

WRITING TIPS

Keeping your words upbeat and unique is a huge challenge. You may be familiar with much of the advice listed below, but hopefully, it will come in handy. It's a work in progress, so please share any tips you have, too.

- A simple and concise, yet varied, vocabulary keeps the piece interesting for readers.
- Use spell check liberally and have someone else proofread—familiarity can lead to missing small mistakes.
- Write in an active voice, using present tense as much as possible.
- Begin each sentence (and each paragraph if applicable) with a different word.
- Use 1.5 or double spacing to review text-only documents. It's easier to concentrate and to edit.
- Use the n-dash (–) in a range of numbers or for a span of time. Use the m-dash (— or --) to amplify or explain a statement, to indicate sudden breaks, or in place of commas in complex sentences.

To insert n-dashes and m-dashes in Microsoft Word, use character codes 2013 and 2014 respectively. Go to Insert>Symbol and enter the character code in the box at the bottom of the window.

- Read what you've written out loud or backwards for self-proofing.
- The difference between “which” and “that”:

“Which” is used to add information indirectly linked to a statement and is preceded by a comma.

I love to pet blue dogs, which has been true since childhood.

“That” is used to connect a phrase directly linked to a statement.

I love blue dogs that like people.

- Oftentimes, the word “that” isn't necessary in a sentence. If you find yourself using “that” a lot, review the sentence to see if it reads smoothly without the word.
- When in doubt, choose one style and follow it consistently.

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