1. **Unless you have a reason not to, use the active voice.**

At the heart of every good sentence is a strong, precise verb; the converse is true as well--at the core of most confusing, awkward, or wordy sentences lies a weak verb.

**Passive**
  
a. It is believed by the candidate that a ceiling must be placed on the budget by Congress.

**Active**
  
b. The candidate believes that Congress must place a ceiling on the budget.

**Passive**
  
c. It was earlier demonstrated that heart attacks can be caused by high stress.

**Active**
  
d. Brown earlier showed that high stress can cause heart attacks.

There are sometimes good reasons to use the passive voice:

- To emphasize the action rather than the actor.
  
e. After long debate, the proposal was endorsed by the long-range planning committee.

- To keep the subject and focus consistent throughout a passage.
  
f. The data processing department recently presented what proved to be a controversial proposal to expand its staff. After long debate, the proposal was endorsed by . . . .

- To be tactful by not naming the actor.
  
g. The procedures were somehow misinterpreted.

- To describe a condition in which the actor is unknown or unimportant.
  
h. Every year, thousands of people are diagnosed as having cancer.

- To create an authoritative tone.
  
i. Visitors are not allowed after 9:00 p.m.
2. **Put the action of the sentence in the verb.** Don't bury it in a noun or blur it across the entire sentence. Watch out especially for nominalizations (verbs that have been made into nouns by the addition of -tion).

   a. An **evaluation** of the procedures **needs to be done**.
   
   b. The procedures **need to be evaluated**.
   
   c. We **need to evaluate** the procedures.
   
   d. The stability and quality of our financial performance **will be developed** through the profitable **execution** of our existing business, as well as the acquisition or development of new businesses.
   
   e. We **will improve** our financial performance not only by executing our existing business more profitably but by acquiring or developing new businesses.

3. **Reduce wordy verbs.**

   a. is aware, has knowledge of ----------> knows
   
   b. is taking --------> takes
   
   c. are indications --------> indicate
   
   d. are suggestive --------> suggests

4. **Use expletive constructions ("It is," "There is," "There are") sparingly.**

   a. **It was** her last argument that finally persuaded me.
   
   b. Her last argument finally persuaded me.
   
   c. **There are** likely to be many researchers raising questions about this methodological approach.
   
   d. Many researchers are likely to raise questions about this methodological approach.

5. **Try to avoid using vague, all-purpose nouns, which often lead to wordiness.**

   --factor, aspect, area, situation, consideration, degree, case . . .

   a. Consumer demand is rising in the area of services.
   
   b. Consumer demand for services is rising.
   
   c. Consumers are demanding more services.
6. *Unless your readers are familiar with your terminology, avoid writing strings of nouns (or noun strings!).*

   a. patient program satisfaction  
   b. student-professor relationship factors  
   c. processing step change  
   d. competitive cotto salami performance test  
   e. program implementation process evaluation  

   f. MHS has a hospital employee relations improvement program.  
   g. MHS has a program to improve employee relations.  
   h. MHS has a program to improve relations among employees.

7. **Eliminate unnecessary prepositional phrases.**

   a. The opinion of the working group.  
   b. The working group's opinion.  

   c. The obvious effect of such a range of reference is to assure the audience of the author's range of learning and intellect.

8. **Avoid unnecessarily inflated words.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instead of</th>
<th>Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cognizant of</td>
<td>aware of, know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>facilitate</td>
<td>help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>impact on</td>
<td>affect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>implement</td>
<td>start, create, carry out, begin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>subsequent to</td>
<td>after</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>utilize</td>
<td>use</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. **Put wordy phrases on a diet.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instead of</th>
<th>Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>the reason for</td>
<td>because, since, why</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for the reason that</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>due to the fact that</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>owing to the fact that</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>considering the fact that</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on the grounds that</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>this is why</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

   despite the fact that                                 |
   regardless of the fact that                              |

   in the event that                                        |
   if it should transpire/happen that                        |
   under circumstances in which                              |

   although, even though                                    |
**Instead of**  
Use  
on the occasion of when  
in a situation in which  
under circumstances in which  
as regards about  
in reference to  
with regard to  
concerning the matter of  
where . . . is concerned  
it is crucial that  
it is necessary that  
there is a need/necessity must, should  
it is important that  
it is incumbent upon  
cannot be avoided  
is able to can  
has the opportunity to  
is in a position to  
has the capacity for  
has the ability to  
it is possible that may, might, can, could  
there is a chance that  
it could happen that  
the possibility exists for  
prior to before, after, as  
in anticipation of  
subsequent to  
following on  
at the same time as  
simultaneously with