of it, but can describe it only from the vantage point of distance. Let people be surprised that it was more than you promised and easier than you said. Please listen carefully and try to hear what I am not saying. But if you skillfully communicate, you can work miracles. The more they are condensed, the deeper they burn. It transforms the thoughts, will and desires of others. What better word for this process than magic? Chinese Proverb When I use a word, said Humpty Dumpty, in a rather scornful tone, it means just what I choose it to mean neither more nor less. Lewis Carroll Language is what makes people human, and it is the primary way we have of knowing who other people are. Sometimes I have good luck and write better than I can. So the writer who breeds more words than he needs is making a chore for the reader who reads.

Chapter 3 : How to Think and Communicate with Clarity and Precision - Learning Personalized

It's called The Precision Model, and it helps us cut through the mental fog and fluff and get to the heart of matters quickly. It can be used to greatly improve our communication with others, and to gain more clarity with our own thoughts, feelings and beliefs.

Print Professors who care about writing will always make a strong plea for concision, precision, and revision CPR. After college, the probability that your writing will be read is inversely proportional to its length and clarity. In the workplace, good writers are rapidly noticed and usually land in management positions; in academia, good writers eventually earn publication, and the best of these writers actually gain a readership who follows their work. By applying CPR to whatever you write, you will reap maximum benefits. A sentence should contain no unnecessary words, a paragraph no unnecessary sentences, for the same reason that a drawing should have no unnecessary lines and a machine no unnecessary parts. This sentence is important because it affirms that writing has utility—it performs a function. The sentence also demonstrates that, like a well-drawn photograph or a well-designed machine, a good sentence has stylistic elegance. Many good writers have memorized the above sentence and consciously apply it to their writing. With the advice from Strunk and White in mind, read the poorly written paragraph that follows: Increasing foreign competition and technological change, in a variety of forms, are now, as they always have been, disrupting various well-established patterns in terms of industrial organization. Perhaps we can sort out the meaning of this paragraph if we work hard enough, but why bother? The paragraph is simply not designed to communicate its message clearly; the writer seems to be more concerned with supplying text-based zones of terminology than with clearly analyzing a trend. This paragraph exemplifies the kind of obtuse writing that appears in the sciences, even in print, regularly. But let us improve this paragraph by applying principles of concision, precision, and revision. Concision We can begin by cutting the needless and virtually meaningless words from the first few sentences in the example paragraph above—words including "in a variety of forms," "as they always have been," "various," and "in terms of. If trends "always have been," for instance, the reader does not need to have their ongoing existence emphasized. By definition, "well-established patterns" would obviously be "various"; therefore we can strike the modifier "various" as unnecessary. By beginning with concision, we strip away what is needless before we attempt actual revision. Our task of effective tinkering thus becomes much easier. Precision Next, more precision can be created in those phrases that are the least exact in their meaning—for example, "an apparent growing quality. In its original form, that sentence is over 50 words long and includes 10 prepositions. Note also the imprecise clusters of nouns in this sentence, including "problems that often focus concern on regional economic decline" and "a context of low rates of national productivity improvement, on loss of international competitiveness. Revision After stripping away the needless words and phrases and refining the meaning of the nouns and verbs, we are poised to revise the sentence and improve its style. We can now begin to provide clearer connections from one sentence to the next via simple, standard transition words and thoughtful repetition of key terms. Here is a revised version of the paragraph after CPR. Recently, increasing foreign competition and technological change have disrupted well-established patterns of industrial organization. Regional economic decline often manifests itself through low rates of national productivity improvement and a loss of international competitiveness. In a word, the paragraph is now designed to be graceful; before revision, it was at best untidy, at worst unfathomable. Lessons in Clarity and Grace and Style: Toward Clarity and Grace. Both books are popular for their practicality and clarity, and because the author so effectively practices what he preaches. Applying the lessons you will learn from these books, you cannot help but improve your style. The book is easy to use and can be read in just a few hours. Scientists and engineers recommend and use this book, because it covers the elements of good writing with concision and precision. I highly recommend that you spend a few dollars and purchase the print version. Your readers will be grateful.

Chapter 4 : rediquest - communicating

Professors who care about writing will always make a strong plea for concision, precision, and revision (CPR). After college, the probability that your writing will be read is inversely proportional to its length and clarity.

Read more from Bena and Art Language and thinking are closely entwined. Like either side of a coin, they are inseparable. Your words represent your mind. When you use fuzzy language, it is a reflection of fuzzy thinking. Intelligent people strive to communicate precisely and accurately by defining terms, using correct names, universal labels and analogies. Instead, they voluntarily support their statements with explanations, comparisons, quantification, data and evidence. Interestingly, the reverse is also true: When you strive to use precise language, it has a corresponding effect on your thinking. Your mind and your internal thinking maps become more precise, organized and focused. How can you become more skillful in thinking and communicating with clarity and precision? A few strategies include: Mental rehearsal Inside your head, practice what you are going to say before you say it. Engage your own internal dialogue. The questions you ask and the answers you provide yourself help to clarify and direct your skills and competencies as speaker and listener. Slow down when you are emotional When you get angry or exasperated, your rational brain closes down and your emotional brain takes over. You are often tempted to respond impulsively when you lose your cool. Take a deep breath. Give yourself a chance to think before you say something. Listen to the words they choose. You must ask to get clarity. Choose to be silent Not only is it important to monitor your own thoughts and language, it is also important to know when to be silent. Do not worry that there are periods of silence in your conversation. Silence allows others and yourself to think, to reflect and to compose your thoughts and words.

Chapter 5 : A Strategy for Revising: Concision, Precision, Revision | Style for Students Online

These instructional pages focus on scholarly voice and topics such as precision, clarity, point of view, avoiding bias, and more. Skip to main content. Writing Center.

If we write clearly, our readers will understand. We will always be accurate, of course, but we will always be clear with it. This takes a great deal of effort, but we will write in language that our readers understand. It is important not to confuse the use of precise technical, engineering or medical terms, for instance, with accuracy when their use might baffle most readers. Translating arcane or specialist terms faithfully into broader, understandable English maintains accuracy and provides clarity. Where a specific but little-known term is essential, perhaps in a direct quote that cannot be put into indirect speech, one should take the time to explain what it means. Basic rules for writers: Never use a metaphor, simile, or other figure of speech which you are used to seeing in print. Never use a long word where a short one will do. If it is possible to cut a word out, always cut it out. Never use the passive where you can use the active. Never use a foreign phrase, a scientific word, or a jargon word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent. Break any of these rules sooner than say anything outright barbarous. The six points above are from *Politics and the English Language*, George Orwell. These six points, including the wry humour of the last, are a good foundation for any writing. The broader subject of the essay is especially relevant to writing news. Similarly, courts do not hear, they are told. This is particularly important because it is arrogant to assume that English is the first language of every reader. An Anglo-Saxon word may sound plain, but longer forms, probably with Latin roots, often add pretension rather than nuance. So prefer buy to purchase, let to permit or allow, take part to participate, show to demonstrate, use to utilise, about to approximately, make to manufacture and so on. The word *absquatulate*, to mean leave, was invented as a humorous construct in the 19th Century and it illustrates the point well. Also remember that long words are often euphemisms. A disadvantaged person or an underdeveloped region might be better described as poor, as might a man who is impecunious. Adjectives and adverbs should describe or modify to add information or refine meaning. They are mostly redundant when used for emphasis, and mawkish or demeaning when used to imply emotion. Grieving relatives are relatives; if among the bereaved you find someone joyous, that person will probably provide the most newsworthy quote. If a child dies in a bus crash it is gratuitous to smear words such as tragic all over the copy. If a population is wiped out by genocide, let the cold figures convey scale, not your adjectives. Avoid using the word ironic. A heavily pregnant woman is pregnant. A leading, highly regarded, influential politician, cleric or writer is probably just a politician, cleric or writer. A key measure is a measure. A senior adviser is an adviser. Words such as very, major, vital and crucial are almost always redundant. A safe haven is a haven. Most probably and most especially are probably and especially. A luxury home located in the suburbs is a house in the suburbs. Adjectives and adverbs are mostly redundant when used for emphasis. What not to cut out: That. Be careful when removing the word that. Its absence often misleads or confuses a reader for part of a sentence. Told, suggested, alleged, indicated, insisted, believed, suggested, felt etc all need the word that. Only said can safely do without it. Be careful also with the position of modifiers. There is a huge difference between saying someone only drinks in the evening, and saying that they drink only in the evening. Think twice before removing the word that. Be active: English works best when it follows its simplest grammatical construction, which is subject, verb, object. Similarly, beware introducing suggestions of blame, initiative or responsibility: According to Collins, jargon is, firstly, "specialised language concerned with a particular subject, culture or profession" and, second, "language characterised by pretentious syntax, vocabulary or meaning". An audience is broad, so any jargon in the first sense must be translated into terms that all readers can understand. Jargon in the second sense is just bad writing. Much journalese may be blamed on tabloid newspapers, especially their subs. Headlines across short measures have led to overuse of words such as bid, spark, move, hit, blow, top, chief, crisis, drama etc. That language has migrated from headlines to body copy. It is ugly and it lacks precision. Be temperate in language, especially in headlines. Keep a sense of proportion and recognise that storms and fury are often merely disagreements. This gives writing balance and maturity. The word slam, to

mean criticised, should be banned. Target The word target, in the sense of aimed at or directed at, is overused. Say attacked, bombed, shot at or blown up if that is the case. The word target is best used as a noun. Targeted used to mean carrying a shield, from the Old French *targette*, meaning little shield. If you must use target as a verb, do so rarely. Impact Do not use impact as a verb, as in the war impacted the economy. The war affected the economy, or better still destroyed or harmed it. Things have an effect on something or are affected by something, or effect some change or other. Things can also have an impact on something, but in all cases it is better to say that they improved matters or made them worse. Impacted means, of a tooth, unable to erupt and, of a fracture, having the broken ends wedged together. Warn To warn is a transitive verb and must take an object. There is nothing wrong with the word said in nearly all cases. If you use the word claimed when attributing a quote or some reported speech to someone, bear in mind that it carries the suggestion that the person is not to be believed. Again, said is the straight option. Labels Think before using words such as warlord, hardman, strongman, mandarin, guru, supremo, mastermind - and then use another. Wars are bloody by default, bombings kill people rather than create carnage, if a rocket hits a car we should be surprised not to find twisted and mangled wreckage. Those killed might occasionally be called victims, but never innocent; they are better off as the dead. People have Aids or cancer, or are cancer or Aids patients. They are never victims, neither do they suffer from their disease. Cancer patients who recover have not won cancer battles. A remote mountain village is a village in the mountains, which do not need to be called rugged. Not all villages are picturesque, neither are they sleepy. If a meadow were not lush, it would be a field. Hills need not roll, nor suburbs sprawl. Awards ceremonies do not have to glitter. If the reader has not, it is inaccurate. Respect If we call someone respected, tell the reader by whom that person is respected. If we call someone defiant, say who or what is being defied. If we are writing about nanotechnology, gene therapy, cell computing, transgenic breeding, missions to Mars and so forth, the label high-technology, or worse, high-tech, is pointless. Be temperate in language and keep a sense of proportion English vs American: This part is for journalists working for media organisations that use UK English Avoid American phrases such as "meet with" or "consult with". In English, we meet people or consult them, there is no need for a with. Also, the phrase "will likely", should be "will probably" or "is likely to". We play down, not downplay, park in car parks, not parking lots, buy aspirin from pharmacies or chemists, not drugstores, and put our shopping in the boot, not trunk, and to check the oil we lift bonnets, not hoods. We do not go downtown, but to the city or town centre. Home town is two words. Ex-servicemen are not necessarily veterans and in English we bring up our children and raise our livestock. Gunned down means shot. One may contest a ruling, but must protest against or appeal against one. We have lawyers or solicitors, not attorneys. The word lawmaker to mean an elected politician conjures up pictures either of Judge Dredd or New Age nonsense. Use politician, senator, congressman or congresswoman, member of parliament or MP, whichever is appropriate.

Chapter 6 : Reflecting on Your Writing Precision and Clarity - Brainy Term Papers

will offer new insights on writing, on the review system, or on whatever else comes to mind while reflecting on those manuscripts, peer reviews, countless letters and telephone conversations, and the pages of articles they selected and helped prepare for publication.

Perhaps you are not a Yankee fan, and not even a baseball fan. However, there are still lessons to be learned, so do not stop reading! It was enjoyable reading, particularly because Mr. Olden adheres to a lot of the vocal techniques that I teach my clients. An additional challenge faced by Mr. Olden these days is that many baseball players, whose names he has to announce when they come up to bat, are from many different countries. He needs to practice the pronunciation of their names so that he can correctly articulate their names when they step up to home plate. How do you do when you have to step up to the plate? Techniques For Improving Your Speech If you are in a position where you have to make presentations, teach a class of students, interact with patients, stand up in front of a jury, or audition for a role, how well prepared are you? Practice is very important to being successful in these situations. The skills you need to learn are: Control the speed of your speech Pause for emphasis and to allow your audience to process what you have said Learn to emphasize words to underscore the meaning of what you are trying to communicate These are important speaking techniques, but the mechanics of your speech are just as important. The way in which you articulate determines how successful you will be in delivering your message. When you speak with others on a personal or a professional level, how accurate is your articulation? If you tend to speak fast, your articulation will lack clarity and sharpness, and you will end up dropping the ends of your words. This can lead to miscommunication and to listener frustration. People can ask you to repeat yourself just so many times. More often than not, they will just give up and remove themselves from the conversation. However, if you are pronouncing the forty-four sounds of Standard American English correctly, your ability to speak well will be greatly enhanced. Test Your Speech – Record and Listen Put yourself to the test by recording yourself while you are on the phone with a friend, or when you are giving a presentation. Really listen to how you are speaking and how effective you think your speech and communications skills are to your listener. It is never too late to work on honing your speech and communication skills. If you are aware of areas in which you need to improve, practice over and over again until you are successful. As baseball teams begin the new season, maybe it is time for your own personal spring training!

Chapter 7 : For journalists, clarity is as important as accuracy

Scholarly Communication is a concise but comprehensive course on how to write research papers in English. The course will help the candidates gain a better understanding of the rhetorical conventions of English and the common challenges the candidates may face as an academic writer.

Thinking and Communicating with Clarity and Precision What does it mean? The ability to share your ideas with others in ways that ensure you are understood. Engaging in all types of communication across all possible modes in ways that are clear. Avoiding distortions, generalisations or omissions. Remembering that communication involves sharing ideas and receiving ideas; listening, reading, watching. Why does it matter? There is little point having great ideas if you cannot then share them others and when you do you will want to be understood. But thinking and communicating with clarity and precision also has an affect on your understanding. It is important that when we think about and communicate ideas and events that we do so accurately and without errors creeping into our thought processes. Making generalisations that are wrong, distorting facts or leaving facts out are all to be avoided. When should you use it? Whenever you are communicating with yourself or others. When it is important to be clear and well understood. When you realise you should not have to explain your explanations. Communicate often, practise is essential, pay attention to what works, observe the habits of those who communicate effectively Plan out what you need to communicate in advance, create an outline for written works Edit your written works for meaning and accuracy. Check for these in your thinking. Learn to spot them in the communications of other people. Think about your audience. What do they need to know? Will they understand you? What questions might they have that you should answer in your communication? What do you mean? What do you want to communicate? Why are you communicating this? Who are you communicating with? Is my thinking accurate? What parts of this idea am I not clear about? What additional details might be required? Reflect on you plan and consider questions your audience might ask, then add the answers into your plan or change how you are explaining yourself. Thinking routines for Communicating with clarity and precision Think, Puzzle, Explore - Use this routine to bring clarity to a topic and develop an outline of key points. Use to create an outline for your communications. What has been distorted? Useful to use with a friend asking the questions. Lastly consider how you can Explore the accuracy of the claim and answer the questions you have asked.

Chapter 8 : Speak Without an Accent | Accent Reduction Techniques

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THINKING AND COMMUNICATING WITH CLARITY; AND PRECISION. Striving for accurate. communication in written and oral form. Think Clearly! "A word to the wise is not sufficient if it doesn't make sense".