



PUBLIC SERVICE RECOGNITION WEEK

MAY 3-9, 2020

The “Write Way”: How HR Professionals Can Get Results

Presented by **Latonia Page**
Federal HR Institute

Center for Leadership Development
Developing Visionary Leaders to Transform Government
LEADERSHIP.OPM.GOV | CLDConnect@opm.gov

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by government, for government
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President's Management Agenda
Key Driver of Transformation
People – Workforce for the 21st Century



OPM Strategic Plan Initiative
Transform hiring, pay, and benefits across the
Federal Government





Course Goal



Apply **critical thinking techniques** to plan, organize, compose, and refine **effective written communication** in various forms





What You'll Learn

- What **result** should written communication **achieve**?
- What **differentiates** effective from ineffective writing?
- What are the **steps** in the writing **process**?





Goals of Written Communication



- ✓ **Who** are the readers?
- ✓ What do you want the readers **to do** with the **information**?
 - *Understand?*
 - *Respond?*
 - *Act?*
- ✓ **What** do you **hope to achieve** with the written message?



What was the
intended result of
the **last** work-
related **email** you
sent?





Principles of Effective Writing

- Writing is effective when it achieves its intended results
- How can you ensure that your writing is effective?





Plain Language Overview



Write for your **audience**



Organize to meet your **readers' needs**



Choose words **carefully**



Write **short, well-structured** sentences and paragraphs

Refer to: <http://www.plainlanguage.gov/>

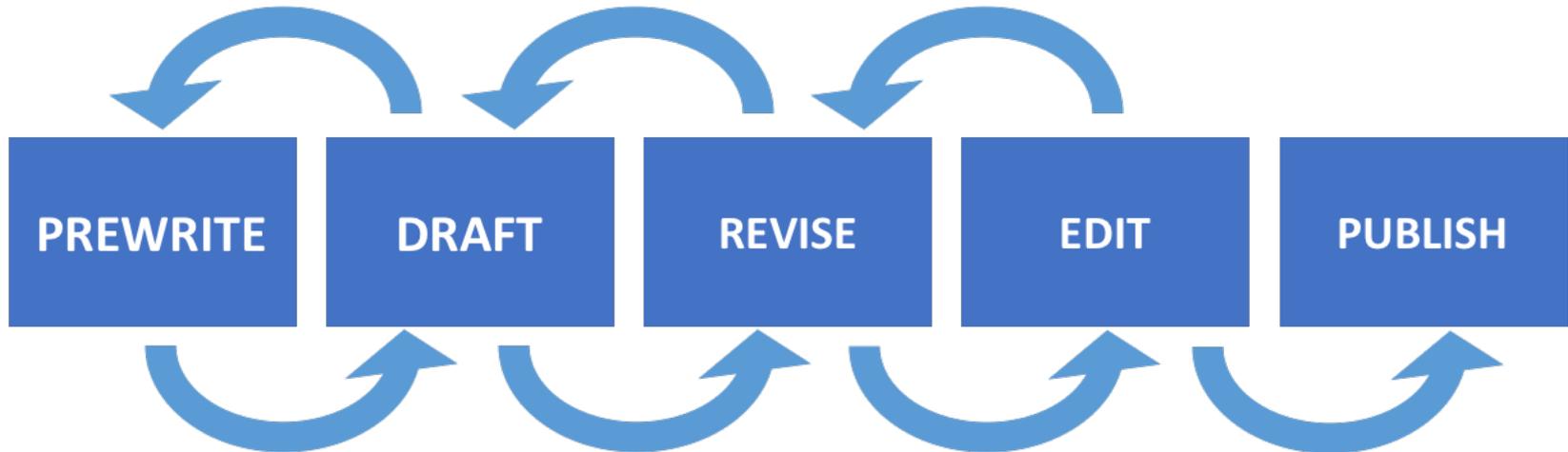


Never use a big word when a singularly unloquacious and diminutive linguistic expression will satisfactorily accomplish the contemporary necessity.

- *Unknown*



The Writing Process

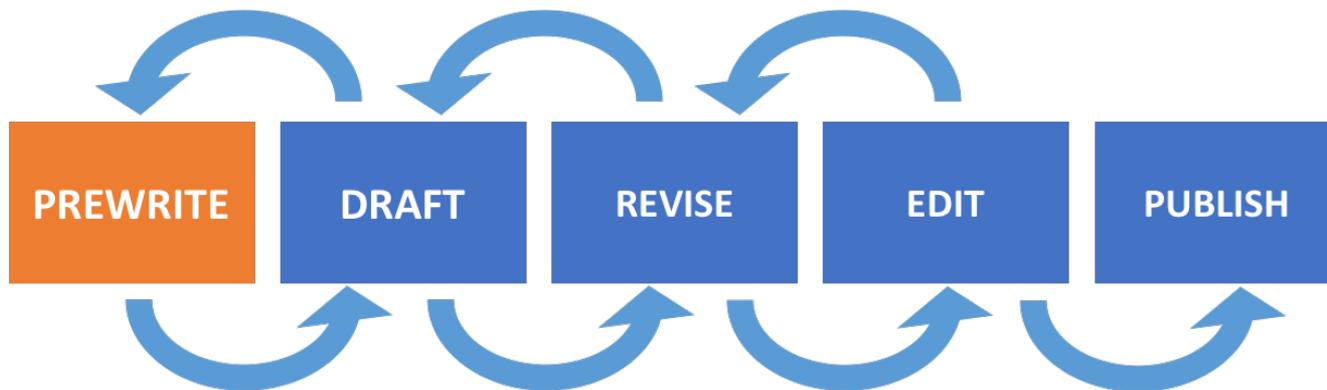




Prewriting

Plan what you will write:

- Who is the intended audience?
- What do you want the reader to do, and by when?
- What do you want to say?
- How will you organize the message?

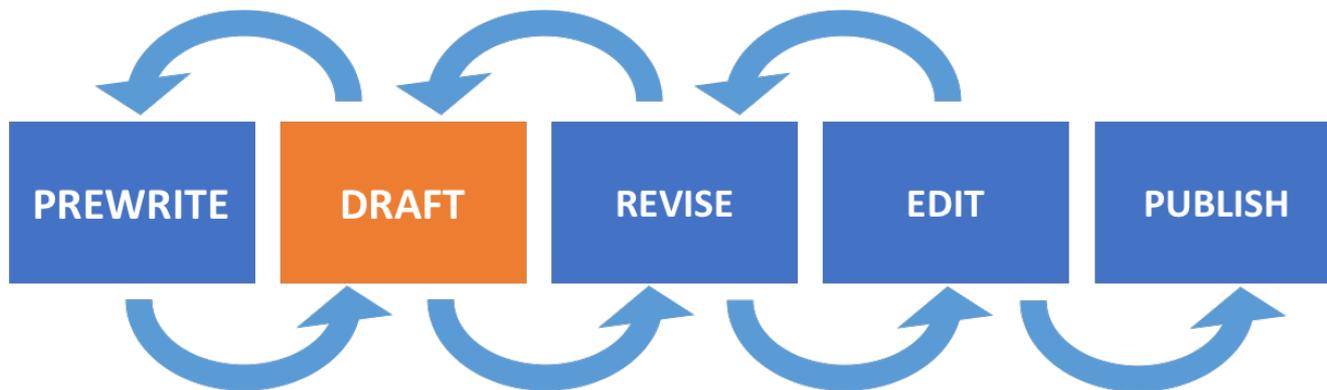




Drafting

Write the first draft:

- Flesh out the ideas you brainstormed
- Follow your prewriting plan

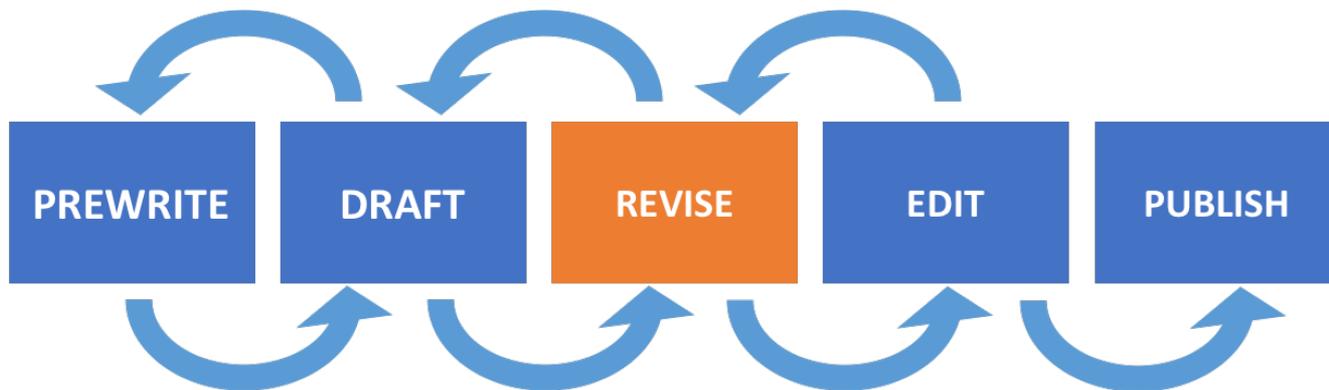




Revising

Revise for clarification:

- Read over your writing and make initial revisions
- Get feedback from a peer to make additional revisions

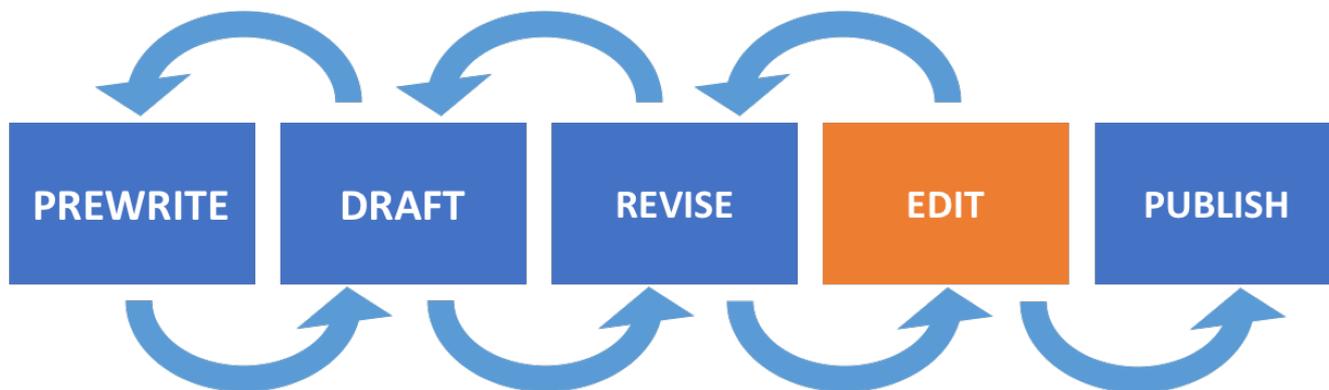




Editing

Proofread and correct mistakes:

- Check grammar and mechanics
- Ensure appropriate organization and formatting

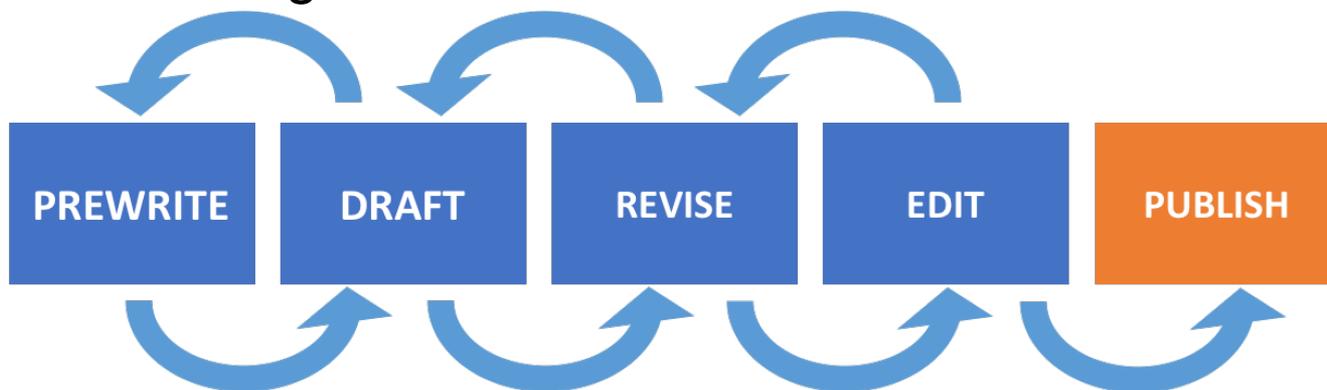




Publishing

Provide the message to the audience:

- Send an email or letter
- Begin the approval process for a government publication
- Publish a website
- Post a message to social media

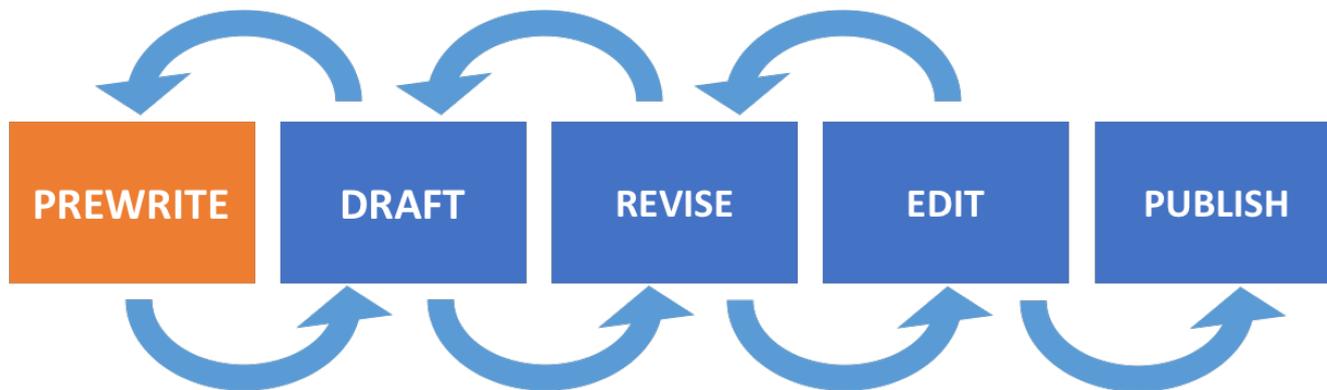




Prewriting

Plan what you will write:

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Prewriting Techniques

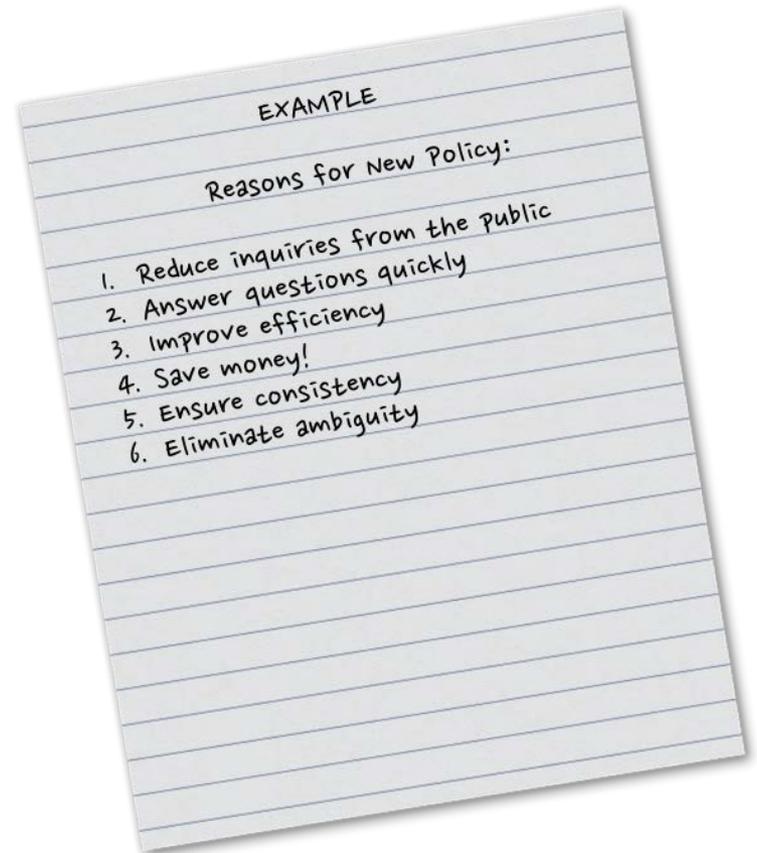
BRAINSTORMING





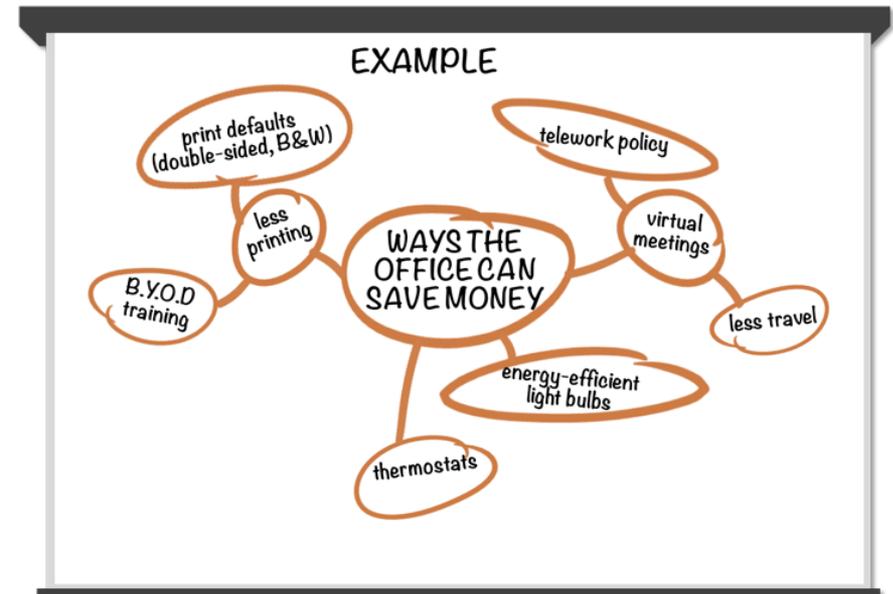
Listing

- **List your ideas freely**
- **Create multiple lists to explore multiple ideas**



Clustering

- Write the **topic** in the **center**
- Write **ideas** around it
- **Circle** related terms
- Draw lines to **connect** the **circles**

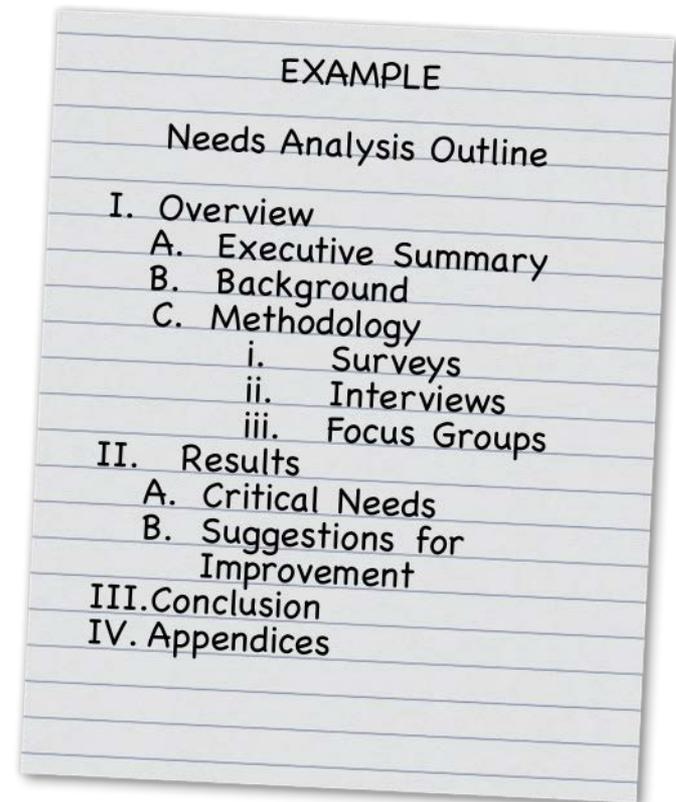




Outlining

Organize your ideas into:

- Topics
- Subtopics
- Supporting details





Prewriting Tips

Consider:

- Who is my intended audience?
- What do I want to say?
- What action(s) do I want my audience to take?
- When do I need a response?



Strategic Planning During Prewriting



- Who are your readers?
- What do they need to know?
- What do they want to know?
- What static may interfere?



- What do you want the readers to do?
- What do you hope to achieve?

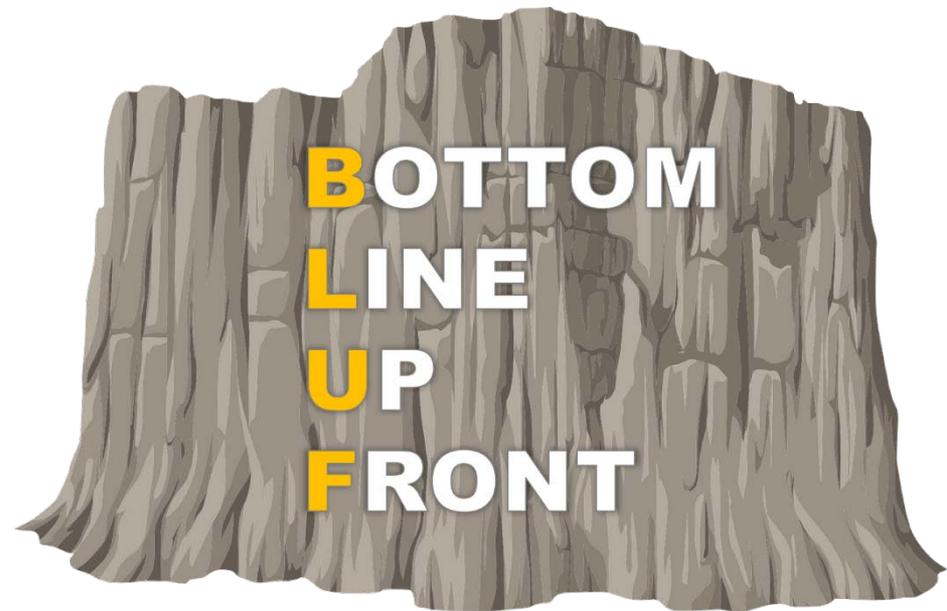


- What is most important for readers to know?
- What supporting details do readers need?
- In what order?



Organize Content Appropriately

- State the **purpose** and **bottom line**
- **Anticipate** questions
- **Eliminate** filler
- Use a **table of contents** when needed
- **Organize** appropriately





Address Separate Audiences Separately

- If your document has more than one audience, address each one separately
- Do not make readers wade through content meant for someone else

A screenshot of a website interface showing a section titled "INFORMATION FOR". Below the title are three light gray rectangular cards, each representing a different audience. Each card has a blue "View More" button at the bottom. The first card is for "Active Federal Employees", the second for "Federal Retirees & Other Annuitants", and the third for "Tribal Employees".

INFORMATION FOR

Active Federal Employees
[View More](#)

Federal Retirees & Other Annuitants
[View More](#)

Tribal Employees
[View More](#)



Address One Person, Not a Group

- Remember that you are speaking to the person reading your document
- Use singular nouns and verbs to prevent confusion
- Use “you” to address the reader directly

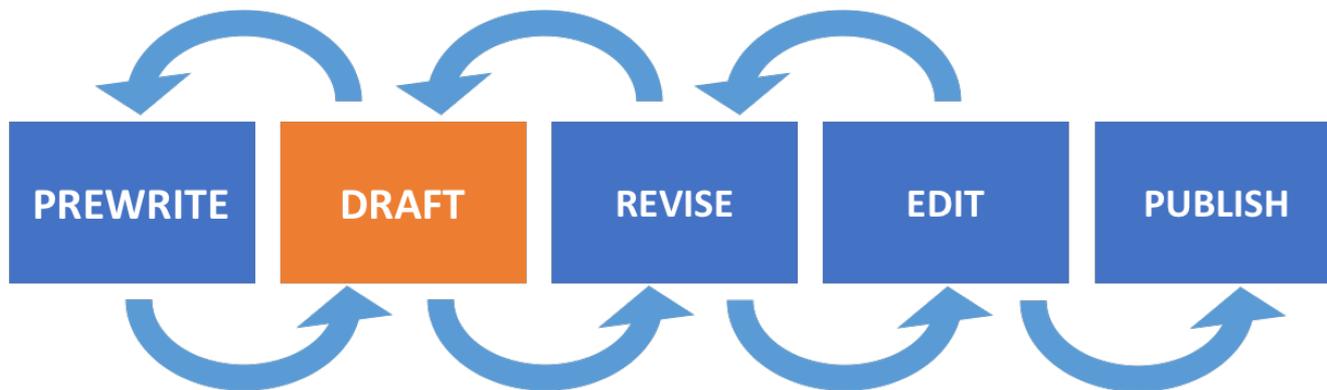
Confusing Plural	Clearer Singular
Individuals and organizations wishing to apply must file applications with the appropriate offices in a timely manner	You must apply at least 30 days before you need the certification. Apply at the state office in the state where: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• You reside, if you are an individual• Your headquarters is located, if you are an organization



Drafting

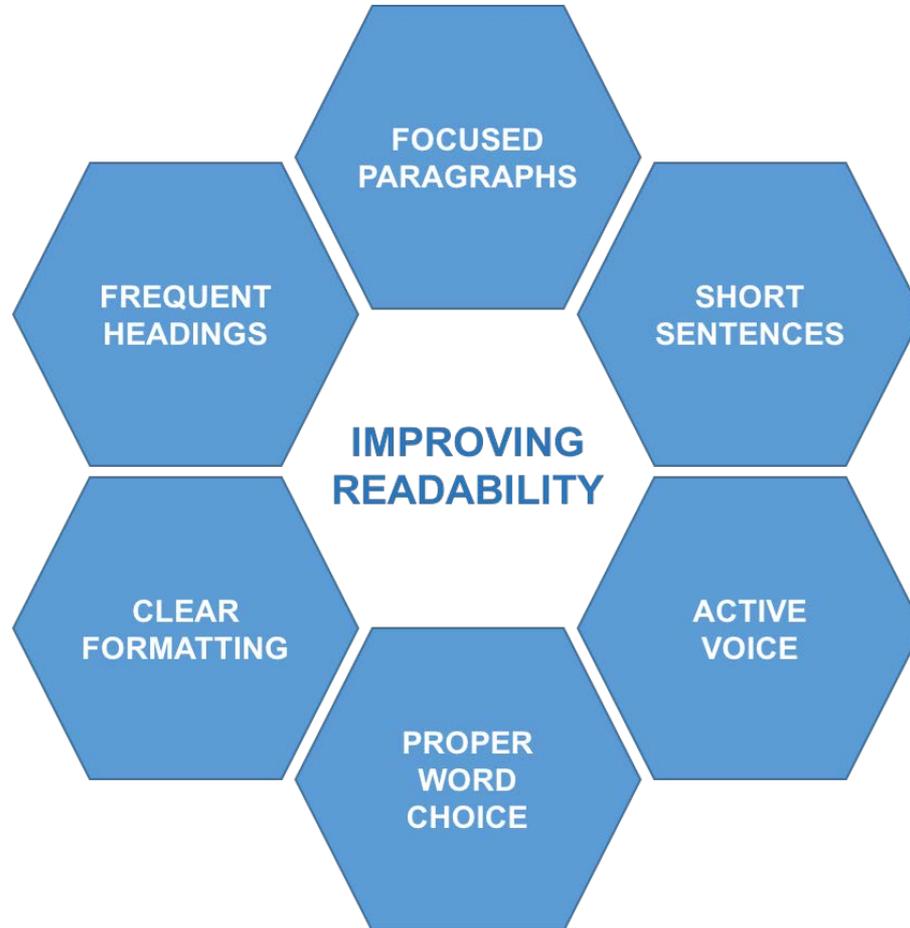
Write the first draft:

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Techniques to Improve Readability





Writing Concisely

Confusing and Wordy



If any member of the board retires, the company, at the discretion of the board and after notice from the chairman of the board to all members of the board at least 30 days before executing this option, may buy, and the retiring member must sell, the member's interest in the company.

Clear and Concise



The company may buy a retiring member's interest. The chairman must notify all board members at least 30 days before the sale.



Writing Concisely, cont.



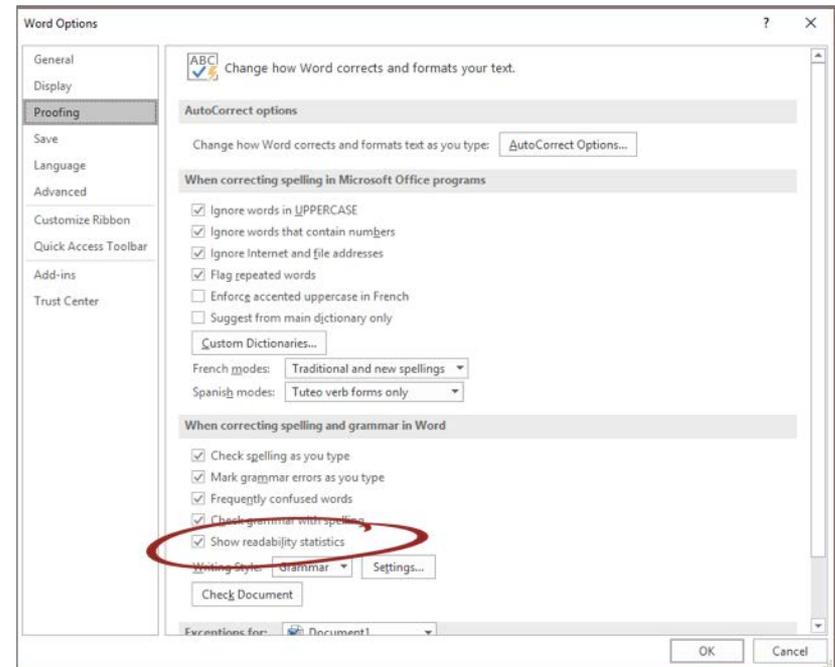
Wordy	Concise
Tom made an application for award of a scholarship	Tom applied for a scholarship
Please take a look at the document that is attached for your review	Please review the attached document
The company is in preparations for the release of its new product	The company is preparing to release its new product
The production of accurate statistics is of utmost importance	Producing accurate statistics is important
A notice of <i>caveat emptor</i> was disseminated by the public affairs office	The public affairs office issued a consumer warning



How to Check Readability Statistics

In Word:

- Select **File**, then **Options**
- Select **Proofing**
- Under **When correcting spelling and grammar in Word**, check the **Show readability statistics** box
- Perform a **spell check**





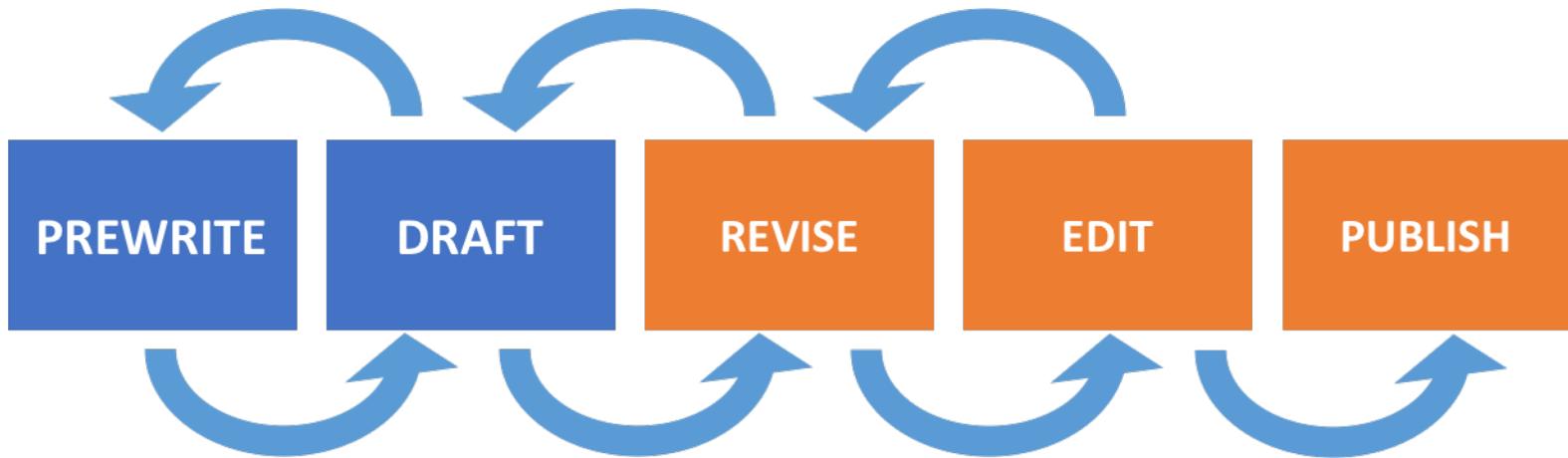
Example Readability Statistics Report

Readability Statistics	
Counts	
Words	7399
Characters	42704
Paragraphs	359
Sentences	271
Averages	
Sentences per Paragraph	1.8
Words per Sentence	20.4
Characters per Word	5.5
Readability	
Passive Sentences	21%
Flesch Reading Ease	28.8
Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level	14.1

OK



Where Are We in the Writing Process?





Rules vs. Style Choices

Examples of Rules

- Capitalizing of the first word of a sentence
- Using correct syntax
- Using a verb form that agrees with the subject
- Correctly punctuating independent clauses
- Using apostrophes to show possession

Examples of Style Choices

- Capitalizing headings, job titles, etc.
- Using the Oxford comma
- Using one or two spaces after a period
- Using contractions
- Punctuating bulleted lists



Sentence Problems



Run-on

Two or more complete statements without proper punctuation between them



Fragment

An incomplete statement



Comma Splice

Two or more complete statements improperly joined with a comma but no coordinating conjunction



Commas Matter

- We're going to learn to cut and paste kids!
- Jane enjoys cooking plants and her dog.
- They interviewed my grandmother, a trapeze artist and a cannibal.





How to Become a Better Writer

- Practice, practice, practice!
- Read—anything!
- Listen to audiobooks
- Make writing a daily habit in your personal life
- Take on more writing assignments at work

“If you want to be a writer you must do two things above all others: read a lot, and write a lot.”
– Stephen King



Questions?





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Additional Webinars:

REGISTER



<http://go.usa.gov/xvjWD>

May 8 | 12 p.m. EST

Will Design for Six Sigma (DFSS) Work for Government Processes?



Scan me!



OPM HR Solutions Center for Leadership Development



Open enrollment courses & certificate programs
for leadership and professional development



Virtual learning ecosystems
to support the human capital lifecycle throughout government



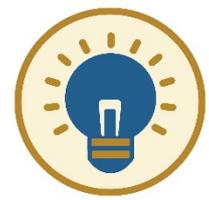
Development programs focused on building decision-making skills through **human-centered design** and **process improvement**



Fellowship programs **to recruit and develop leadership skills** for highly-qualified talent for **Federal agencies**



Certification programs built specifically for government **skills for various professions**, such as the Federal HR Institute



Customized development program solutions to meet agency-specific needs

>> LEADERSHIP.OPM.GOV

>> CLDConnect@OPM.gov



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Thank you for your participation & service to our nation!

Federal HR Institute

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