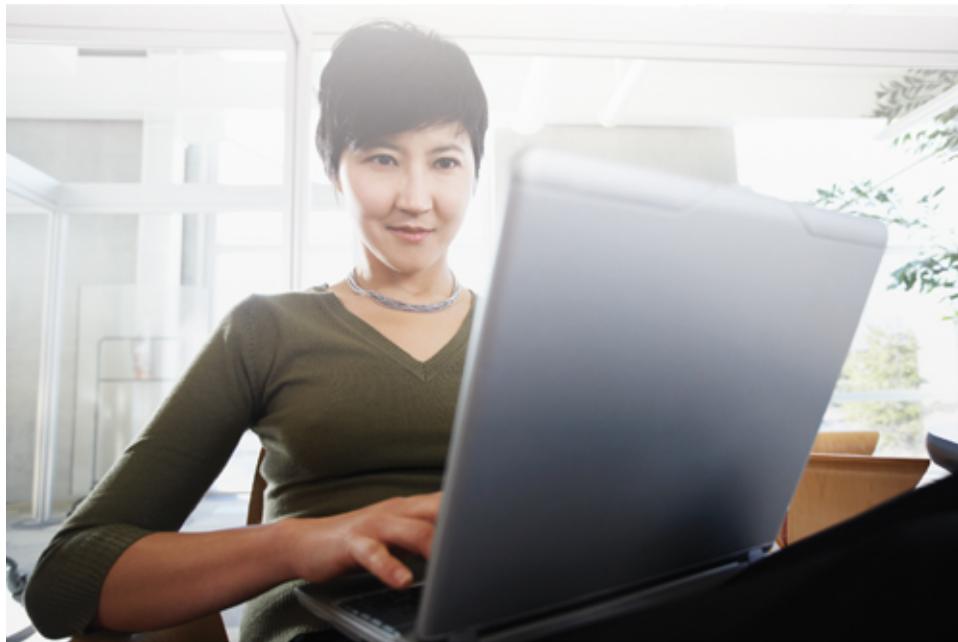


Improving Readability with Style and Design



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Learning Objectives

After studying this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

1. Describe and apply the following principles of writing style that improve ease of reading: completeness, conciseness, and natural processing.
2. Explain and use navigational design to improve ease of reading.
3. Describe and apply the components of the reviewing stage, including a FAIR test, proofreading, and feedback.

Why Does This Matter?

In Chapter 5, we focused on getting your message right with the AIM planning process. Then we introduced the importance of tone as you begin formally drafting your message. In this chapter, we focus on style and design—the next considerations as you draft your message. At this point, *your entire focus should be making your message easy to read*.

Hear Pete Cardon explain why this matters.



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bit.ly/CardonWhy6

In short, your audience members—whether executives, managers, other professionals, or clients and customers—are typically preoccupied with many projects and overwhelmed with messages and information. When you make your messages easy to read, your audience is more likely to read them carefully and understand them as you intended.¹

Many of the principles in this chapter focus on simplifying your words and sentences. This should not be confused with oversimplifying and minimizing your message. Your messages should contain the best of ideas with strong support. If your message is difficult to read, however, your ideas may not even be considered.

In this chapter, we discuss four broad goals. The first three goals relate to writing style and include being complete, concise, and natural. The final goal is to design your document for rapid navigation. Throughout the chapter, you will find less-effective and more-effective examples of each of these style and design elements. These examples come directly from the chapter case. Make sure to skim Stephanie's original difficult-to-read brochure draft (see Figure 6.1) so you understand the context for the chapter examples. By the end of the chapter, you will see the revisions that result in the final version of the brochure (see Figure 6.3).

Figure 6.1 Stephanie's Original, Difficult-to-Read Brochure

This document is difficult to read. It contains long paragraphs and long sentences. It flows poorly. It is not designed to help a reader navigate it for information. Most readers would get frustrated as they attempt to learn how to purchase a franchise.

Hello Potential Sunrise Greeting Cards and Flowers Shop Owner! Would you like to be part one of the most exciting businesses – providing those special somethings for those special someones on those special occasions and do you want to make your wildest dreams come true? There are many reasons for owning a Sunrise store, and it is wonderful to see happy customers day in and day out and be in a line of business where there are such great loyal customers. They are refined and appreciative of excellent craftsmanship and expect creative, original, and upscale greeting cards and flower arrangements. Our brand is one of the most strongly recognized among our customers and is associated with positive characteristics such as quality and reliability, and our customers associate these qualities with the special occasions in their lives. By owning a Sunrise store, you automatically tap into a brand that will provide profitability and join the Sunrise family. To help you reach your goals, we provide you with the products and resources to succeed. We also create a tight knit group of store owners and managers who share tricks of the trade with one another, and to this end, we organize an annual retreat for store owners and managers that provides synergistic solutions and proactive approaches to managing our stores.

We have made an estimate that you will need an initial investment of between \$290,000 and \$605,000. The initial investment costs include the following: fixtures (\$60,000–\$90,000); inventory (\$80,000–\$190,000); store improvements (\$20,000–\$130,000); retail equipment (\$20,000–\$35,000); miscellaneous expenses (\$10,000–\$30,000); and an initial franchise fee (\$50,000). Fixtures include product displays, stock room components, and signing. Inventory includes greeting cards, gifts, flowers, and non-Sunrise items. Store Improvements include carpeting, electrical, plumbing, lighting, etc. Retail Equipment includes point-of-sale cash registers and software, pricing machines, accounting software, etc. Miscellaneous Expenses include various deposits, license fees, promotional costs, etc. You can pick possible locations for your new store.

recent advertising es on your (depending by Sunrise. an, Running a an typically on location. In strip Currently, 0 and ation, profits ng will sunrise ons, bant

POSSIBLE LOCATIONS FOR YOUR NEW STORE.

Sunrise will make the final approval about your proposed sites and may suggest alternate locations based on our marketing formula, which has worked successfully in the past. As far as financial requirements, you must have a minimum net worth of \$350,000, and you also will need minimum unencumbered assets of between \$120,000 and \$265,000. You may not finance more than two-thirds of the initial investment to open the store. You must also have access to financing in the range of \$170,000 to \$340,000 (assuming that you finance two thirds of the initial investment costs). Confirmation of loan, terms, and collateral is required. You will need to show that you can maintain an outside income of at least 80 percent of your present income for a period of at least two years to show that you have adequate financial stability as you get your business started. You will need to show that your liquid assets are available for investment and operations of your new Sunrise Gift Cards and Flowers shop, and the capital must be from your personal assets; capital in a current business will not be recognized as available to a new store. Sunrise does not provide loans.

Sunrise will assist in the business planning, such as helping in the development of a marketing plan, budgeting plan, and a break-even analysis consultation will be provided with your active participation. The budgeting plan that will be provided includes initial investments (building, fixtures, products, etc.), marketing costs, personnel expenditures, insurance and other potential expenses needed to run a Sunrise store, and an analysis of your chosen location will also be provided that includes demographics, traffic patterns, competitors, and a related analysis will be given to you that contains estimates of retail sales and revenue.

Stephanie Jorgenson, President and Owner
 Sunrise Greeting Cards and Flowers, LLC
 Stephanie@Sunrisegiftcards.com, 1-800-SUN-SET9

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Chapter Case: Promoting Franchises at Sunrise Greeting Cards and Flowers

Who's Involved



Stephanie Jorgenson, owner and founder

- Started her greeting card business 20 years ago
- Has expanded to 32 stores
- Wants to set up franchises

The Situation

Over the past 20 years, Sunrise Greeting Cards and Flowers has succeeded far beyond Stephanie Jorgenson's original expectations. Her model of high-end greeting cards, flower arrangements, and other special-occasion gifts appealed to a growing customer base. In fact, even with increasing accessibility to low-end greeting cards at department stores and free e-cards, she found that her

customers had grown more loyal and purchased more than ever.

In recent years, Stephanie has received many requests from people to open franchises. Since she was not in a position to expand as quickly as the market seemed to dictate, she thought franchising would be a good option.

Six months ago, she hired a franchising consultant, who provided her with a basic strategy and action plan to make franchising possible. With her top management team, she set up the basic terms for franchises.

One of Stephanie's immediate goals was to produce a brochure to explain opportunities for franchisee opportunities. Stephanie had thought carefully about the audience for the brochure. She wanted financially strong and ambitious individuals. She also wanted people with a strong sense of optimism and customer orientation. She felt that success in her business was strongly related to genuine delight in helping others celebrate their special moments.

In terms of message structure, she had seen a number of brochures that she felt could be good models. Generally, they included an introductory message from the company president. Then, they typically contained information about financial qualifications and application procedures. She wanted a brochure that would be upbeat but also clear about the strong financial position needed to qualify for a franchise.

Her plan was to distribute the brochure personally to contacts at industry expos she attended throughout the year. She also envisioned mailing it, placing it on the company website, and sending it by email.

Stephanie drafted a document (see Figure 6.1) for the brochure. She asked several of her colleagues for input on the content. They all told her the same thing: "This is hard to read."

Task 1

How can Stephanie improve the writing style of the document so that potential franchisees will easily read it? (See the "Improving Ease of Reading with Completeness," "Improving Ease of Reading with Conciseness," and "Improving Ease of Reading with Natural Style" sections.)

Task 2

How can Stephanie improve her document's navigational design so that potential franchises can find important pieces of information rapidly? (See the "Improving Ease of Reading with Navigational Design" section.)

Improving Ease of Reading with Completeness

LO6.1. Describe and apply the following principles of writing style that improve ease of reading: completeness, conciseness, and natural processing.

Most of your messages in the workplace have a clear goal: to update your team members, to promote a service to a client, to give an assignment, and so on. Your goal of completeness means that your message provides all the information necessary to meet that purpose. Your colleagues, clients, and other contacts expect complete information so they can act on your message immediately. Otherwise, they will need to contact you to get additional information or, worse yet, ignore your message altogether. You can achieve completeness with three basic strategies: (1) providing all relevant information; (2) being accurate; and (3)

being specific.

Provide All Relevant Information

One challenge is to judge which information is relevant for your message. After all, providing too much information can distract your readers and weigh your document down. On the other hand, not providing enough information can leave your reader wondering how to respond. The key to providing *all but only* relevant information is to plan, write, and review your message strategically. Repeatedly asking yourself what information is necessary for the purpose of your message will help you accomplish this.

In Stephanie's case, her basic purpose is to attract qualified individuals to apply for franchises. In the limited space of a two-page brochure, she wants to accomplish several objectives to encourage applications of qualified individuals: show that she is committed to their success, describe the basic business model, and explain the financial qualifications for franchisees. As long as she keeps these objectives in mind, she can ensure that the brochure contains only relevant information.

Be Accurate

Accuracy is a basic objective of all business communications because your colleagues, customers, and clients base important decisions on your communications (see Table 6.1).² In short, accurate information is true, correct, and exact. You should aim for accuracy in facts, figures, statistics, and word choice. Inaccuracies may result from miscalculations, misinformation, poor word choice, or simply typos (see Table 6.2 for examples). Accuracy, like specificity, strongly impacts your readers' perceptions of your credibility. Just one inaccurate statement can lead readers to dismiss your entire message and lower their trust in your future communications as well.

Table 6.1 Most Important Elements of Writing Style and Design according to Employers

Skills	Percentage of Employers Who Think Skill Is Extremely Important
1. Accuracy	95
2. Clarity	75
3. Language mechanics	59
4. Conciseness	41
5. Scientific precision	37
6. Visual appeal	11

Source: College Board survey of 2,825 corporate recruiters in 2,092 companies in 63 countries about needed skills for graduating college students. From *Writing: A Ticket to Work ... Or a Ticket Out: A Survey of Business Leaders*. Report of the National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges. Copyright © 2004 The College Board, www.collegeboard.org. Reproduced with permission.

Table 6.2 Being Accurate

Less Effective	More Effective
Your store should spend roughly <u>30</u> percent of annual sales on local advertising.	Your store should spend roughly <u>3</u> percent of annual sales on local advertising.
A typo (30 percent instead of 3 percent) implies an expense commitment that is	The revised version contains the corrected figure.

ten times higher than the actual recommendation.

We estimate that you will need an initial investment of between \$240,000 and <u>\$425,000</u> . The initial investment costs include the following: fixtures (\$60,000–\$90,000); inventory (\$80,000–\$190,000); store improvements (\$20,000–\$130,000); retail equipment (\$20,000–\$35,000); miscellaneous expenses (\$10,000–\$30,000); and an initial franchise fee (\$50,000).	We estimate that you will need an initial investment of between \$240,000 and <u>\$525,000</u> . The initial investment costs include the following: fixtures (\$60,000–\$90,000); inventory (\$80,000–\$190,000); store improvements (\$20,000–\$130,000); retail equipment (\$20,000–\$35,000); miscellaneous expenses (\$10,000–\$30,000); and an initial franchise fee (\$50,000).
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Incorrect calculation leads to one of the figures being off by \$100,000.

The revised version contains the corrected figure.

Be Specific

Your readers expect you to be precise and avoid vagueness in nearly all business situations. The more specific you are, the more likely your readers are to have their questions answered. If you are not specific, your readers may become impatient and begin scanning and skimming for the information they want. If they can't find that information, they are unlikely to respond to your message as you intend.

Being specific also affects the judgments your readers make about your credibility. Specific statements lead your readers to believe that you know what you're talking about (competence); that you are not hiding anything (character); and that you want your readers to be informed (caring). Being vague, on the other hand, detracts from your credibility. See Table 6.3 for examples of less-specific and more-specific writing.

Table 6.3 Being Specific

Less Effective	More Effective
Once approved, new Sunrise stores can be opened <u>quickly</u> .	Once approved, new Sunrise stores can typically be opened in <u>between 3 and 12 months</u> .
The term <i>quickly</i> is not specific.	The phrase <i>between 3 and 12 months</i> is specific and avoids ambiguity.
The minimum store size is based on location. Typically, the minimum size is <u>larger</u> in strip shopping centers than in shopping malls.	The minimum store size is based on location. In shopping malls, the minimum size should be approximately <u>2,500 square feet</u> . In strip shopping centers, the minimum size should be approximately <u>3,400 square feet</u> .
The term <i>larger</i> is not specific.	By stating specific figures for square feet, the difference is not open to interpretation.

Improving Ease of Reading with Conciseness

When you write concisely, your message is far easier to read. Conciseness does not imply removing relevant information. Rather, it implies omitting needless words so that readers can rapidly process your main ideas. In

response to the question “[Do you have] any thoughts on how language is used in the business world?” Clarence Otis Jr., CEO of Darden Restaurants, responded this way:

I think writing in the business world is more functional than elegant. I felt that way making the transition from law to business. Lawyers write much better. They spend a lot more time on it. In the business world, it's less about how well you say it and more about how efficiently you say it.³

Otis's primary point is that your language should be efficient. You should say as much as you can in as few words as possible. His distinction between functionality and elegance means that your primary focus is not impressing with words, but rather impressing with ideas. In this section, we describe strategies for writing concisely, including controlling paragraph length, using shorter sentences, avoiding redundancy, avoiding empty phrases, and avoiding wordy phrases.

Control Paragraph Length

Before they even begin to read, readers form impressions about ease of reading by looking at paragraph length. When they see long paragraphs, they often enter skim mode—searching for certain words and ideas rather than reading. Long paragraphs can signal disorganization and even disrespect for the reader's time.

Improving Ease of Reading with Writing Style

Completeness

- Provide all relevant information.
- Be accurate.
- Be specific.

Conciseness

- Control paragraph length.
- Use short sentences.
- Avoid redundancy.
- Avoid empty phrases.
- Avoid wordy prepositional phrases.

Natural Style

- Use action verbs when possible.
- Use active voice.
- Use short and familiar words and phrases.
- Use parallel language.
- Avoid buzz words and figures of speech.
- Avoid it is/there are.

Typically, paragraphs should contain 40 to 80 words. For routine messages, paragraphs as short as 20 to 30 words are common and appropriate. As the level of information and analysis grows deeper, some paragraphs will be longer. Rarely should paragraphs exceed 150 words. In a matter of seconds, you can easily check how many words are in your paragraphs with nearly all word processing software.

One primary cause of overly lengthy paragraphs is placing more than one main idea or topic in the paragraph. Your readers can process the information in your message far more easily if you create unified paragraphs in which each paragraph focuses on one idea or topic. Paragraphs with more than one idea often confuse readers. Even worse, readers may miss some ideas altogether. The process of unifying helps you

control paragraph length and even tighten your business reasoning (see Table 6.4).

Table 6.4 Controlling Paragraph Length

Less Effective	More Effective
<p>As far as financial requirements, you must have a minimum net worth of \$350,000. Also, you will need minimum unencumbered assets of between \$120,000 and \$265,000. You may not finance more than two-thirds of the initial investment to open the store. You must also have access to financing in the range of \$170,000 to \$340,000 (assuming that you finance two-thirds of the initial investment costs). Confirmation of loan, terms, and collateral is required. You will need to show that you can maintain an outside income of at least 80 percent of your present income for a period of at least two years. This allows you to have adequate financial stability as you get your business started. You will need to show that your liquid assets are available for investment and operations of your new Sunrise Greeting Cards and Flowers shop. Capital must be from your personal assets; capital in a current business will not be recognized as available to a new store. Sunrise does not provide loans.</p>	<p>Minimum financial requirements include a net worth of \$350,000 with unencumbered liquid assets of between \$120,000 and \$265,000 (these financial requirements must be from personal assets, not from capital in a current business). You will need to show that these liquid assets are available for investment in your Sunrise store. You will also need to show that you can maintain an outside income of at least 80 percent of your present income for a period of at least two years.</p>
<p>This paragraph contains 168 words. It also contains excessive numerical figures.</p>	<p>You are required to finance less than two-thirds of the initial investment costs. Assuming that you can, you will need access to financing in the range of \$170,000 to \$340,000. Confirmation of loan, terms, and collateral is required. Sunrise does not provide loans.</p>
<p>The right to open a new Sunrise store will be awarded based on the business plan, market potential in your chosen area, personal interviews, and financial criteria. Running a Sunrise store can be extremely profitable. Once approved, new Sunrise stores can typically be opened in 3 to 12 months. The minimum store size is based on location. In shopping malls, the minimum size should be approximately 2,500 square feet. In strip shopping centers, the minimum size should be approximately 3,400 square feet. Currently, average annual profit per Sunrise store is \$153,000, with ranges</p>	<p>This paragraph contains the same information but has been edited for conciseness and divided into two paragraphs. It contains one paragraph of 80 words and one paragraph of 44 words. Altogether, the information has been presented in 30 fewer words.</p> <p>The right to open a new Sunrise store will be awarded based on the business plan, market potential in your chosen area, personal interviews, and financial criteria. Once approved, new Sunrise stores can typically be opened in 3 to 12 months.</p> <p>Currently, average annual profit per Sunrise store is \$153,000, with ranges between \$49,000 and \$215,000. Profit level depends on many factors, including location, market demand, square footage, and management. Typically, profits become relatively stable after the first three years of operation.</p>

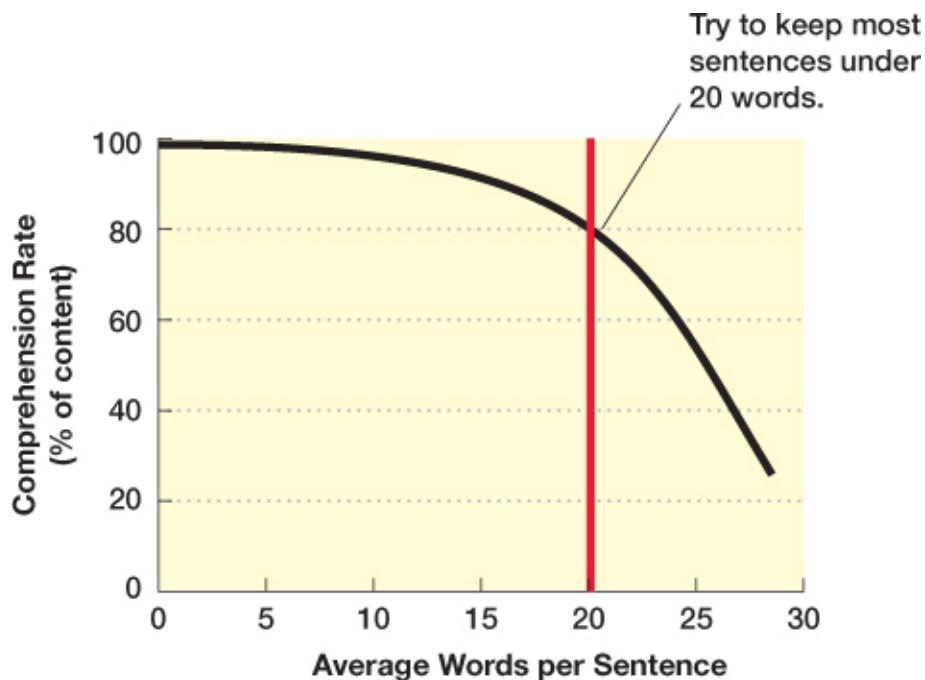
between \$49,000 and \$215,000. Profit level depends on many factors, including choosing the right location, market demand, square footage, and managing the store effectively. Typically, profits become relatively stable after the first three years of operation.

This paragraph has two ideas or topics: (a) awarding the right to open a store and (b) average annual profit per store. This paragraph contains 130 words. The revised paragraph is broken into two separate, unified paragraphs with 42 and 41 words, respectively.

Use Short Sentences in Most Cases

Like relatively short paragraphs, short sentences allow your readers to comprehend your ideas more easily. Consider Figure 6.2, which depicts the data from a study conducted by the American Press Institute.⁴ Readers were tested on their overall comprehension based on the length of sentences. When sentences had 10 words or fewer, readers had nearly 100 percent comprehension. Once sentence lengths reached around 20 words, comprehension dropped to about 80 percent. Thereafter, comprehension dropped rapidly. Sentence lengths of 28 words resulted in just 30 percent comprehension.

Figure 6.2 Comprehension Rate and Sentence Length



Source: Figure adapted from Ann Wylie, "How to Make Your Copy More Readable: Make Sentences Shorter," *Comprehension* (January 14, 2009), retrieved March 3, 2012, from <http://comprehension.prsa.org/?p=217>.

As a rule of thumb, then, for routine messages, aim for average sentence length of 15 or fewer words. For more analytical and complex business messages, you may have an average sentence length of 20 or fewer

words. Of course, you will often deal with complex ideas and need to go above 20 words in some of your sentences. Use your judgment to minimize sentence length (see Table 6.5).

Table 6.5 Using Short Sentences

Less Effective	More Effective
Our brand is strongly recognized among our customers and is associated with positive characteristics such as quality and reliability, and our customers associate these qualities with the special occasions in their lives.	To our customers, our brand represents quality products that help them celebrate special occasions.
This sentence contains 32 words.	This sentence contains the same ideas in just 14 words.
Our team of experienced managers will apply our well-developed formula for analyzing the demographics, traffic patterns, local competitors, and other factors of your chosen location to provide you with estimates of retail sales and revenue.	Our team of experienced managers will apply our well-developed formula for analyzing the demographics, traffic patterns, local competitors, and other factors of your chosen location. From this analysis, we will provide you with estimates of retail sales and revenue.
This sentence contains 35 words.	The less-effective sentence has been split into one 25-word sentence and one 14-word sentence.
Sunrise has aggressively advertised in print and radio in regional markets in recent years, and Sunrise has developed excellent brand recognition with its various advertising and promotional materials that will directly benefit your store, which, of course, depends and varies on your chosen store location.	In recent years, Sunrise has aggressively advertised in print and radio in regional markets. As a result, Sunrise brand recognition is strong. Your store will benefit from Sunrise regional advertising and promotional campaigns.
This sentence contains 45 words.	The less-effective sentence has been split into three sentences with 14, 8, and 11 words, respectively.

Avoid Redundancy

One way to reduce word count and make your messages easier to read is to avoid redundancies, which are words or phrases that repeat the same meaning. For example, consider the phrase *past history*; history can only be past, so there's no need to use both words. By eliminating redundancies, you can reduce overall word count (see Table 6.6).

Table 6.6 Avoiding Redundancy

Less Effective	More Effective
To help you reach your goals, we provide you with the products and resources to succeed.	We provide you with the products and resources to succeed.
This sentence has 16 words. <i>To help you</i>	This sentence has 10 words. It removes

<i>reach your goals and to succeed</i> are redundant phrases.	redundancy.
We organize a fun-filled <u>annual</u> retreat <u>each year</u> for store owners and managers to <u>share and to share and discuss</u> problems, solutions, and opportunities <u>with one another</u> .	We organize a fun-filled <u>annual</u> retreat for store owners and managers to <u>share and discuss</u> problems, solutions, and opportunities.
This sentence has 24 words. <i>Annual</i> and <i>each year</i> are redundant. <i>Share and discuss</i> implies <i>with one another</i> , making <i>with one another</i> redundant.	This sentence has 19 words. It removes redundancies.

Avoid Empty Phrases

Many phrases simply fill space without adding additional meaning. Many of these phrases are common in conversations but are not needed for written messages (see Table 6.7).

Table 6.7 Avoiding Empty Phrases

Less Effective	More Effective
<u>Needless to say</u> , the profitability of a store depends on many factors.	The profitability of a store depends on many factors.
This sentence contains 12 words.	This revision contains 9 words.
<u>With all due respect</u> , Sunrise suggests other locations for your store based on our marketing formula.	Sunrise suggests other locations for your store based on our marketing formula.
This sentence contains 16 words.	This revision contains 12 words.

Avoid Wordy Prepositional Phrases

Eliminating extra words allows you to get your ideas across as efficiently as possible. You will often find that you can reduce word count by 30 to 40 percent simply by converting many of your prepositional phrases into single-word verbs. Like other elements of style we have discussed already, prepositional phrases are not bad in themselves. In many cases, they are perfectly appropriate. Rather, their overuse leads to wordiness and less clarity (see Table 6.8).

Table 6.8 Avoiding Wordy Prepositional Phrases

Less Effective	More Effective
<u>In</u> an effort to maximize your profitability as a Sunrise owner, you should be <u>in</u> attendance <u>at</u> each annual retreat.	Attending the annual Sunrise retreats helps you maximize profitability.
This sentence contains 20 words.	This revision of the less-effective sentence contains 9 words.
<u>In</u> the business planning process, please keep <u>in</u> mind that at Sunrise, we are here <u>for</u> you.	Please remember that we will help you in business planning.
This sentence contains 17 words.	This revision of the less-effective sentence contains 10 words.

Improving Ease of Reading with Natural Style

The closer you match your writing style to the way your readers think and talk, the easier it is for them to process the information you present. Ease of processing means your readers need less mental effort to understand your message, which is especially important for readers who are busy and preoccupied with other work challenges.

Several broad principles support the strategies in this section. First, people can generally process information more quickly when writers use action verbs. Second, people tend to think in a doer-action-object pattern, so using this pattern in your writing enhances comprehension. Furthermore, when the subject or doer is missing from the sentence, readers may become confused. Third, people generally process simple, short words more quickly than long, complex ones.

Use Action Verbs When Possible

As a business writer, you want to project a positive, can-do, action-oriented tone whenever possible. Indeed, fostering action is the basic purpose of most workplace communication. Using action verbs focuses on the goal of coordinating action in the workplace and livens up your writing. Also, it usually reduces word count.

Typically, then, you can focus on two types of revisions to achieve more effective action verbs. First, find nouns that you can convert to action verbs. For example, *have a meeting* becomes *meet* or *have a discussion* becomes *discuss*. Second, find forms of the verb *to be* (e.g., *be* verbs such as *is*, *are*, *am*) and convert them to action verbs (see Table 6.9). For example, *Sunrise is a great place to open a franchise with* becomes *Sunrise provides great opportunities for franchises*.

Table 6.9 Using Action Verbs

Less Effective	More Effective
We <u>have made an estimate</u> that you will <u>need an initial investment</u> of between \$290,000 and \$605,000.	We <u>estimate</u> that you will <u>initially invest</u> between \$290,000 and \$605,000.
This sentence contains 17 words.	This revision contains 11 words.
Sunrise <u>is</u> a company with excellent customer service.	Sunrise <u>provides</u> excellent customer service.
This sentence contains 8 words.	This revision contains 5 words.

Use Active Voice

One way to immediately improve your writing is use active rather than passive voice in most sentences. Active voice and passive voice contain the following grammatical patterns:

Active voice: Doer as Subject + Verb + Object
Passive voice: Object as Subject + Be Verb + Verb + Doer (Optional)

Consider the following examples:

Active voice: Sunrise provides free training for up to three people for each new store.
Passive voice: Free training is provided for up to three people for each new store.

In active voice, this sentence immediately identifies the doer (Sunrise). It then uses a strong verb (provides) and proceeds to the object (free training). In passive voice, this sentence begins with the object of the action (free training), proceeds to a weak verb (is), then employs a strong verb (provided), and leaves out the doer, thus lacking the clarity of active voice.

Using active voice in writing includes many benefits. The doer-action-object allows for faster processing because most people's natural thinking occurs in this way. It also emphasizes the business orientation of action. Perhaps most important, it specifies the doer. Since business activities depend on accountability and coordination, knowing the identity of the doer of an action is usually important. Furthermore, writing in the active voice usually results in fewer words (see Table 6.10).

Table 6.10 Using Active Voice Appropriately

Less Effective (Passive Voice)	More Effective (Active Voice)
A marketing plan, budgeting plan, and break-even analysis <u>will be provided</u> to you with your active participation.	Sunrise will work directly with you to create a marketing plan, budgeting plan, and break-even analysis.
This passive sentence de-emphasizes who will create the plan and lacks an action-oriented tone.	The active verb construction in this sentence helps achieve a more engaging, action-oriented tone.
An analysis of your chosen location <u>will also be provided</u> that includes demographics, traffic patterns, competitors, and a related analysis <u>will be given</u> to you that contains estimates of retail sales and revenue.	Sunrise will use its well-developed formula for analyzing the demographics, traffic patterns, local competitors, and other factors of your chosen location. Sunrise will also provide you with estimates of retail sales and revenue.
This sentence contains two sets of passive verbs. Again, it de-emphasizes who will create the plan and lacks an action-oriented tone. It is also wordy. It contains 33 words.	These sentences clearly identifies that Sunrise will conduct the analyses. It is action-oriented. It is also easier to read. It breaks the thoughts into two sentences of 21 and 12 words, respectively.

While active voice is the preferred writing style for most business writing, passive voice is sometimes better when attempting to avoid blaming others or sounding bossy. Some research reports also use passive voice to emphasize neutrality (see Table 6.11).

Table 6.11 Using Passive Voice Appropriately

Less Effective (Active Voice)	More Effective (Passive Voice)
<u>Since you did not meet the financial criteria</u> , we have denied your application for a Sunrise franchise.	<u>Since financial criteria were not met</u> , your application for a Sunrise franchise was not accepted at this time.
This active verb construction emphasizes the reader's failures.	This passive verb construction provides the bad news without assigning blame or directly pointing out failure.
<u>You need to complete the application forms carefully</u> for us to seriously consider your application.	<u>Application forms that are completed carefully</u> allow us to better determine the merit of your application.
This active verb construction might be	This passive verb construction

perceived as bossy (sounds like an order) emphasizes the importance of carefully or demeaning (implies the reader is not completing the forms without directly smart enough to understand basic implying the reader is likely to make procedures).

elementary mistakes.

Use Short and Familiar Words and Phrases

Whenever possible, choose short, conversational, and familiar words. Using longer, less common ones to “sound smart” rarely pays off. They slow processing and distract from your message. They may even inadvertently send the signal that you are out of touch, quirky, or even arrogant (see Table 6.12).

Table 6.12 Using Short, Familiar Words and Phrases

Less Effective	More Effective
Sunrise <u>advocates</u> that you seek <u>consultation</u> with us during the application <u>process</u> .	Sunrise <u>suggests</u> that you seek our <u>advice</u> during the application process.
Advocates is a word that is less familiar to many readers. Furthermore, <u>advocates</u> and <u>consultation</u> are words that may suggest the need for legal counsel to some readers.	This sentence contains short, familiar words that allow for ease of reading.
Sunrise <u>bestows</u> you with many <u>opulent</u> greeting cards and <u>singular</u> flower arrangements that can only be found in Sunrise stores.	Sunrise <u>provides</u> you with many <u>upscale</u> greeting cards and <u>unique</u> flower arrangements that can only be found in Sunrise stores.
This sentence contains infrequently used adjectives (<i>opulent, singular</i>). These terms sound overblown and will confuse many readers.	This sentence contains shorter, more familiar terms that capture the intended meaning.
To <u>facilitate</u> this <u>course of action</u> , we organize a <u>convivial</u> annual retreat for store owners and managers where we <u>collectively</u> discuss our <u>mutual</u> challenges, solutions, and opportunities.	To help <u>make this happen</u> , we organize a <u>fun-filled</u> annual retreat where store owners and managers can discuss our <u>shared</u> problems, solutions, and opportunities.
This sentence contains rarely used or stuffy words (<i>course of action, convivial, collectively, mutual</i>) that will frustrate many readers.	This sentence avoids stuffy, formal-business-sounding words (<i>course of action, collectively, mutual</i>) and replaces them with shorter, more conversational words.

Use Parallel Language

Using parallel language means that you apply a consistent grammatical pattern across a sentence or paragraph. Parallelism is most important when you use series or lists. For example, when you describe a product with three characteristics, use the same grammatical pattern for each—that is, for example, choose adjectives or nouns or verbs for all of them. When you use consistent grammatical patterns for items in lists and series, readers can process the information far more naturally and quickly (see Table 6.13).

Table 6.13 Using Parallel Language

Less Effective	More Effective
Our customers are <u>refined</u> and <u>purchase high-end products</u> .	Our customers are <u>refined</u> and <u>upscale</u> .
The two characteristics of customers are not parallel. They are in the following pattern: adjective and verb-object.	The two characteristics of customers are parallel. They are both adjectives.
	<p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <p>Our customers <u>appreciate refined craftsmanship</u> and <u>purchase high-end products</u>.</p>
Sunrise will work directly with you to <u>create a marketing plan, develop a budgeting plan, and break-even analysis</u> .	The two characteristics of customers are parallel. They both follow verb-object patterns.
The three items in the list are not parallel. They are in the following pattern: verb-object, verb-object, noun.	<p>Sunrise will work directly with you to create a <u>marketing plan, budgeting plan, and break-even analysis</u>.</p>
	<p>The three items in the list are parallel. They are each nouns (each are objects of the verb <i>create</i>).</p> <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <p>Sunrise will work directly with you to <u>create a marketing plan, develop a budgeting plan, and set up a break-even analysis</u>.</p>
Profit level depends on many factors, including <u>choosing the right location, market demand, square footage, and managing the store effectively</u> .	The three items in the list are parallel. They each follow verb-object patterns.
The four factors do not have matching grammatical patterns. They are in the following pattern: verb-object, noun, noun, verb-object.	<p>Profit level depends on many factors, including <u>location, market demand, square footage, and management</u>.</p>
	<p>The four factors are parallel. They are each nouns.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <p>Profit level depends on many factors, including <u>choosing the right location, meeting market demands, leasing adequate store space, and managing the store effectively</u>.</p>
	The four factors are parallel. They each follow a verb-object pattern.

Avoid Buzzwords and Figures of Speech

To keep your writing natural and engaging, make sure you don't distract your readers with overused or out-of-place words or phrases. Buzzwords, which are workplace terms that become trite because of overuse, can stir negative feelings among some readers. In Table 6.14, you can see one list of annoying buzzwords cited in a recent survey of executives.⁵ (Dozens of such lists exist because business professionals become so agitated by these overused words.)

Table 6.14 The Most Annoying Buzzwords

At the end of the day	Redeployed people
Synergy	On the runway
Solution	Win-win
Think outside the box	Value-added
Customer-centric	Get on the same page
Do more with less	Generation X
Paradigm	Accountability management
Incremental	Core competency
Metrics	Alignment
Take it offline	

Source: Accountemps surveys of financial executives, "What's the Buzz? Survey Reveals Most Overused Workplace Terms," retrieved March 3, 2012, from <http://accountemps.rhi.mediaroom.com/index.php?s-189&item=255>. Reprinted with permission of Robert Half International.

Figures of speech, such as idioms and metaphors, which contain nonliteral meanings, are generally out of place or inappropriate in business writing. Since they are nonliteral, they lack the precise meanings needed in business. Also, some idioms and metaphors have become so clichéd that they have lost almost all meaning (see Table 6.15).

Table 6.15 Avoiding Buzzwords and Figures of Speech

Less Effective	More Effective
Do you want to <u>make your wildest dreams</u> come true? There are many reasons for owning a Sunrise store.	Owning a Sunrise store can help you <u>reach your financial dreams</u> and satisfy your wish to be your own boss.
<i>Making your wildest dreams come true</i> is a figure of speech that sounds unbelievable to most readers.	This sentence is more believable. It avoids exaggerated figures of speech but remains extremely positive and future-oriented.
We also create a tight-knit group of store owners and managers who share <u>tricks of the trade</u> with one another.	We create a tight-knit group of store owners and managers who <u>share ideas about improving our brand and sales performance</u> .
<i>Tricks of the trade</i> is a figure of speech that is more appropriate in oral communication. Some readers may be unfamiliar with the phrase. In any case, it could create confusion.	This sentence is more specific. It explains what expertise is shared and discussed among owners and managers.

To this end, we organize an annual retreat that is a total blast for store owners and managers and that provides synergistic, win-win solutions and proactive approaches to managing our stores.

To help make this happen, we organize a fun-filled annual retreat for store owners and managers where they can share and discuss problems, solutions, and opportunities.

These sentences contain various figures of speech that readers may not receive well. A *total blast* is slang. Not only can slang be misunderstood, but it can also serve as a generation marker. Slang goes out of style and can make you look out of date. Other slang will highlight how young you are. The combination of buzzwords (*synergistic*, *win-win*, *proactive*) in the second sentence will annoy some readers.

This sentence, without the excessive slang and buzzwords, is easy to read. Readers can rapidly process this sentence and relate to its tone.

Avoid *It Is/There Are*

Readers naturally want to know precisely *who* or *what* the subject of a sentence is, particularly in business writing, where specificity is so important. Most sentences that begin with *it is* or *there are* fail to provide a specific subject and generally contain more words than necessary. A message can be particularly awkward when many of the sentences begin with *it is* or *there are*. By rewording *it is/there are* statements, you generally liven up your writing.

One way of recognizing when to reword *it is* statements is to ask the question *what does it refer to?* If you don't know the answer, your readers won't either. Consider the second sentence in Table 6.16: *It is wonderful to see happy customers day in and day out.* What does *it* refer to? Recognizing what *it* is requires you to think for a few seconds. By rewording the sentence, you can provide a more descriptive, concise, and natural statement: *Seeing happy customers day in and day out is wonderful.* After considering the examples in Table 6.16, read the Technology Tips on page 161 for ways that you can use your word processing program to further improve your writing.

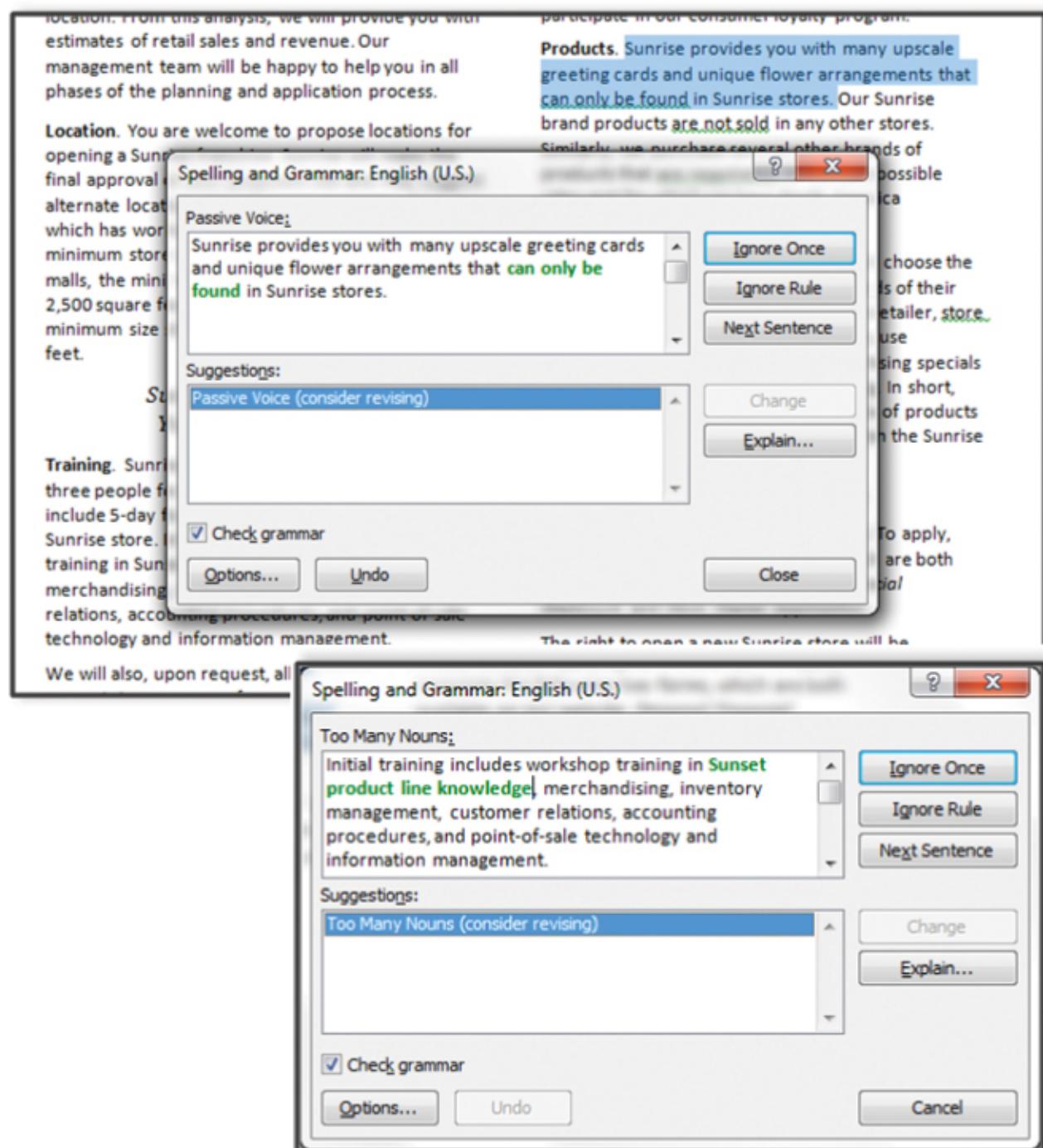
Table 6.16 Avoiding *It Is* and *There Are*

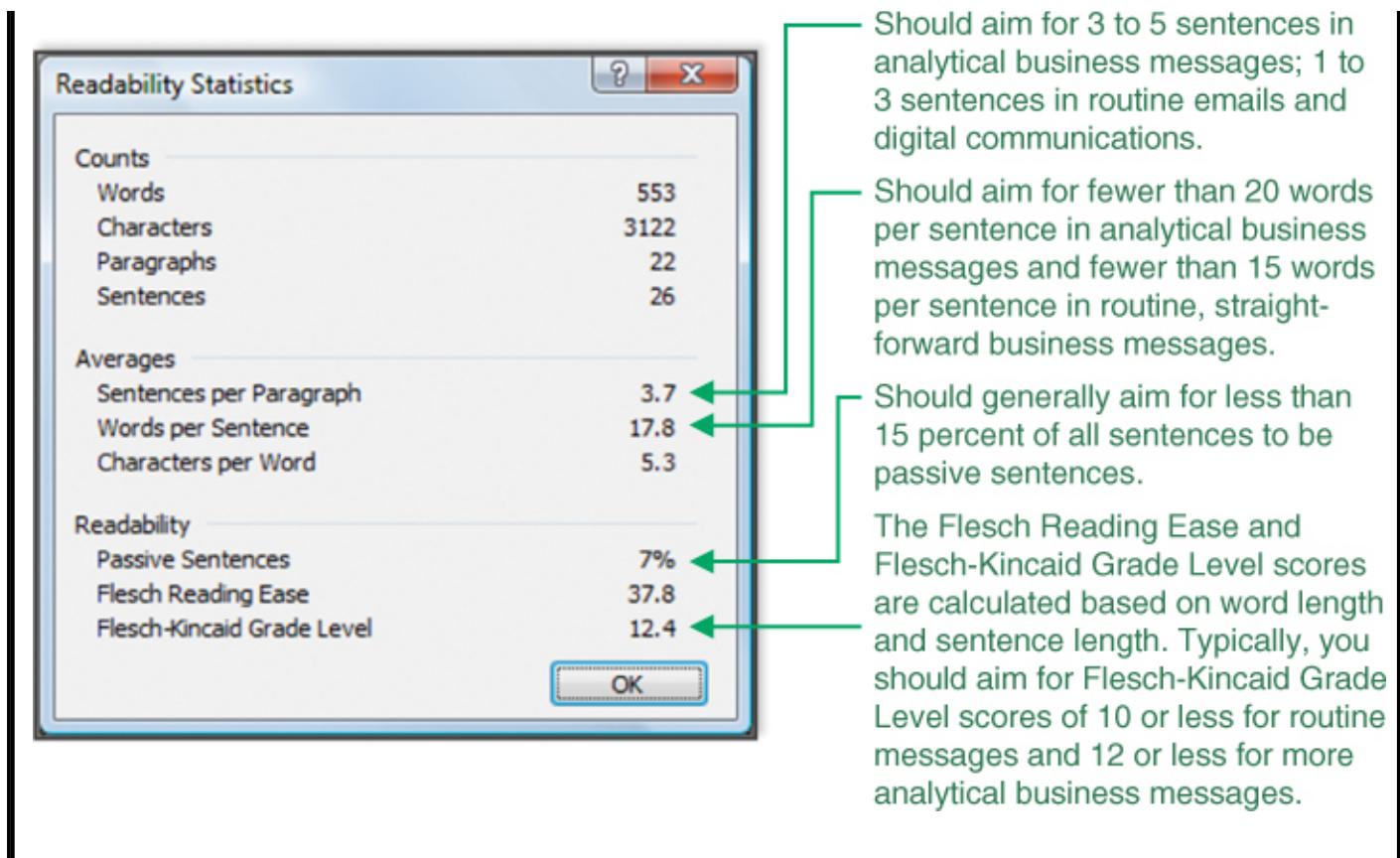
Less Effective	More Effective
<u>There are</u> many reasons for owning a Sunrise store.	Owning a Sunrise store has many benefits.
This sentence contains 9 words.	This sentence contains 7 words.
<u>It is</u> wonderful to see happy customers day in and day out.	Seeing happy customers day in and day out is wonderful.
This sentence contains 12 words.	This sentence contains 10 words.
<u>It is</u> great to be in a line of business where <u>there are</u> such extremely loyal customers.	In this line of business, customers are extremely loyal.
This sentence contains 17 words.	This sentence contains 9 words.

Technology Tips: Using Spelling and Grammar Checks

Most word processing software programs contain spelling and grammar checks to help you avoid misspellings and grammatical mistakes. Many of these programs, such as Microsoft Word, also have tools to evaluate writing style and ease of reading. Typically, these tools are not set by default. You will need to manually select them. (In Microsoft Word, you can access these additional tools by changing settings in the *Proofing* area of *Word Options*.)

When you run spelling and grammar checks, you can review your document sentence by sentence for passive voice, noun clusters, and other elements. Once you finish the check, you will see a final calculation of readability statistics. Keep in mind that the software is not perfect. Generally, however, it will help you improve your writing style.





Improving Ease of Reading with Navigational Design

LO6.2. Explain and use navigational design to improve ease of reading.

Your primary goal for document design is making your message easy to navigate. Ask yourself these questions: How can I get my readers to see my main ideas and messages quickly? How can I make sure my readers can find the information they are most interested in? Several features will help you improve navigational design, including headings, highlighting, lists, white space, and simplicity. Later in the book, we will focus on additional ways of enhancing the appearance of your document with charts, figures, and graphics.

Use Headings

In information-rich and complex messages, headings can help your readers identify key ideas and navigate the document to areas of interest. As you create headings and subheadings, be consistent in font style and formatting throughout your document. One way to be consistent with your headings is to apply formatting features available in most word processing programs. For example, in Microsoft Word, you can assign heading levels for major heads and subheads (Heading 1, Heading 2, and so on). You have many options for the formatting styles you apply, and the software ensures that the formatting remains consistent throughout the document.

As you develop your headings, make sure you concisely and accurately convey the contents of a section. For example, notice the heading “Financial Requirements & Financing” in the more-effective example in Table 6.17. In contrast, the heading “Minimum Financial Requirements to Apply for a Franchise and Financing Stipulations” is likely too long for most documents. On the other hand, a subheading such as “Minimum Requirements” may not give readers accurate information about the contents of the section. Readers skimming the document for *financial* requirements might miss the section on the first pass. You can find more

information about headings in Chapters 12 and 13 about reports.

Table 6.17 Using Headings

Less Effective	More Effective
<p>Sunrise will make the final approval about your proposed sites and may suggest alternate locations based on our marketing formula, which has worked successfully in the past. As far as financial requirements, you must have a minimum net worth of \$350,000, and you also will need minimum unencumbered assets of between \$120,000 and \$265,000. You may not finance more than two-thirds of the initial investment to open the store. You must also have access to financing in the range of \$170,000 to \$340,000 (assuming that you finance two-thirds of the initial investment costs). Confirmation of loan, terms, and collateral is required. You will need to show that you can maintain an outside income of at least 80 percent of your present income for a period of at least two years to show that you have adequate financial stability as you get your business started.</p> <p>You will need to show that your liquid assets are available for investment and operations of your new Sunrise Greeting Cards and Flowers shop, and the capital must be from your personal assets; capital in a current business will not be recognized as available to a new store. Sunrise does not provide loans.</p>	<p>Financial Requirements & Financing</p> <p>Owning a Sunrise shop requires a strong financial position and evidence of the ability to finance a new business.</p> <p>Financial Requirements. Sunrise seeks franchise owners who are in a financially sound position. The minimum requirements include a total net worth of \$350,000, with unencumbered liquid assets of between \$120,000 and \$265,000. You will need to show that these liquid assets are personal rather than capital in a current business and available for investment in your Sunrise store. You will also need to show that you can maintain an outside income of at least 80 percent of your present income for at least two years.</p> <p>Financing. You are required to finance less than two-thirds of the initial investment costs. Assuming that you finance up to two-thirds of the initial investment costs, you will need access to financing in the range of \$170,000 to \$340,000. Confirmation of loan, terms, and collateral is required. Sunrise does not provide loans.</p>
<p>This paragraph is 198 words with far too many numbers. Many readers would have a hard time locating the key information.</p>	<p>Visually, these paragraphs are far more appealing and inviting. The headings immediately orient the reader to the content.</p>

Highlight Key Words and Phrases

When you want to highlight ideas or phrases, consider using **bold**, *italics*, or underlining to draw and keep your readers' attention. Typically, you will apply this type of formatting sparingly; if you use too much special formatting, your main ideas will not stand out. In general, apply only one type of formatting to a highlighted word/s (i.e., only bold or italics, not bold and italics) (see Table 6.18).

Table 6.18 Applying Formatting to Key Words and Phrases

Less Effective	More Effective
----------------	----------------

<i>Sunrise will work directly with you to create a marketing plan, budgeting plan, and break-even analysis.</i>	<i>Sunrise will work directly with you to create a marketing plan, budgeting plan, and break-even analysis.</i>
By italicizing everything, nothing is highlighted.	By italicizing one short phrase, you emphasize it.
Sunrise will provide free training for up to three people for each new store.	Sunrise will provide free training for up to three people for each new store.
Applying two formatting features (bold and underlining) may appear overbearing.	Applying one formatting feature (bold) is sufficient to highlight the phrase.

Improving Ease of Reading with Navigational Design

- Headings
- Highlighting
- Lists
- White space
- Simplicity

Use Bulleted and Numbered Lists

You will often use lists in business writing. When you set these items apart with bullets or numbers, your readers notice and remember the items more easily (see Table 6.19).

Table 6.19 Using Bulleted and Numbered Lists

Less Effective	More Effective
<p>The brochure for prospective franchisees should first and foremost show how committed we are to the success of the franchisee. We can do this by providing a warm and inviting message from Stephanie on the front of the brochure. Then we should provide basic information that all prospective franchisees would be interested in, such as information about initial investment costs and profit potential, financial requirements and financing, our involvement in opening a new franchise store, and the application process. We should also have a section about our commitment to their success after they open a store.</p>	<p>The brochure for prospective franchisees should accomplish two main goals: (1) show our commitment to the success of franchisees and (2) provide basic information about becoming a franchisee. The brochure should contain the following sections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening letter from Stephanie. • Initial investment costs and profit potential. • Financial requirements and financing. • Sunrise involvement in opening a new franchise store. • Sunrise support after opening a store. • Application process.
<p>Without bullets, this paragraph contains a lot of items that are difficult for the reader to remember. Furthermore, it takes longer for the reader to visualize the components of the brochure.</p>	<p>With bullets, this paragraph allows the reader to rapidly process the information and visualize the components of the brochure. Furthermore, the use of enumeration and bullets more clearly distinguishes the overarching goals of the brochure and the components of the</p>

brochure.

Use White Space Generously

Your readers will form an immediate impression about your document based on how much white space (areas without text) it has. Documents with too much text and not enough white look daunting or cluttered. On the other hand, documents with too much white space may look insufficient. Many students are trained in the university setting to double-space documents. In the workplace, double-spaced documents are rare, however.

Keep It Simple

Visual appeal is not the first consideration for most written business communications (see Table 6.1 at the beginning of the chapter). Rather, the goal is to get your message across in an easy-to-read manner. As you design your document, focus first on easy navigation for your reader. Avoid formatting features that distract from the main message. See Figure 6.3 for effective use of navigational features and white space.

Figure 6.3 Stephanie's Final, Easier-to-Read Brochure (Compare to Original Version in Figure 6.1)

Statistical Comparison of Original and Final Versions of Brochure

	Original Version	Revised Version
Paragraphs (#)	8	21
Longest Paragraph	216 words	95 words
Average Paragraph Length	143 words	55 words
Average Sentence Length	23 words	15 words

Owning a Franchise

Sunrise Greeting Cards and Flowers

Hello Potential Sunrise Shop Owner!

Would you like to own and run one of the most exciting businesses—providing happy customers with cards and flowers for those special occasions?

As a Sunrise store owner, you would be in a business with loyal customers who appreciate refined and excellent craftsmanship. They expect creative, original, and upscale greeting cards and flower arrangements, and Sunrise delivers. To our customers, our brand represents quality products that help them celebrate special occasions.

When you own a Sunrise store, you tap into a brand that provides profitability, and you also become part of the Sunrise family. We provide you with the products and resources to succeed. We create a tight-knit group of store owners and managers who share ideas about improving our brand and sales performance. To help make this happen, we organize a fun-filled annual retreat where store owners and managers can discuss our shared problems, solutions, and opportunities. We build success together.

In this brochure, you'll find basic answers to your questions about investment costs and profit potential; financial requirements and financing; Sunrise involvement in opening your store; Sunrise commitment to your success after you open your store; and the application

process.

I will always be willing to personally answer your questions and explain the wonderful benefits of running a Sunrise business. Please call me or email me anytime to chat about your future with Sunrise!

Stephanie

Stephanie Jorgenson, President and Owner Sunrise Greeting Cards and Flowers, LLC
Stephanie@sunrisegiftcards.com 1-800-SUN-SET9

Initial Investment Costs & Profit Potential

Initial investment costs for Sunrise shops are comparable to other franchises in the industry, yet average profits from our shops exceed industry averages by 20 to 50 percent.

Initial Investment Costs.* The initial investment typically ranges from \$290,000 to \$605,000. The table below shows ranges for the initial investment costs.

	Low	High
Fixtures	\$ 60,000	\$ 90,000
Inventory	80,000	190,000
Store Improvements	20,000	130,000
Retail Equipment	20,000	35,000
Miscellaneous	10,000	30,000
Initial Franchise Fee	50,000	50,000
Total Initial Costs	\$240,000	\$525,000
Plus Working Capital	\$ 50,000	\$ 80,000
Total Required Capital	\$290,000	\$605,000

**See our website, sunrisegiftcards.com/franchisees, for detailed information about these expenses.*

Profit Potential. Currently, average annual profit per Sunrise store is \$153,000, with ranges between \$49,000 and \$215,000. Profit level depends on many factors, including location, market demand, square footage, and management. Typically, profits become relatively stable after the first three years of operation.

Financial Requirements & Financing

Owning a Sunrise shop requires a strong financial position and evidence of the ability to finance a new business.

Financial Requirements. Sunrise seeks franchise owners who are in a financially sound position. The minimum requirements include a total net worth of \$350,000, with unencumbered liquid assets of between \$120,000 and \$265,000. You will need to show that these liquid assets are personal rather than capital in a current business and available for investment in your Sunrise store. You will also need to show that you can maintain an outside income of at least 80 percent of your present income for at least two years.

Financing. You are required to finance less than two-thirds of the initial investment costs.

Assuming that you finance up to two-thirds of the initial investment costs, you will need access to financing in the range of \$170,000 to \$340,000. Confirmation of loan, terms, and collateral is required. Sunrise does not provide loans.

Sunrise Involvement in Opening a New Franchise Store

Sunrise will help plan your Sunrise business and find a location that best supports your goals.

Business Planning. Sunrise will work directly with you to create a marketing plan, budgeting plan, and break-even analysis. Our team of experienced managers will apply our well-developed formula for analyzing the demographics, traffic patterns, local competitors, and other factors of your chosen location. From this analysis, we will provide you with estimates of retail sales and revenue. Our management team will be happy to help you in all phases of the planning and application process.

Location. You are welcome to propose locations for opening a Sunrise franchise. Sunrise will make the final approval of your proposed site but may suggest alternate locations based on our marketing formula, which has worked successfully in the past. The minimum store size is based on location. In shopping malls, the minimum size should be approximately 2,500 square feet. In strip shopping centers, the minimum size should be approximately 3,400 square feet.

Sunrise Commitment to

Your Ongoing Success

After you open your shop, Sunrise will provide the training, marketing, customer support, and products to help you succeed.

Training. Sunrise will provide free training for up to three people for each new store. The training will include 5-day formal workshops about running a Sunrise store. Initial training includes workshop training in Sunrise product line knowledge, merchandising, inventory management, customer relations, accounting procedures, and point-of-sale technology and information management. We will also, upon request, allow shadowing of a current store manager for up to one week. All travel expenses for the training are the responsibility of new owners.

Advertising/Marketing. Sunrise has aggressively advertised in print and radio in regional markets in recent years. As a result, Sunrise brand recognition is strong. Your store will benefit from Sunrise regional advertising and promotional campaigns (depending on your location). In addition, you will have access to all advertising materials developed by Sunrise for your own use. Your store should spend roughly 3 percent of annual sales on local advertising.

Customer Service/Website Support. Sunrise provides centralized customer service for all product lines at a toll-free number. We also provide a customizable website for your shop with built-in capabilities for your customers to make orders and purchase products. Your customers will also be able to participate in our consumer loyalty program.

Products. Sunrise provides you with many upscale greeting cards and unique flower arrangements that can only be found in Sunrise stores. Similarly, we purchase several other brands of products that we negotiate at the best possible rates and for which we have North America exclusivity rights.

Store owners make their own orders and choose the mix of products that best meets the needs of their customers. To retain status as a Sunrise retailer, store owners must carry certain product lines, use appropriate signs, and abide by advertising specials and offers in Sunrise regional advertising. In short, store owners are expected to carry a mix of products and marketing that match and strengthen the Sunrise brand.

Application Process

Please consider applying for a franchise. To apply, complete the following two forms, which are both available on our website: *Personal Financial Disclosure* and *Store Owner Application*.

The right to open a new Sunrise store will be awarded based on the business plan, market potential in your chosen area, personal interviews, and financial criteria. Once approved, new Sunrise stores can typically be opened in three to twelve months.

Reviewing Your Message

LO6.3. Describe and apply the components of the reviewing stage, including a FAIR test, proofreading, and feedback.

You will recall from Chapter 5 that expert business writers use their time differently than do average business writers (see Figure 5.2 in Chapter 5). They devote more time to planning and reviewing and proportionately less time to drafting. They spend most of their time—before and after drafting—carefully thinking about how the message will influence and affect others.

Many business professionals get anxious to send their messages as soon as they finish drafting them. It is human nature to want to move on to the next task. Resist the urge to move on without carefully reviewing your messages. During the reviewing stage, you will improve your message, making it far more successful. You will also minimize the possibility of embarrassing and damaging mistakes.

The reviewing process includes three interrelated components: conducting the FAIR test, proofreading, and getting feedback (not generally needed for routine messages). These reviewing components ensure that you show fairness, get the message right, avoid errors, and get perspectives from trusted colleagues. For short, routine messages (one to four paragraphs), expert business writers can often check for fairness and proofread in just a few minutes. For long, important messages, such as business proposals or business plans, the reviewing stage may take weeks or months.

Conduct a FAIR Test

In Chapter 1, we introduced the FAIR test as a way of ensuring ethical business communication. Of course, you will consider such issues during the planning and writing stages. Also, during the review process you can also take the time to think about the degree to which your entire message conforms to standards for facts, access, impacts, and respect. For important messages—particularly those that involve complicated business issues—apply the FAIR test:

- **Facts:** Are you confident in your facts? Are your assumptions clear? Have you avoided slanting the facts or made other logical errors?
- **Access:** Have you granted enough access to message recipients about decision making and information? Have you granted enough access to the message recipients to provide input? Are you open about your motives, or do you have a hidden agenda?
- **Impacts:** Have you thought about how the message will impact various stakeholders? Have you

evaluated impacts on others from ethical, corporate, and legal perspectives?

- **Respect:** Have you demonstrated respect for the inherent worth of others: their aspirations, thoughts, feelings, and well-being? Have you shown that you value others?

Proofread

Proofreading involves rereading your entire document to make sure it is influential and accurate. You might consider rereading each sentence several times, each time with a different focus. On your first pass, place yourself in the position of your audience members. Imagine how they will respond. On your second pass, check for problems with writing style and language mechanics.

Get Feedback

As one business writing expert stated, one of the best ways to ensure that your communication is effective and fair is to get feedback from others:

Ask some people whose judgment you respect to give it a test read and get their reaction. Do they think it's too energetic or hyperbolic for the audience and the occasion? Or is it too frosty? Similarly, do they think the writing is too distant or too familiar? What are the offending words or phrases? How can they be changed to do the job at hand? Using test readers is hardly rocket science, but those willing to go through this trouble invariably produce more effective writing.⁶

Communication Q&A: Conversations with Current Business Professionals

Pete Cardon: How important are writing skills in the workplace?

Ronald Scott: They are vital. Members of my staff are regularly required to take complex and technical ordinance language and explain it in plain terms to citizens or customers. This requires the ability to capture the essence and translate it into simple language that the customer can understand and act on. In today's workplace, having good writing skills is an asset that will distinguish an employee from his or her peers. One of the first opportunities an employer has to assess writing skills is when he or she reviews an application for employment or a résumé. A basic review of these two documents can either thoroughly impress or completely horrify a potential employer.

PC: How much time do you spend writing? What types of writing?

RS: I spend approximately half my time writing. Examples include writing emails; drafting letters to customers, citizens, and businesses; drafting letters to local, state, and federal officials; reviewing and correcting written documents and reports prepared by staff; creating policy and procedure manuals; creating form letters; creating grant application and grant documents; and creating budget documents and periodic budget reports.

PC: How formal is business writing?

RS: Typically, business writing is a formal means of communication. Recently, one of my employees wrote a letter to a customer he knew quite well. After his salutation he wrote, "How are you doing today? I hope you are doing well and that you are feeling better." While this language may have been acceptable for an in-person exchange, it seemed too casual and inappropriate for a business letter.

PC: What kinds of writing mistakes do you see most often in the workplace? How damaging

are these mistakes? Could you give a recent example?

RS: In my profession we often communicate with large businesses about the cost of development permits for large projects. Some permit fees can be in excess of \$50,000. A missing zero in a letter estimating permit fees can make a big difference when a business is preparing its budget. Recently, an employee addressed a letter to a customer about a code violation. He wrote, "You will not need a building permit to complete this work." He intended to write, "You will need a building permit to complete this work." What a difference one word made. Some delicate negotiations were necessary to make the situation right with that customer.

PC: How is writing in the workplace different from writing for school projects?

RS: Business writing requires you to maintain business relationships (even when giving bad news), build and maintain company loyalty and morale, retain customers/clients, and portray a positive image for yourself and your company. Academic writing focuses more on its subject than on the reader's reactions or on the goal of cultivating a long relationship with the reader. When writing for business purposes, we need to make sure we do not hamper business transactions and workflow due to misuse of language, inappropriate expressions and emotions, or lack of empathy.



Ronald Scott is the director of community development for Lexington County in South Carolina. He oversees all development ordinances in his community and administers approximately \$2 million annually in federal block grant programs that serve low-income and moderate-income citizens and communities.

Courtesy of Peter Cardon.

This advice reveals an important point: Your trusted colleagues are giving your message a trial run—trying to simulate how the intended message recipient will respond. As they review your message, they can provide insights about making it better. Before they begin to read, ask them to consider whether you have framed the idea correctly, whether the business logic holds up, whether the message has the intended effects, whether the tone is appropriate, and so on. Effective business communicators make a habit of getting this advance feedback for important messages. In the Communication Q&A with Ronald Scott, you can learn more about the importance of clarity, tone, and accuracy in business writing.

Chapter Takeaway for *Improving Readability with Style and Design*

LO 6.1. Describe and apply the following principles of writing style that improve ease of reading: completeness, conciseness, and natural processing. (pp. 148–161)

Improving Ease of Reading with Writing Style

Completeness	Conciseness	Natural Style
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide all relevant information. Be accurate. Be specific. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Control paragraph length. Use short sentences. Avoid redundancy. Avoid empty phrases. Avoid wordy prepositional phrases. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use action verbs when possible. Use active voice. Use short and familiar words and phrases. Use parallel language. Avoid buzzwords and figures of speech. Avoid <i>it is/there are</i>.

See *examples of writing style improvements* in Tables 6.2 through 6.16.

LO 6.2. Explain and use navigational design to improve ease of reading. (pp. 161–165)

Improving Ease of Reading with Navigational Design

- Headings
- Highlighting
- Lists
- White space
- Simplicity

See *examples of navigational design* in Tables 6.17 through 6.19.

LO 6.3. Describe and apply the components of the reviewing stage, including a FAIR test, proofreading, and feedback. (pp. 166–167)

FAIR Test: Evaluate your message in terms of facts, access, impacts, and respect.

Proofreading: Ask trusted colleagues to review your message for effectiveness and accuracy.

Feedback: For important messages, ask trusted colleagues to give input about effectiveness and fairness.

Discussion Exercises

6.1 Chapter Review Questions (LO 6.1, LO 6.2, LO 6.3)

Answer the following questions:

- How does complete writing improve ease of reading?
- How does concise writing improve ease of reading?
- How does natural writing improve ease of reading?
- How does document design improve ease of reading?
- Do you think that complete and concise writing are competing goals? Explain.

6.2 Communication Q&A Discussion Questions (LO 6.1)

Answer the following questions based on the comments from Ronald Scott in the Communication Q&A:

- A. What does Scott say about the importance of writing? What are several examples he provides to illustrate his points?
- B. Based on his statements, what are a few guidelines for determining if your writing is formal enough but not too formal?
- C. What does he say about the importance of accuracy in writing?
- D. What are some distinctions he makes between academic and business writing?
- E. Scott advises young professionals to take writing seriously. What are a few ways you can do that?

Evaluation Exercises

6.3 Analyzing a Corporate Message (LO 6.1, LO 6.2)

In the early months of 2010, Apple and Adobe, two of the largest computer companies, engaged in a high-profile dispute. Adobe officials complained publicly that Apple was not allowing one of Adobe's most successful products, Flash, to run on Apple's new iPad. They even accused Apple of attempting to monopolize the market and engaging in noncompetitive practices. Apple officials claimed that Flash was outdated. In April, Steve Jobs, CEO of Apple, wrote a long statement defending Apple's actions. Read the message at www.apple.com/hotnews/thoughts-on-flash/.

Analyze this message for ease of reading in the following ways:

- A. Identify and revise five sentences that are not complete.
- B. Identify and revise five sentences that are not concise.
- C. Identify and revise five sentences that are not natural.
- D. Explain three strategies for designing the document for faster navigation.
- E. Revise the document. Attempt to cut the length in half. Use headings and other design features to improve navigation.

6.4 Identifying Areas for Personal Improvement (LO 6.1, LO 6.2)

Identify three writing principles from this chapter that you most need to work on. For each principle, write a paragraph about why you want to improve in this area and how you will go about doing it. Choose from the following writing principles: be specific; be accurate; control paragraph length; use short sentences in most cases; avoid redundancy; avoid empty phrases; avoid wordy phrases; use action verbs when possible; use active voice; use short and familiar words and phrases; use parallel language; avoid buzzwords and figures of speech; avoid *it is* and *there are*; use headings; apply formatting to key words and phrases; use bulleted and numbered lists; use white space generously.

Application Exercises

Case for Exercises 6.5 through 6.18: Promoting the Supply Chain Management Club

Your roommate is the president of the Supply Chain Management Club. She wants you to help her revise a flyer that she has drafted to attract more members. Here is her draft. Rewrite each of the following sentences

from her draft to be complete, concise, and natural. The sentences are organized by principles from the chapter; however, note that many sentences contain additional style issues for you to correct. Make reasonable embellishments as necessary.

Joining a Student Club

Have you thought about joining a student club? If so, we are organizing an information session to orient you to our club.

The purpose of the Supply Chain Management Club (SCMC) that we have here on campus is to support Supply Chain and Operations Management (SCOM) majors as well as other interested majors if they choose to gain a broader and balanced understanding of the opportunities, career paths, trends, and current burning issues in global supply chain management. Each and every semester, SCMC has facility tours, discussion panels, faculty interactions, and resume workshops in order for our members to gain a glimpse into the real world of global supply chain management and the nature of this constantly evolving and developing business field.

There are many, many reasons for being an SCMC member. It goes without saying that many of you want financial aid, and SCMC has received boatloads of generous donations to offer scholarships for qualifying SCMC students. All SCMC club members learn to market themselves more effectively by joining the club. There is a SCMC Placement Coordinator specifically directed to search for every possible job that you could apply for, and these jobs are placed on the SCMC website where you can view them anytime and anywhere. These jobs are in a plethora of industries, like Business Services, Consumer Products and Services, Food and Beverage, Health, Industrial, Public Sector, and Technology and Communications. Also, through SCMC and by also gaining a membership in ISM, certification opportunities will be at your fingertips. The sky's the limit in this club. SCMC board members are currently looking for new opportunities and are researching the potential of funding future group workshops and certification programs that we haven't had access to in the past.

The most popular part of the club that students like the most are the abundant events that are scheduled. Plant tours and speeches by supply-chain professionals are constantly being scheduled for SCMC club members to attend. These events create a big impact on your future career by giving you the opportunities to gain exposure to real-world professionals. One of the great opportunities you have as a member in the club is the opportunity to be in touch with the SCMC alumni group, which gives you a networking chance with people already working in supply chain management.

There are many opportunities to learn special skills since there are special-interest groups within the club. For example, there is a special-interest group devoted to learning about various software tools for global supply chain management. In the software group, you can learn statistical software programs such as POM for Windows, Excel Solver, ProcessModel, and SPSS as well as learning mapping software such as MapPoint. Skills acquired in these special-interest groups can be placed on your resume in conjunction with other skills developed in your studies from the SCOM major. It can't be stated enough how much these extra skills can enhance your qualifications to be a supply-chain manager.

The Supply Chain Management Club (SCMC) is designed to help club members understand the critical and essential organizational function of

global supply chain and operations management that creates and distributes products and services; measures their quality and instigates the processes whereby quality improvement occurs; and simultaneously creates nimble, streamlined, and efficient business processes and supply chains. This critical business function is responsible for short-term survival and long-term profitability and growth of the organization in all types of businesses, such as large or small, manufacturing or service, or even for-profit or non-profit. In today's globally interconnected economy, prowess in global supply chain and operations management is the benchmark of the great manufacturers, retailers, and major companies, such as Dell, Wal-Mart, Southwest Airlines, Toyota, and Bank of America. Supply chain management is the fundamental competency that determines success in today's business world, and by joining the SCMC club, you literally have success in your hands since so many major businesses will need your services.

The Supply Chain Management Club (SCMC) is extremely practical with many career options in global manufacturing firms in production, purchasing, quality control, distribution and supply chain management; in service firms as general operations management and logistics/supply chain management; in consulting firms as business process and quality improvement consultants. In fact, even if you are pursuing other professions as primary careers, SCOM skills and competencies make one a better accountant, better at financial analysis, better as marketing manager, or even better at managing human resources or managing information technology for a company.

The club is affiliated with the Institute for Supply Chain Management (ISM), which was founded in the year 1915 and the biggest supply chain management association in the world and is recognized by supply chain professionals far and wide as the repository of best practices in the field. The ISM website can be visited at the following website: <http://www.ism.ws/>.

A pizza party will be held in the business building on January 29 to introduce you to the club. This meeting will provide a lot of information about reasons for joining the club.

All of our regular meetings are at the Marriot next to the business school. A speech is always given by an important industry professional. Dinner is served at just \$10.

6.5 Be Specific (LO 6.1)

- A. Have you thought about joining a student club? If so, we are organizing an information session to orient you to our club.
- B. A pizza party will be held in the business building on January 29 to introduce you to the club.
- C. This meeting will provide a lot of information about reasons for joining the club.
- D. All of our regular meetings are at the Marriot next to the business school.

6.6 Be Accurate (LO 6.1)

- A. Supply chain management is the fundamental competency that determines success in today's business world, and by joining the SCMC club, you literally have success in your hands so all major businesses will need your services.
- B. All SCMC club members learn to market themselves more effectively by joining the club.

6.7 Use Short Sentences in Most Cases (LO 6.1)

Cut these sentences by more than 50 percent. Use more than one sentence if necessary.

- A. The purpose of the Supply Chain Management Club (SCMC) that we have here on campus is to support Supply Chain and Operations Management (SCOM) majors as well as other interested majors if they choose to gain a broader and balanced understanding of the opportunities, career paths, trends, and current burning issues in global supply chain management.
- B. The Supply Chain Management Club (SCMC) is designed to help club members understand the critical and essential organizational function of global supply chain and operations management that creates and distributes products and services; measures their quality and instigates the processes whereby quality improvement occurs; and simultaneously creates nimble, streamlined, and efficient business processes and supply chains.
- C. This critical business function is responsible for short-term survival and long-term profitability and growth of the organization in all types of businesses, such as large or small, manufacturing or service, or even for-profit or non-profit.

6.8 Avoid Redundancy (LO 6.1)

Remove redundancies and shorten these sentences.

- A. Each and every semester, SCMC has facility tours, discussion panels, faculty interactions, and resume workshops in order for our members to gain a glimpse into the real world of global supply chain management and the nature of this constantly evolving and developing business field.
- B. There is a SCMC Placement Coordinator specifically directed to search for every possible job that you could apply for, and these jobs are placed on the SCMC website where you can view them anytime and anywhere.
- C. The most popular part of the club that students like the most are the abundant events that are scheduled.

6.9 Avoid Empty Phrases (LO 6.1)

Remove empty phrases and shorten these sentences.

- A. It goes without saying that many of you want financial aid.
- B. It can't be stated enough how much these extra skills can enhance your qualifications to be a supply-chain manager.

6.10 Avoid Wordy Prepositional Phrases (LO 6.1)

Rewrite these sentences to reduce wordy prepositional phrases.

- A. Skills acquired in these special-interest groups can be placed on your resume in conjunction with other skills developed in your studies from the SCOM major.
- B. One of the great opportunities you have as a member in the club is the opportunity to be in touch with the SCMC alumni group, which gives you a networking chance with people already working in supply chain management.

6.11 Use Action Verbs When Possible (LO 6.1)

Rewrite these sentences to include action verbs.

- A. The Supply Chain Management Club (SCMC) is extremely practical with many career options.
- B. These events create a big impact on your future career by giving you the opportunities to gain exposure to real-world professionals.

6.12 **Use Active Voice** (LO 6.1)

Rewrite these sentences to use active voice instead of passive.

- A. Plant tours and speeches by supply-chain professionals are constantly being scheduled for SCMC club members to attend.
- B. A speech is always given by an important industry professional.

6.13 **Use Short and Familiar Words and Phrases** (LO 6.1)

Replace uncommon words with familiar words and phrases.

- A. These jobs are in a plethora of industries.
- B. In today's globally interconnected economy, prowess in global supply chain and operations management is the benchmark of the great manufacturers, retailers, and major companies, such as Dell, Wal-Mart, Southwest Airlines, Toyota, and Bank of America.

6.14 **Use Parallel Language** (LO 6.1)

Rewrite these sentences so the language is parallel.

- A. SCOM skills and competencies make one a better accountant, better at financial analysis, better as marketing manager, or even better at managing human resources or managing information technology for a company.
- B. In the software group, you can learn statistical software programs such as POM for Windows, Excel Solver, ProcessModel, and SPSS as well as learning mapping software such as MapPoint.

6.15 **Avoid Buzzwords and Figures of Speech** (LO 6.1)

Rewrite these sentences to eliminate buzzwords and figures of speech.

- A. Also, through SCMC and by also gaining a membership in ISM, certification opportunities will be at your fingertips.
- B. The sky's the limit in this club.
- C. SCMC has received boatloads of generous donations to offer scholarships for qualifying SCMC students.

6.16 **Avoid *It Is* and *There Is/Are***(LO 6.1)

Rewrite these sentences to improve clarity.

- A. There are many opportunities to learn special skills since there are special-interest groups within the club.
- B. There is a special-interest group devoted to learning about various software tools for

global supply chain management.

6.17 Setting Up Effective Navigational Design (LO 6.2)

- A. If you were going to use headings in this document, how would you group sections? What headings would you use?
- B. Which parts of the document would you consider converting to bulleted or numbered lists?
- C. What other strategies would you consider for making the document easy to navigate?

6.18 Revising the Supply Chain Management Club Flyer (LO 6.1, LO 6.2)

Revise the entire student club flyer. Create an effective flyer to help promote the Supply Chain Management Club. Make sure the document is as easy to read as possible while retaining all relevant information.

6.19 Converting the Sunrise Brochure into a Frequently Asked Questions Document (LO 6.1, LO 6.2)

Convert the Sunrise brochure into a Frequently Asked Questions document. Assume that you will place it on the Sunrise website.

Case for Problems 6.20 and 6.21: Expressing Interest as a Prospective Sunrise Franchise Owner

Stephanie recently gave Jenny Li one of the franchise brochures while at an industry exhibition. Jenny Li was eager to learn more about franchise opportunities with Sunrise. She wrote the following letter to introduce herself and describe her qualifications.

Dear Stephanie,

It was an honor to meet you at the Flower Exhibition. It is with great interest that I write this letter to describe my genuine hopes to be a franchisee. There are many reasons why I am interested in this opportunity, and there are many reasons why I am qualified to be a franchisee for you. I have been in the flower industry for over twelve years in various capacities such as starting as a flower deliverer, then I acted as a flower arranger, and finally for the last eight years I was the shop manager for a flower shop in the mall. In my time as a shop manager, I was told by the shop owner and dozens of employees that I was the right person to lead the shop and that sales were higher at my location than any other shop in that chain (which has 18 shops at malls in my state and the three surrounding states). In fact, sales at my shop have increased every quarter that I have been the shop manager with the exception of just two quarters in the eight years of my stewardship. I am very proactive in my approach to sales and think that my approach of keeping repeat customers happy is the key to success at my shop and which I seek to continue as a franchisee. I have used so many marketing techniques to gain our customers' attention. Such as, I have created a Facebook group and I send specials to the people in that group. Not to mention I send targeted coupons by mail and email that are sent to the customers with specific types of interests. There is no substitute for knowing your customers. I also do many great special events at seasonal periods and have won prizes for flower arrangements many times that bring the shop good press. My flower arrangements were even featured in some TV commercials for the flower

shops across our region. There are not any Sunrise stores near here and I believe from the bottom of my heart that this is the right time to invest in this area. I know without any doubt that you will be impressed with my work ethic and my focus on the customer. Needless to say, the customer is king, and we need to treat them that way. I am capable of meeting all of the financial obligations. Thank you and hope to hear from you soon. Most of all, is I love people, and if you are caring for your customers, you will achieve your goals and reach the pinnacle of success.

Regards,
Jenny

6.20 Revising a Message for Readability (LO 6.1, LO 6.2)

Analyze this message for ease of reading in the following ways:

- Identify and revise five sentences that are not complete.
- Identify and revise five sentences that are not concise.
- Identify and revise five sentences that are not natural.
- Explain three strategies for designing the document for faster navigation.

6.21 Rewriting a Message for Readability and Effectiveness (LO 6.1, LO 6.2, LO 6.3)

Rewrite the entire document. Ensure that the message is easy to read and effectively highlights Jenny's potential for owning and running a Sunrise franchise. Use the following table with statistics about the cereal industry⁷ for problems 6.22 through 6.33. In some cases, you will need to carefully review the information in the table to get the correct answers.

Comparisons between Kellogg Company and General Mills

	Kellogg Company (K)	General Mills (GM)
Top-Selling Cereal	Special K	Cheerios
Market Share in Cereal Industry	34%	31%
Number of Employees	30,900	33,000
Headquarters	Battle Creek, Michigan	Minneapolis, Minnesota
CEO Annual Salary	\$11.5 million	\$11.1 million
Main Products	Ready-to-eat cereals, cookies, toaster pastries, cereal bars, frozen waffles, and meat alternatives	Ready-to-eat cereals, yogurt, ready-to-serve soup, dry dinners, frozen vegetables, dough products, baking mixes, frozen pizza, snacks
Newly Introduced Products	Special K crackers, fruit crisps, and chocolate pretzel bars. New Special K flavors such as cinnamon pecan, fruit and nut clusters, and blueberry	Chocolate Cheerios, Yoplait Delights yogurt parfaits, Wanchai Ferry frozen foods, Betty Crocker gluten free dessert mixes, new Häagen-Dazs ice cream flavors

North American Revenues	67.7% of total revenues	81.6% of total revenues
Worldwide Revenues	\$12.5 billion	\$14.8 billion
Worldwide Advertising Expenses	\$1.1 billion	\$908 million
Net Sales Percentage to Wal-Mart	44%	30%
Negative Media Attention	Product recalls due to potential salmonella contamination	Ammonia leaks at its manufacturing facilities
Least Nutritious Children's Cereals (NPI is a nutritional ranking for cereals ranging from 34 [worst] to 72 [best] and issued by the Rudd Center.)	Corn Pops (NPI: 35.8); Froot Loops (NPI: 38.0); Apple Jacks (NPI: 40.0)	Reese's Puffs (34.0); Golden Grahams (36.0); Lucky Charms (36.0); Cinnamon Toast Crunch (36.6); Trix (38.0); Count Chocula (38.0)
Yogurt Sales	N/A	General Mills yogurt brands include Yoplait, Trix, Yoplait Kids, Go-GURT, Fiber One, YoPlus, and Whips! Approximately \$1.5 billion in yogurt sales

Other statistics about the breakfast cereal industry:

- Approximately two-thirds of all cereals are sold with a deal (discounts, coupons).
- The total cereal market in the United States is approximately \$9 billion.
- Gross profit margins in the breakfast cereal industry average between 40 and 45 percent.
- The global cereal market is approximately \$28.7 billion.
- The ten cereals most marketed on TV to children are the following (company and percentage of sugar content displayed in parentheses): 1. Cinnamon Toast Crunch (GM; 33%); 2. Honey Nut Cheerios (GM; 32%); 3. Lucky Charms (GM; 41%); 4. Cocoa Puffs (GM; 44%); 5. Trix (GM; 38%); 6. Frosted Flakes (K; 37%); 7. Fruity and Cocoa Pebbles (Post; 37%); 8. Reese's Puffs (GM; 41%); 9. Corn Pops (K; 41%); 10. Froot Loops (K; 41%).

6.22 Being Accurate (LO 6.1)

Use the table above to proofread the following items and correct them as needed.

- A. Please address correspondence to the following address: General Mills, PO Box 1493, Minneapolis, MI.
- B. The annually salary for General Mills' CEO is higher than that of Kellogg Company's CEO by approximately \$400 thousand.
- C. With nearly half of their net sales to Wal-Mart, General Mills and Kellogg Company are extremely dependent on a single retailer.
- D. General Mills has six children's cereals with NPI rankings below 40, whereas Kellogg's has just three.

- E. General Mills spends approximately 8.1 percent of its total revenues on advertising, whereas Kellogg Company spends roughly 8.8 percent of its total revenues on advertising.
- F. Kellogg's children's cereals are the least nutritious cereals in the industry.
- G. Since only about one in four boxes of cereal is sold without deals of some kind, cereal producers must constantly market new and exciting discounts and coupons.
- H. General Mills reached \$1.5 million in yogurt sales last year.
- I. One of Kellogg Company's worst negative publicity resulted from ammonia leaks at some its manufacturing facilities.
- J. The United States cereal market accounts for approximately 35.1 percent of the world market.

6.23 Being Specific (LO 6.1)

Use information from the table above to revise the following sentences and make them more specific.

- A. General Mills markets through television to children far more than other cereal makers.
- B. Gross profit margins in the breakfast cereal industry are quite high.
- C. Kellogg's Company and General Mills have each experienced negative media attention recently.
- D. General Mills is more dependent on the North American market than Kellogg Company.
- E. While General Mills and Kellogg Company have similar product mixes, they each market several products not offered by the other.
- F. Kellogg Company and General Mills are the top two cereal makers.
- G. Kellogg Company and General Mills have each introduced new flavors for their products in recent years.
- H. General Mills offers the least nutritious children's cereal on the market.
- I. Kellogg's cereals include three children's cereals with NPI scores at 40 or below: Corn Pops, Froot Loops, and Apple Jack's.

6.24 Using Short Sentences in Most Cases (LO 6.1)

Revise each of the following items to make the sentences shorter and more readable.

- A. General Mills is a dominant player in the American yogurt industry with \$1.5 billion in sales, and it sells yogurts under a variety of brands, including Yoplait, Trix, Yoplait Kids, Go-GURT, Fiber One, Whips!, and YoPlus.
- B. The two cereal giants, Kellogg Company and General Mills, do not remain complacent with their existing products lines but rather routinely develop and market new products —after all, Kellogg Company has recently introduced new products such as Special K crackers, fruit crisps, and chocolate pretzel bars, and General Mills has recently added new products such as Chocolate Cheerios, Yoplait Delights yogurt parfaits, Wanchai Ferry frozen foods, and Betty Crocker gluten free dessert mixes.
- C. The total cereal market in the United States is \$9 billion, which is just a small and decreasing portion—31.4 percent—of the worldwide market, which is seeing robust growth in the BRIC countries of Brazil, Russia, India, and China.

6.25 Avoid Redundancy (LO 6.1)

Revise each of the following sentences to eliminate redundancy.

- A. Discount coupons for select Kellogg's cereals contain rebates of between 10 and 20 percent that can save you money.
- B. Kellogg Company definitely needs to view crisis communications for the salmonella outbreak as absolutely necessary.
- C. Please make advance reservations for the bloggers conference hosted at General Mills to see how you can connect and cooperate together with other corporate bloggers.

6.26 **Avoid Empty Phrases (LO 6.1)**

Revise each of the following items to eliminate empty phrases.

- A. Needless to say, General Mills is by all accounts among the worst offenders of marketing less healthy cereals to children.
- B. In my personal opinion, Kellogg's children's cereals are in a very real sense superior to General Mills in terms of nutritional value.
- C. The point I am trying to make is that parents, for all intents and purposes, are usually unaware of how unhealthy most children's cereals are.

6.27 **Avoid Wordy Prepositional Phrases (LO 6.1)**

Revise each of the following items to eliminate wordy prepositional phrases.

- A. In view of the recent rankings about nutritional values for cereals, I think we should focus for the next product development cycle on a reduction in sugar content and an increase in fiber content.
- B. For companies in the food industry, a heavy proportion of sales to Wal-Mart provides advantages in terms of higher revenues and a boost in name recognition but disadvantages in terms of lower margins on sales and reduction in customer perceptions of quality.
- C. In light of the product recalls in recent times, Kellogg Company is in no position to tout a reputation for food safety.

6.28 **Use Action Verbs When Possible (LO 6.1)**

Improve each of the following sentences by using action verbs.

- A. Kellogg Company has new product developments and marketing efforts as part of its re-branding strategy that demonstrates a healthy-food focus.
- B. General Mills is a company with strong yogurt brand, and it is in a position of leverage in this regard to achieve higher visibility for healthy foods.
- C. The CEO of Kellogg will provide an announcement about new corporate strategy, give his explanation for how the company will reach its goals, and do a presentation about the current financial situation.

6.29 **Use Active Voice (LO 6.1)**

Revise each of the following sentences to switch them from passive to active voice.

- A. The NPI rankings were widely publicized in media outlets and were a cause for concern among many cereal executives.
- B. The new Special K flavors—cinnamon pecan, fruit and nut clusters, and blueberry—were introduced last year, and Kellogg reports that they have been a huge success.

- C. Market strategies to promote healthier cereals were the focus of discussions among industry insiders.
- D. Your inaction in confronting the potential salmonella contamination lost us millions of dollars in revenues.
- E. Quick crisis communications were the key to General Mills quickly eliminating negative press about the ammonia leaks.

6.30 Use Short and Familiar Words and Phrases (LO 6.1)

Revise the following sentences to eliminate unnecessarily long and/or unfamiliar words and phrases.

- A. General Mills has abated the public's denouncements of its high-sugar children's cereals by curtailing sugar content by 8 percent on average.
- B. The preeminent cereal brands for the dominant duo of cereal-makers, Kellogg Company and General Mills, are Special K and Cheerios, respectively.
- C. By incentivizing discount programs with multi-purchase point allocations and associated rewards, cereal-makers could develop enhanced affinity to brands.

6.31 Use Parallel Language (LO 6.1)

Revise the following sentences for parallelism.

- A. Kellogg Company and General Mills produce ready-to-eat cereals and also are selling cereal bars.
- B. At the bloggers conference hosted by General Mills, the sessions will include the following: (a) reaching a business audience; (b) best practices in tagging; and (c) how to partner with companies.
- C. Special K is Kellogg's leading cereal and is continuing to match sales targets.
- D. Wanchai Ferry frozen foods are named after the famous tourist spot in Hong Kong, which is known for excitement, attracting boisterous crowds, and creates an exotic atmosphere.
- E. Make sure to sign up for RSS feeds from the General Mills Investor Relations page to stay updated with stock prices and for gaining the latest news about the company.

6.32 Avoid Buzzwords and Figures of Speech (LO 6.1)

Revise the following sentences to eliminate buzzwords and clichéd figures of speech.

- A. The latest hot news for the industry is that Kellogg's and General Mills will develop synergistic working relationships with international partners to get a piece of the pie in the BRIC countries.
- B. General Mills' latest strategy is nothing more than a swing for the fence.
- C. Just as an FYI, I want everyone to come ready to our next meeting to think outside of the box.

6.33 Avoid *It Is/There Are* (LO 6.1)

Revise the following sentences to eliminate the phrases *it is* and *there are*.

- A. It is gratifying that General Mills has reduced sugar content in its children's cereals so that there are fewer children who face obesity.

- B. There are several new product lines for Kellogg Company that it hopes will show that there is still plenty of innovation and creativity at the company.
- C. It is critical for Kellogg Company to tell the public that there is a risk of salmonella contamination in some of its products and that there will be full rebates for products purchased with peanuts as ingredients.

Endnotes

¹Granville N. Toogood, *The Articulate Executive: Learn to Look, Act, and Sound Like a Leader* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1996).

²The National Commission on Writing for America's Families, Schools, and Colleges, *Writing: A Ticket to Work ... Or a Ticket Out: A Survey of Business Leaders* (New York: CollegeBoard, September 2004).

³New York Times Corner Office Blog, "Communication," retrieved June 15, 2010, from <http://projects.nytimes.com/corner-office/Communication>.

⁴Figure adapted from Ann Wylie, "How to Make Your Copy More Readable: Make Sentences Shorter," *Comprehension* (January 14, 2009), retrieved March 3, 2012, from <http://comprehension.prsa.org/?p=217>.

⁵Accountemps, "What's the Buzz? Survey Reveals Most Overused Workplace Terms," retrieved March 3, 2012, from <http://accountemps.rhi.mediaroom.com/Buzzwords>.

⁶Richard Bierck, "Find the Right Tone for Your Business Writing," *Harvard Management Communication Letter* 4, no. 9 (2001): 10–11.

⁷Cereal nutrition facts are based on 2009 figures from the Rudd Center:
www.cerealfacts.org/media/Marketing_Rankings/Brand_Nutrition.pdf.

Business Communication. Developing Leaders for a Networked World

Chapter 6: Improving Readability with Style and Design

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