



DeYoung Consulting Services

Helping People Learn up to Their Potential

Usually my emails address a specific writing issue. But sometimes it's good to step back to see the big picture—whether in your writing or in life in general. Here are a few checklists you can post by your computer to help you see the big picture in your writing.

Principles of Sentence Development

- Each sentence should be complete with a subject and a verb and communicate a clear thought.
- Make sure the subject and the verb agree with each other.
- Check the punctuation for accuracy and avoid using unnecessary marks.
- Avoid using passive language so your writing is as active as possible.
- If a sentence gets too complicated, make it into two sentences.
- Eliminate unnecessary words.
- Check for misspellings.

Principles of Paragraph Development

- Confirm that each paragraph starts with a general topic sentence or idea.
- Review transitions between paragraphs for clarity and ease.
- If your paragraph has more than five or six sentences, consider dividing it into more readable segments.

Principles of Document Development

- Identify the audience of your document. Recognize their knowledge, background and goals.
- Determine the tone that is most appropriate for your audience.
- Think about the best format for your document, whether a letter, report or short email.
- Review your piece with an eye for overused jargon or acronyms.
- Complement your document with an introduction and conclusion.

General Principles of Writing

- Organize your ideas before you start writing.
- Make a first draft, whether a few handwritten notes or an actual outline of your document.

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- Let your writing sit before you edit it. The longer the document, the longer you should let it sit before your review it.
- Use the spell check feature on your computer, but don't rely on it completely.
- Re-read your document one final time before you send it off to your reader.
- For long or very important documents, ask someone else to proofread your piece.

If you have trouble seeing the big picture when writing training materials or manuals, give me a call. I'll help you work through the process and produce clearly written documents for your audience.

Karen DeYoung is principal of DeYoung Consulting Services, which provides quality learning experiences for individuals and groups. We develop training materials and activities that advance individual, team, and organizational learning. Our work is done with integrity, reliability, and accountability.

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