

12 January 1999

MEMORANDUM FOR ALL CEFC TEAM MEMBERS

SUBJECT: IMPROVING OUR WRITING

1. Improving writing skills and techniques is an important job responsibility that requires focused effort and constant attention. I am enclosing an excellent guide, revised and condensed from one originally published by the U. S. Navy, for your review and reference. Although this guide is now over 10 years old, its principles remain valid. Good writing techniques are timeless!

2. Developing your writing skill also requires encouragement from reviewers. If you are a reviewer, let your staff know that you value good writing by:

a. Stressing clear, concise writing, not just grammatical correctness.

b. Ensuring your staff use this guide or similar ones.

c. Using performance evaluations to reward action officers who focus on improving their writing skills.

d. Making writing-improvement a part of the professional development plan for reviewers as well as writers.

3. We will make this publication available on the UFC Internal Home Page for all CEFC Team Members. As always, I rely upon all of you to maintain high standards in our Center.

Encl

/s/

STANLEY N. WRENN
Director, USACE Finance Center

TIMELESS WRITING GUIDE

CEFC-L
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PREFACE

Most of our mission involves writing policy. We must be careful because while often our writing is perfectly correct, it can also be perfectly awful. Wordy and pompous, the verbiage can misrepresent the author, misuse the modern word processor that typed it, and mistreat the many readers who aren't allowed to throw it away.

Our writing is frequently bloated. Much of it seems left over from some age of ornate formity and no age would claim the worst of it. Multiplied across an activity's work for just one month, such outdated writing adds significantly to the cost of typing, reading, mailing, and filing.

To improve we must overcome the most stubborn of obstacles: habit. Perhaps because writing is so personal and painful, many of us stick to a few old patterns, even inefficient ones. Improvement is doubly difficult when individual habit is reinforced by group inertia. In any large organization, older members train younger ones, old letters make convenient models, and old ways seem the safest. These tendencies have left us with a contradiction; we insist on working with modern equipment but settle for writing with outdated English.

CHAPTER I ORGANIZED WRITING

1. Avoid Mystery Stories

a. Timid writing creeps up on the most important information. First come references, then discussion, and finally the so-what. With luck, the main point follows a sign such as therefore, consequently, or due to the above.

b. Even with such a signal, readers must grope for "the bottom line," which is rarely at the bottom but somewhere near there, more or less. This slow buildup isn't chaotic; it enacts the way writers inform themselves. But the pattern isn't efficient either. From the perspective of readers, it is the clue-by-clue patter of mystery stories.

c. Your writing should follow the newspaper pattern. Open with the most important information and taper off to the least important. Avoid mere chronology.

2. Start Fast, Explain as Necessary, Then Stop

a. When you write a letter, think about the one sentence you would keep if you could keep only one. Many letters are short and simple enough to have such a key sentence. It should appear by the end of the first paragraph. The strongest letter highlights the main point in a one-sentence paragraph at the very beginning. Put request before justifications, answers before explanations, conclusions before discussions, summaries before details, and the general before the specific.

b. You probably have seen this up-front method in endorsements and official biographies. Endorsements usually start by concurring or nonconcurring, while biographies usually start by giving the senior official's present duties.

c. Sometimes, as in a complex proposal or a reply to various questions, you may have many key points. They would overload the first paragraph if you tried to put them all there. In these cases, start with a general statement of purpose, much as directives do.

d. Here are some good beginnings- *The Engineering Department was inspected on 24 January 1983. Overall, performance was satisfactory. Special-interest areas were satisfactory.*

An earlier version of the inspection report buried the information of greatest interest to readers the results - on the second page. It opened with references, the inspection's scope, and detailed findings. By the way, inspection reports and other documents whose topics vary widely are especially suited to headings. They allow readers to see the structure at a glance.

We request authorization to hire a full-time clerk typist or reassign a student aide from the word-processing center.

In January 1983, our typing workload increased because of...

A lesser writer might have combined the two paragraphs above. Worse, the writer might have started with the second paragraph and delayed the request for authorization until the bitter end. Remember to keep your first paragraph short, to use one-sentence paragraphs occasionally for special emphasis, and to avoid mere chronology.

This memorandum summarizes how we are planning the first step toward your goal of centralizing LAN administration.

The memorandum developed a series of complex points that would have come too fast if they had appeared in the top paragraph, so the writer wisely began with a general statement of purpose. Should the writer start with, "The purpose of this memorandum is to summarize. . ."? Strictly speaking, the added words are unnecessary, but they leave no doubt that a key idea is about to follow.

We're moving toward a more modern style of writing in Headquarters, USACE and I want the Directorate of Resource Management to get there first. You'll find that style amply illustrated in the next presentation of DRM Writing Course. Please try to attend if you haven't already, and urge your people to do the same.

The Director might have begun with details about dates, times, and places for the writing course. However, readers might have yawned and put the letter aside before getting to the endorsement of the program. The first paragraph was uncommonly personal so that the DRM Division Chiefs would give the letter special attention.

Jim Shoe did an outstanding job during his recent developmental assignment.

This is the first sentence of a thank-you letter to Shoe's supervisor. Notice that it avoids a slow buildup. The second paragraph should describe Shoe's long hours and dedication to service. The last paragraph reads, "*Please thank Mr. Shoe for his conscientious effort.*" This three-paragraph formula will keep your thank-you letters short, detailed, and focused **on the person** being praised.

e. Delay your main point to soften bad news, for example, or to introduce a controversial proposal. But don't delay routinely. Readers, like listeners, are put off by people who take forever to get to the point. In most cases, plunge right in.

f. To end most letters, just stop. When writing to persuade rather than just to inform, you may want to end strongly - with a forecast, appeal, or implication. When feelings are involved, you may want to exit gracefully - with an expression of good will. When in doubt, offer your help or the name of a contact.

3. Downplay References

a. Reading slows with every glance from the text to the reference caption. Justify such distractions by using only those references that bear directly on the subject at hand. Avoid unnecessary or complicated references. Many letters need no references at all while others are complete with a reference to only the latest communication in a series. Reading letters that overuse references is like driving in reverse through alphabet soup.

b. When you respond to an earlier communication, subordinate it to your main point. Don't waste the opening - the strongest place in a letter - by merely summarizing a reference or saying you received or reviewed something.

This is in reply to your conversation with Crystal Ball on 1 August wherein you requested a copy of the HQUSACE HQUSACE CEFMS Business Process Guide BPG. A copy of the BPG is enclosed

Here's the CEFMS Business Process Guide you requested from Crystal Ball on 1 August.

4. Use Short Paragraphs

a. Long paragraphs swamp ideas. Cover one topic completely before starting another, and let a topic take several paragraphs if necessary. But keep paragraphs short, down to roughly four or five sentences. Long paragraphs will divide where your thinking takes a turn. By adding white space, you make reading easier.

b. Short paragraphs are especially important at the start of letters. Long first paragraphs discourage reading.

c. Call attention to lists of items or instructions by displaying them in subparagraph. Just don't use so many levels of subparagraphs that the writing becomes hard to follow.

d. Now and then use a one-sentence paragraph to highlight an important idea.

5. Take Advantage of Topic Sentences

a. A paragraph may need a topic sentence, that generalization explained by the rest of the paragraph. Then again, it may not. The decision to use a topic sentence is among a writer's many judgment calls. A short paragraph announcing the time, place, and agenda of a meeting might begin with; *"Here are details about the meeting."* Yet such a topic sentence is probably unnecessary, for readers can follow the writer's thinking without it.

b. Now suppose you are writing a report defending a UFC policy. Your ideas

are complex, and the evidence needed to make them clear and convincing is considerable. So your paragraphs are likely to run longer and use more topic sentences than is the case of letters. Here's an example:

Errors in DCPS accounting information are creating millions of dollars in uncleared payroll charges on department records. There is an ongoing effort to improve validation of accounting information in DCPS. However, until system changes can be implemented, manual validations are required to ensure the reliability of account information being processed in DCPS.

The first sentence of the sample gives the paragraph a bull's eye. Because we know early where the facts are headed, the paragraph inspires confidence. A lesser writer might have left out the topic sentence or put it elsewhere in the paragraph or claimed more than the facts support. Be alert to the advantages of topic sentences, for they help shape masses of information. Without them, some paragraphs make readers shrug and, "So?"

c. The topic sentence of a paragraph is like the main point of a letter; both give general statements that are developed later. However, a short and simple letter that could be written as one unbroken paragraph should still be divided for ease of reading.

6. Write Disciplined Sentences

a. So far this section on organized writing has talked about structuring letters and paragraphs so they call attention to important ideas. Now here are a few important ways to avoid sentences that mumble: subordinate minor ideas, place ideas deliberately, use more parallelism, and try some mini-sentences.

b. subordinate minor ideas. Besides clarifying the relationship between ideas, subordination prevents the overuse of and, the weakest of all conjunctions.

The revised IM costing policy, which have been mailed to all is effective 1 October. (Stresses date)

The revised IM costing policy, which is effective 1 October, has been mailed to all Division, Districts, Labs and FOAs. (Stresses mailing)

The centralized LAN uses a similar contractor service and saves its customers about 15 percent.

By using a similar contractor service, the centralized LAN saves its patrons about 15 percent.

c. Place ideas deliberately. Start and finish a sentence any way you like, but keep in mind that ideas gain emphasis when they appear at either end. To mute an idea, put it in the middle.

I would like to congratulate you on your selection as our Gerald F Gregor Award recipient for 1998.

Congratulations on your selection as our 1998 Gerald F. Gregor Award Recipient.

We may have to retire the computers faster if more major hard disk problems arise. (Faster retirement muted).

If more major hard disk problems arise, we may have to retire the computers faster. (faster retirement stressed).

d. Use more parallelism. Look for opportunities to arrange two or more equally important ideas so they look equal. Parallelism saves words, clarifies ideas, and provides balance. Go by the first words of the series; all should use the same part of speech (verbs in the previous sentence).

Their position is that the workshop is a forum for the dissemination of information and is not intended to establish standards.

Their position is that the workshop is a forum for sharing information and not for setting standards.

Effective 1 October, addressees will be required to utilize the cost accounts contained in enclosure (1). Addressees will cease reporting against cost account WV60.

On 1 October, start using the cost accounts in enclosure (1) and stop using cost account WV60.

e. Try some mini-sentences. An occasional sentence of six words or less slows down readers and emphasizes ideas. The principle is illustrated in this next example from a Director's memo to his staff.

I can get more information if each of you gives me less. Here's why. In a week, about 110 staff actions show up in my inbox I could handle that in a week if all I did was work the inbox. Seventy percent of my time in the headquarters goes not to the in-box but to briefings. I could handle that dilemma, too - by listening to briefings and thinking about staff papers at the same time. I don't.

CHAPTER 2 NATURAL WRITING

1. Speak on Paper

a. Make your writing as formal or informal as the situation requires, but do so with language you might use in speaking. This isn't a call to copy every quirk of speech down to grunts and ramblings. And granted, some people don't speak very well. Still, because readers hear writing, the most readable writing sounds like people talking to people.

b. A spoken style means fewer gears to shift each time we write. It also means less adjustment for new personnel, who find the old style increasingly foreign. You probably remember your own difficulty in getting used to roundabout writing.

c. To make your writing more like speaking, begin by imaging your reader is sitting across from your desk. If you are writing to many different people but none in particular, picture one typical reader. Then write with personal pronouns, everyday words, and short sentences.

2. Use Personal Pronouns

a. Though you needn't go out of your way to use personal pronouns, you mustn't go out of your way to avoid them. Avoiding natural references to people is false modesty. Whether you sign "by direction" or with a title, follow these principles:

(1) Speak of your activity, command, or office as we, us, our. These words are no more exact or inexact than the vague it. They are merely conventions of modern writing that prevents much roundabout language.

(2) Use you, stated or implied, to refer to the reader.

(3) Use I, me, my, less often, usually in correspondence signed by the Director and then only to show special concern or warmth.

b. Multiplied across an entire letter, roundabout sentences like those in the next examples do severe damage. We would be laughed out of the room if we talked that way. Ordinary English is shorter, clearer, and just as official:

It is necessary that the material be received in this office by 10 Jun 3.

We need the material by 10 June (or)

The material must reach us by 10 June

Conceivably, funding constraints for POM 01 will exceed in severity the financial scarcities of POM 99.

We may have less money to work with in POM 01 than in POM 99.

c. It is and this command complicates the next example. They force readers to put back the pronouns the writer took out. To make matters worse, the first 'it is' refers to the reader, while the second refers to the sender.

If it is desired that careerists be allowed to compete for developmental assignment positions, this command would he happy to establish and manage the application process. It is recommended that applications he submitted soon to ensure...

If you allow careerists to compete for developmental assignment positions, we would be happy to establish and manage the application process. You must send applications soon to ensure...

d. Can you overdo personal pronouns? You can use so many pronouns that you obscure the subject, and no number of them will overcome confused thinking. Besides, some subjects don't lend themselves to pronouns. Also, criticism hurts fewer feelings if delivered impersonally. "Nothing has been done" avoids the direct attack of "You have done nothing."

e. If we or I opens more than two sentences in a row, the writing becomes monotonous and may suggest self-centeredness. Sometimes a single sentence can call too much attention to the sender: "I would like to extend my congratulations for a job well done." Praise should stress the reader: "Congratulations on the fine job you did."

f. Stressing the reader's interest is a matter of attitude more than pronouns, but pronouns contribute. "The help you receive" suggest more concern for readers than "the help we provide." By being sensitive to the difference, you are more likely to meet your reader's needs.

3. Talk to One Reader when writing to many

a. Take special care when writing to many addressees but none of them in particular. Talk directly to a typical group of readers or, better, one typical reader. Use you and your, stated or implied. Only one person reads your writing at any one time, so the most readable writing speaks directly to one reader.

All addressees are requested to provide input of desired course content.

Please send us you recommendations for course content.

It is requested that all personnel planning to take leave in December complete the enclosed schedule.

If you plan to take leave in December, complete the enclosed schedule.

b. When you write directives, look for opportunities to talk directly to a user. Procedure checklists or other how-to instructions lend themselves to this cookbook approach. Imagine someone has walked up to you and asked what to do.

The action officer will verify that security responsibilities have been completed by putting his/her initials on the checklist.

When you complete the inspection, initial the checklist.

The correspondence manual talks directly to you, a typical user. The sentences that give directions lead with verbs; you is simply implied. This direct approach requires imagination more than technical skill. Think of writing not as words on a page but as speaking from a distance.

4. Rely on Everyday Words

a. The complexity of our work and the need for precision require some big words. But don't use big words when little ones will do. People who speak with small words often let needlessly fancy ones burden their writing. On paper help swells to assistance, pay to remuneration, and visit to visitation. The list goes on, and so does the damage from word inflation.

b. Overdressed writing fails just as foolishly. Prefer short, spoken transitions over long, bookish ones. Save long transitions for variety. By preferring short ones, you help set an ordinary tone for the rest of what you say. And, yes, you can start sentences with conjunctions such as but, so, yet, and.

c. Avoid the needless complications of legalistic lingo. Let a directive's number or a letter's signature carry the authority. You risk committing bloated bombast by trying to put that authority in your language. Write to express not to impress. All writers try to impress readers. The best do it through language that doesn't call attention to itself. Size of vocabulary is less important than skill in manipulating the words you already know.

5. Use Some Contractions

a. Contractions link pronouns with verbs (we're, we'd, I'll, you're) make verbs negative (don't, can't, won't). They are appropriate in less formal writing situations. Yet even when your final product will be very formal; you can use contractions in drafts to help you write naturally. Limited contractions in a directive to negative verbs because research shows that readers are less likely to skip over not when it is contracted.

b. The point is that if you are comfortable with contractions, your writing is likely to read easily, for you will be speaking on paper. If contractions seem out of place, you may need to

deflate the rest of what you say. In the next sentence, something has to go, either the opening contraction or the inflated language that follows:

It is incumbent upon all personnel to effect energy savings. Written naturally, the sentence might read, *It's your job to save energy.*

6. Keep Sentences Short

a. For variety mix long sentences and short ones, but average fewer than twenty words. Though short sentences won't guarantee clarity, they are usually less confusing than long ones. You needn't count every word. Try the eye test: average under two typed lines. Or try the ear test: read your writing aloud and break up most of the sentences that don't end in one breath.

b. Break long sentences into manageable units. Then prune needless words and ideas.

It is requested that attendees be divided between the two briefing dates with the understanding that any necessary final adjustments will be made by the Training Coordinator to facilitate equitable distribution. (31 words)

It is requested that attendees be divided between the two briefing dates. Any necessary final adjustments will be made by the training coordinator to facilitate equitable distribution (12,15 words)

Send half your people on one day and half on the other. The training coordinator will make final adjustments. (12,7 words)

7. Ask More Questions

a. A request gains emphasis when it ends with a question mark. Do you hear how spoken a question is?

b. Look for opportunities to reach out to your reader:

Request this office be notified as to whether the conference has been rescheduled

Has the conference been rescheduled?

In an effort to improve the cost of office copier operation, it is requested your Division complete the attached form relating to office copiers, which you would propose to rent/lease.

Would you let us know on the accompanying form what you charge to rent and lease your copiers?

8. Be Concrete

a. Without generalizations and abstractions, we would drown in detail. We sum up vast amounts of experience when we speak of dedication, programs, hardware, and lines of authority. But such broad language isn't likely to evoke in a reader's mind the same experiences it evokes in a writer's. Lazy writing overuses such vague terms. Often it weakens them further by substituting adjectives, for example: immense dedication, enhanced programs, viable hardware, and responsive lines of authority.

b. If you write, "*The solution to low morale and poor discipline is good leadership,*" your readers may feel warm all over. But until you point out some specific behavior meant by low morale, poor discipline, and good leadership, neither you nor your readers can tackle the problem.

c. Vague, high-sounding language weakens job descriptions. Someone is said to "assist and advise in the organization management aspects of manpower management." Another "serves as a system proponent to transition from current capabilities to architectural projections." But what do these people really do? After all, a person who "serves as a direct interface with interstate commerce" may be only a highway flag holder.

d. Performance evaluations suffer when writers make extravagant, unsupported claims.

Engaged in a technical assignment of a highly complex and technical nature, Mr. Smith has molded on-the-job experience, diligence, and perseverance to a point where his seniors and supervisors can inevitably afford credence to his work and the conclusions he derives therefrom...

Communication, someone once said, is never having to say, "Huh? Effective evaluations show what a person did and how well he or she did it. They are concrete enough to inspire confidence in the writer's judgment about the ratee's performance and potential.

9. Listen to Your Tone

a. Tone - a writer's attitude toward the subject or readers causes relatively few problems in routine letters. The rules are straightforward. Subordinates may suggest request, or recommend, but only superiors may direct. And though pronouns are acceptable, we don't get personal." Courtesy is required, warmth is not. Our tone is neutral.

b. Because much of our writing is routine, tone causes problems when the matter is delicate. The more sensitive the readers or issue, the more careful we must be to promote good will. Tactlessness in writing suggests clumsiness in general. When feelings are involved, one misused word can make an enemy.

c. Beware of rubber-stamp endings. They don't improve good letters or save bad ones.

CHAPTER 3 COMPACT WRITING

1. Cut the Fat

a. Give your ideas no more words than they deserve. The longer you take to say things, the weaker you come across and the more you risk blurring important ideas.

b. Economy requires the right attitude. You must suspect wordiness in everything you write. When you revise, tighten paragraphs to sentences, sentences to clauses, clauses to phrases, phrases to words, words to pictures - or strike the idea entirely. To be easy on your readers, you must be hard on yourself. To help you hunt for wordiness, here are some common problems that are easy to spot and avoid.

2. Avoid "it is" and "there is"

a. No two words hurt government writing more than it is. They stretch sentences, delay meaning, hide responsibility, and encourage passive verbs. Unless it refers to something mentioned earlier, avoid it is. Spare only natural expressions such as "it is time . . ." or "it is hard to.. and an occasional pointing expression such as "it is your job to. . ." (Not someone else's).

Not	But
it is requested	we request, please
it is my intention	I intend
it is necessary that you	you need to, you must
it is apparent that	clearly
it is the recommendation	we recommend
of this office that	

It is mandatory that all team members attend the SAEDA briefing.

All team members must attend the SAEDA briefing.

It is requested that upon departure from the Directorate, all CEFMS SmartCards be surrendered

When you leave the Directorate, please turn-in your CEFMS SmartCard

b. Like constructions, forms of there is make sentences start slowly. Don't write these delayers without first trying to avoid them.

There will be a meeting of the Human Relations Council at 1000 on 26 July in the main conference room.

The Human Relations Council will meet at 1000 on 26 July in the main conference room.

There are two alternatives offered in the report.

The report offers two alternatives.

3. Prune Wordy Expressions

a. Wordy expressions don't give writing impressive bulk; they clutter it by getting in the way of the words that carry the meaning. In order to and in accordance with for example, are minor ideas that don't deserve three words. Here are some repeat offenders.

Not	But
for the purpose of	for, to
in accordance with	by, following, per,
	under
in order to	to
in the event that	if
in the near future	soon
be advised	-
in the process of	-
is responsible for	-
the provisions of	-
the use of	-

b. Wordy expressions dilute the next examples:

In accordance with reference (b), you may pay the claim with a check in the amount of \$300.

Under reference (b), you may pay the claim with a check for \$300.

In the event that this offer is satisfactory, be advised your written acceptance must reach us by May 11.

If this offer is satisfactory, your written acceptance must reach us before May 11.

We are in the process of revising our form letters in order to make them more readable.

We are revising our form letters to make them more readable.

4. Free Smothered Verbs

a. The most important word in a sentence is the verb, the action word, and the only word that can do something. Weak writing relies on general verbs, which take extra words to complete their meaning. When you write a general verb such as make or is, check to see if you can turn a nearby word into a verb.

b. Let your verbs do more work:

This directive is applicable to all personnel who make use of the system.

This directive applies to all personnel who use the system

The committee held a meeting to give consideration to the proposal.

The committee met to consider the proposal.

We will conduct an investigation into the matter before making a decision.

We will investigate the matter before deciding.

5. Shun "the -ion of" and "the -ment of"

a. Words ending in -ion and -ment are verbs turned into nouns. Whenever the context permits, change these words to verb forms.

b. By favoring verb forms, your sentences will be shorter and livelier.

Use that format for the preparation of your command briefing.

Use that format to prepare your command briefing.

The settlement of travel claims involves the examination of orders.

Settling travel claims involves examining orders.

The development of an effective system depends on three factors.

Developing an effective system depends on three factors. (or) An effective system depends on three factors.

7. Avoid Excessive Abbreviating

a. Excessive abbreviating is false economy. Use abbreviations no more than you must with insiders and avoid them entirely with outsiders. Spell out an unfamiliar abbreviation the first time it appears, like this:

Army Comptroller Career Evaluation System (ACCES)

b. If an abbreviation would appear only twice or infrequently, spell out the term every time and avoid the abbreviation entirely. Put clarity before economy.

CHAPTER 4 ACTIVE WRITING

1. Avoid Dead Verbs

Using passives causes problems. They make writing wordy, roundabout, and sometimes downright confusing. To avoid this problem, learn how to spot passive verbs and make them active. Most of your sentences should use a who-does-what order. By leading with the doer, you automatically will avoid a passive verb.

Passive: *The report was inspected by the Division Chief.*

Active: *The Division Chief inspected the report.*

2. Learn the Symptoms of Passive Voice

- a. A verb in the passive voice uses any form of to be plus the past participle of a main verb:

am is are was were be being been

Plus

a main verb usually ending in -en or -ed

- b. Unlike sentences with active verbs, sentences with passives don't need to show who or what has done the verb's action. If a doer appears at all, it follows the verb. But most passives in government writing just imply the doer, sometimes a severe problem when the context doesn't make the doer clear.

As a result of what has been learned, it is desired that additional software testing be made. (Be made is passive. The past participle of to make is irregular.)

Two reams of paper were ordered for an action officer whose project had been overdue. (Had been is active. Had isn't a form of to be.)

3. Know the Three Cures

- a. PUT A DOER BEFORE THE VERB:

*The part must have been broken by the mover.
The mover must have broken the part.*

*The requests will be approved (By whom?)
(Supervisors?) Will approve the requests.*

*Appropriate clothing will be worn by all personnel.
All personnel will wear appropriate clothing. (or) Wear appropriate clothing.*

b. DROP PART OF THE VERB:

The results are listed in enclosure (2).
The results are in enclosure (2).

Then he was transferred to Ft. Belvoir.
Then he transferred to Ft. Belvoir.

c. CHANGE THE VERB:

Letter formats are shown in this manual.
Letter formats appear in this manual.

Personnel are prohibited from doing so.
Personnel must not do so.

4. Write Passively Only for Good Reason

a. Write passively if you have good reason to avoid saying who or what has done the verb's action. This situation may occur when the doer is unknown, unimportant, obvious, or better left unsaid:

Presidents are elected every four years.
(doer obvious)

The part was shipped on 1 June.
(doer unimportant)

Christmas has been scheduled as a workday.
(doer better left unsaid)

When in doubt, write actively, even though the doer may seem obvious or whatever. You will write livelier sentences (not, livelier sentences will be written by you).

b. Now and then you may want to write a passive sentence that names the doer. The situation may occur when you need a transition from one topic to another:

ANNEX A
SIMPLER WORDS AND PHRASES

Official writing does not demand big words or fat phrases. Go out of your way to use ordinary English. The result will be clearer thinking and shorter writing. Asterisks mark the dirty dozen, the twelve offenders most likely to weaken your work.

<u>Instead of</u>	<u>Try</u>	<u>Instead of</u>	<u>Try</u>
a and/or b	a or b or both	deem	believe, consider, think
accompany	go with	delete	cut, drop
accorded	given	demonstrate	prove, show
accordingly	so	depart	leave
accurate	correct, exact, right	desire	want, wish
additional	added, more, other	determine	decide, figure, find
address	discuss	discontinue	drop, stop
addressees	you	disseminate	give, issue, pass, send
addressee are requested...	(omit), please	due to the fact that	due to, since
adjacent to	next to	during the period	during
advantageous	helpful	effect modification	make changes
adversely impact on	hurt, set back	elect	choose, pick
advise	recommend, tell	eliminate	cut, drop, end
afford an opportunity	allow, let	employ	use
aircraft	plane	encounter	meet
allocate	divide, give	endeavor	try
anticipate	expect	ensure	make sure
a number of	some	enumerate	count
apparent	clear, plain	equipments	equipment
appreciable	many	equitable	fair
appropriate	proper, right	equivalent	equal
approximately	about	establish	set up, prove, show
arrive on board	arrive	evidenced	showed
as a means of	to	evident	clear
ascertain	find out, learn	exhibit	show
as prescribed by	in, under	expedite	hasten, speed up
assist, assistance	aid, help	expeditious	fast, quick
attain	meet	expend	spend
attempt	try	expertise	ability, skill
at the present time	at present, now	expiration	end
.....		facilitate	ease, help
be advised	(omit)	failed to	didn't
benefit	help	feasible	can be done, workable
by means of	by, which		
.....			

<u>Instead of</u>	<u>Try</u>
capability	ability, can
caveat	warning
close proximity	near
combat environment	combat
combined	joint
commence	begin, start
comply with	follow
component	part
comprise	form, include, make up...
concerning	about, on
consequently	so
consolidate	combine, join, merge
constitutes	is, forms, makes up
contains.....	has
convene.....	meet
currently.....	now
identical	same
identify	find, name, show
immediately	at once
impacted	affected, changed
implement	carry out, start
in accordance with	by following, per, under
in addition	also, besides, too
in an effort to.....	to
in as much as.....	since
in a timely manner	on time, promptly
inception	start
incumbent upon.....	must
inform.....	tell
indicate	show, write down
indication.....	sign
Initial.....	first
Initiate.....	start
in lieu of	instead of
in order that.....	for, so
in order to.....	to
in regard to	about, concerning, on
inter alia	(omit)
interface with	meet, work with
interpose no objection.....	don't object
in the amount of.....	for
in the event that.....	if

<u>Instead of</u>	<u>Try</u>
females	women
finalize	complete, finish
for a period of	for
for example, - etc	for example, such as
forfeit	give up, lose
for the purpose of	for, to
forward	send
frequently	often
function	act, role, work
furnish	give, send
has a requirement for.	needs
herein	here
heretofore	until now
herewith	below, here
however	but
objective	aim, goal
obligate	bind, compel
observe	see
on a - basis	(omit)
operate	run, use, work
optimum	best, greatest, most
option	choice, way
parameters.....	limits
participate	take part
perform	do
permit	let
pertaining to	about, of, on
point in time	point, time
portion	part
possess	have, own
practicable	practical
preclude	prevent
previous	earlier, past
previously.....	before
prioritize	rank
prior to	before
proceed	do, go ahead, try
procure	buy
proficiency	skill
promulgate	issue, publish

<u>Instead of</u>	<u>Try</u>
in the near future	shortly, soon
in the process of	(omit)
in view of	since
in view of the above	so
is applicable to	applies to
is authorized to	may
is in consonance with	agrees with, follows
is responsible for	(omit), handles
it appears	seems
it is	(omit)
it is essential	must, need to
it is requested	please, we request,
liaison	discussion
limited number	few
limitations	limits
Magnitude	size
maintain	keep, support.
majority of	most
maximum	greatest, largest, most
methodology	method
minimize	decrease, lessen,
minimum	least, smallest
modify	change
monitor	check, watch
necessitate	cause, need
notify	let, know, tell
not later than 10 May.....	by 10 May,
not later than 1600	by 1600
notwithstanding	in spite of, still
numerous	many
take action to	(omit)
task	ask
terminate	end, stop
the month of	(omit)
there are	(omit),

<u>Instead of</u>	<u>Try</u>
provide	give, offer, say
provided that	if
provides guidance for...	guides
purchase	buy
pursuant to	by, following, per, under
reflect	say, show
regarding	about, of, on
relative to	about, on
relocate	move
remain	stay
remainder	rest
remuneration	pay, payment
render	give, make
represents	is
requests	ask
require	must, need
requirement	need
reside	live
retain	keep
some, such	the, this, that
selection	choice
set forth in	in
similar to	like
solicit	ask for, request
state-of-the-art	latest
subject	the, this, your
submit	give, send
subsequent	later, next
subsequently	after, later, then
substantial	large, much
successfully complete.....	complete, pass
sufficient	enough
under the provisions of	under
until such time as	until
utilize, utilization	use
validate	confirm

<u>Instead of</u>	<u>Try</u>
therefore	so
therein	there
there is	(omit), exists
thereof	its, their
the undersigned	I
the use of	(omit)
this activity, command.....	us, we.
timely	prompt
time period	(either one)
transmit	send
type	(omit)

<u>Instead of</u>	<u>Try</u>
viable	practical, workable
vice	instead of, versus
warrant	call for, permit
whereas	because, since
with reference to	about
with the exception of.....	except for
witnessed	saw
your office	you

ANNEX B
COMPLICATED DIRECTIVE AND REVISION

COMPLICATED

1. Purpose. To promulgate policies and Procedures to lessen the administrative Burden on Divisions, Districts, Labs and FOAs through a reduction in the need for Directive pyramiding.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

STRAIGHTFORWARD

1. Purpose. To lessen the burden on USACE organizations by reducing the need to supplement directives.

2. Action. Follow these requirements when Preparing UFC standing operating procedures.

- a. Be so clear and detailed that customers Do not have to create supplements to other Non-technical staff offices.
- b. If a supported site must create a Supplement, don't distribute the SOP Below the supplementing command.
- c. When time and other circumstances Permit, a proposed SOP should be staffed And coordinated with sites supported.

