MY KEY LEARNINGS FROM THE GOOGLE TECHNICAL WRITING COURSE

ARUNIMA CHAUDHURI

WORDS

Define new or unfamiliar terms

- If the term already exists, link to a good existing explanation.
- If your document is introducing the term, define the term.

Use terms consistently

- , if you rename a term in the middle of a document, your ideas won't compile

Use acronyms properly

- Spell out the full term, and then put the acronym in parentheses. Example: OttoGroup Server (OGS)
- Put both the spelt-out version and the acronym in boldface.

Recognize ambiguous pronouns

- Use a pronoun after you've introduced the noun;
- Place the pronoun as close as possible to the referring noun.
- If you introduce a second noun between your noun and your pronoun, reuse your noun instead of using a pronoun.

PREFER ACTIVE VOICE TO PASSIVE VOICE

- **Clarity and Directness:**

Example:

Passive: The software was developed by the team.

Active: The team developed the software.

- **Conciseness:**

Example:

Passive: The error was identified by the technician, and the necessary adjustments were made by him.

Active: The technician identified the error and made the necessary adjustments.

- **Emphasis on the Subject:**

Example:

Passive: The new feature was added to the application by the development team.

Active: The development team added the new feature to the application.

- **Accountability and Clarity of Responsibility**:

Example:

Passive: Mistakes were made during the experiment.

Active: The researchers made mistakes during the experiment.

- **Readability and Engagement:**

Example:

Passive: The system requirements were reviewed and analyzed by the project manager.

Active: The project manager reviewed and analyzed the system requirements.

CLEAR SENTENCES

Choose Strong verbs

Weak Verb	Strong Verb
The exception **occurs** when dividing by zero.	Dividing by zero **raises** the exception.
This error message **happens** when...	The system **generates** this error message when...
We **are** very careful to ensure...	We carefully **ensure**...

Reduce there is / there are

There is a variable called `met_trick` that stores the current accuracy.

Removing **There is** replaces the generic subject with a better subject. For example, either of the following sentences is clearer than the original:

A variable named `met_trick` stores the current accuracy.

The `met_trick` variable stores the current accuracy.

Minimize certain adjectives and adverbs

Refactor amorphous adverbs and adjectives into objective numerical information.

SHORT SENTENCES

01 Focus each sentence on a single idea

02 Convert some long sentences to lists

03 Eliminate or reduce extraneous words

LISTS & TABLES

01 Choose the correct type of list

02 Keep list items parallel

03 Punctuate items appropriately

04 Create useful tables

PARAGRAPHS

01   Write a great opening sentence

02   Focus each paragraph on a single topic

03   Don't make paragraphs too long or too short

04   Answer what, why, and how

SELF-EDITING

01   Adopt a style guide

02   Think like your audience

03   Come back to it later

04   Find a peer editor

SUMMARY

Words

- Define new or unfamiliar terms
- Use terms consistently
- Use acronyms properly
- Recognize ambiguous pronouns

Prefer active voice to passive voice

- Clarity and Directness
- Conciseness
- Emphasis on the Subject:
- Accountability and Clarity of Responsibility
- Readability and Engagement

Clear sentences

- Choose Strong verbs
- Reduce there is / there are
- Minimize certain adjectives and adverbs

Short sentencs

- Focus each sentence on a single idea
- Convert some long sentences to lists
- Eliminate or reduce extraneous words

Lists & tables

- Choose the correct type of list
- Keep list items parallel
- Punctuate items appropriately
- Create useful tables

Paragraphs

- Write a great opening sentence
- Focus each paragraph on a single topic
- Don't make paragraphs too long or too short
- Answer what, why, and how

Self-editing

- Adopting a style guide
- Think like your audience
- Come back to it later
- Find a peer editor