

The Art of Writing One-Breath Sentences

Please do me a favor and read this out loud:

"As companies are looking to provide accountability for all electronic messaging in increasingly regulated times when business processes extend beyond a company's boundaries, our server software manages all electronic messaging to ensure compliant and streamlined information flow."

Can you read it without drawing a breath? I can't. (If you can, then I congratulate you on your excellent lung capacity!)

In case you haven't figured it out yet, the subject for this Monthly Makeover is sentence length, and the sentence I had you read above is the "Before" example. (It's 37 words long. Remember that number.)

Often, companies are so anxious to get their message across that they cram as much information into a sentence as they can. But developing a relationship with a prospect or client is much like developing a friendship. You can't rush it. Develop it over time.

Writing "dense" sentences will probably only scare them away. And even the most sophisticated reader likes to rest their eyes and mind on sentences that are easier to absorb.

Tips for Writing Shorter Sentences

To that end, break up long sentences into smaller sentences whenever you can. But that doesn't mean you have write on a first-grade level!

"See our technology. See how it works. We have great support."

Here are a few ways you can shorten your sentences without sounding like a primary reader:

- Vary the structure and length of sentences.
- Limit a sentence to just one concept.
- Pay attention to how the sentences sound. Like music, text has a rhythm that becomes too repetitive if you string sentences together that have a similar structure.

Using these general rules, I rewrote the breath-defying "Before" example:

"Increased regulation demands accountability in electronic messaging. But e-messaging must also accommodate business processes that extend beyond a company's boundaries. Our server software ensures compliant and streamlined information flow for all of your e-messaging."

Even though I broke a 37-word sentence into three sentences, the word count is now just 34 words. How about that?

One more thing ... as I mentioned earlier, reading a piece of writing out loud is a great way to catch problems. But if you're in a small office or just self-conscious about reading your writing out loud, reading in a whisper also works!

I hope you've found this issue of Monthly Makeover helpful. If you did, please pass it on!

Regards,



Mary

P.S. As I mentioned above, this issue is Part 2 in a 4-part series on writing more clearly. To read Part 1 or other Monthly Makeover issues, see the [Monthly Makeover archive](#).

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If you have a writing project coming up, I'd love to talk to you about it. Please contact me for a complimentary 30-minute consultation.

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