General Guidelines: Clarity and Concision

Part of writing in plain, user-friendly English is learning to write in a way that is clear and concise, so that your writing can be easily understood by your reader. The following are some things to remember when you are writing and revising:

1. Use verbs, not nouns

edit: The President has made an announcement proclaiming United States' participation in the program.

2. Use active voice, not passive

edit: The problem will be thoroughly discussed by the committee before a vote is taken.

3. Avoid redundancy/repetition

edit: Each and every student is concerned about the poor, unappetizing, unappealing food served on campus.

4. Avoid cliches/empty phrases

edit: It appears to many people that former Vice President Gore, at this point in time, is not considering running for president again.

5. Avoid unnecessary "be"

edit: There are several factors indicating that the stock market will remain depressed for some time.

Whenever possible, bring out **characters** and **actions.**

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