

EDITING EXERCISE

Use the following process to evaluate and edit the letter on the following page:

1. Read the letter and then comment on how readable you found the letter. Briefly analyze the factors which influenced the letter's readability.

The letter is very difficult to read, even for a planning engineer:

- ◆ *the opening paragraph is far too long, at 158 words*
- ◆ *the paragraph unnecessarily repeats phrases and uses pompous phrases*
- ◆ *it buries a mass of details within the paragraph. Instead, the paragraph could have used lists to make those details clearer*
- ◆ *it unnecessarily repeats the topic sentence in the last sentence*

2. Calculate a Fog Index for the document's first paragraph.

158 words ÷ 6 sentences = 26.33 average sentence length

40 "big" words ÷ 158 = 25.31 percentage of "big" words (3 or more syllables)

26.33 + 25.31 = 51.64 X .4 = 20.7

Fog Index

3. Calculate the average number of words coming before the subject of the sentences in paragraph 1.

0+1+1+1+3+1=7÷6=1.67 (This figure is less than 3 words, on average, which indicates that the paragraph's difficulty does not lie here.)

4. Calculate the average number of words coming between the subject and verb of the sentences in paragraph 1.

0+0+0+3+0+0+0=3÷8=.375 (Again, the index is less than 3 words, on average, which indicates that the paragraph's difficulty does not lie here, either.)

5. Calculate the percentage of linking verbs used in paragraph 1.

total verbs: 12 total linking verbs: 3 percentage of linking verbs: 25%

6. Restructure paragraph 1 into two readable paragraphs. Then, edit the phrasing in those paragraphs to make the phrasing simpler and more direct (without changing the writer's apparent meaning). Also, repair unclear sentence structures.

See the next page for the edited version, which eliminates unneeded repetition

Note: the edited version of paragraph 1 now has a Fog Index of 18.8, which is only marginally better than the previous Fog Index of 20.7. However, let's examine that reading more closely. Much of the high reading comes from two sentences which have, respectively, 34 words and 55 words. These two sentences contain bulleted lists, which are quite easy to read. Together, the sentences comprise 89 of the 135 words in the sample. The other three sentences average about 15 words per sentence.

Also note that although the percentage of "big" words has been reduced only from 25.31% to 20%, those "big" words are found in short sentences or in lists, so they do not "pile up" the way they do in longer, more complicated sentences.

MidWest Power Corporation

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January 17, 2002

Mr. Gary McCord
Power Research Center
1002 Oak Bay Boulevard
Palo Alto, California 94406

Dear Mr. McCord:

MidWest Power Corporation is searching for an optimal generator maintenance scheduling program. This program must produce optimum generator maintenance schedules for:

- ◆ our generation planning department (to plan for 10 to 20 years) and
- ◆ our operations planning department (to plan for 1 to 5 years).

If your inventory of planning software includes programs which would help us plan our operations and maintenance schedules, we would appreciate your sending us the following information about each program:

- ◆ the program's intended planning period
- ◆ its price
- ◆ its host CPU
- ◆ its source language
- ◆ its objective function
- ◆ its input requirements

We've learned about planning software in technical journals, but we haven't found any commercial programs. We're seeking a program which will produce optimum generator maintenance schedules with minimum risk and with low production costs.

We would greatly appreciate any help you could provide in locating such a program.

Yours truly,

Winston St. Cloud

Winston St. Cloud
Planning Engineer, System & Development Planning