



LEARNING BRIEF

HOW TO DEVELOP CONCISE DOCUMENTS

Tips for summarizing lengthy documents

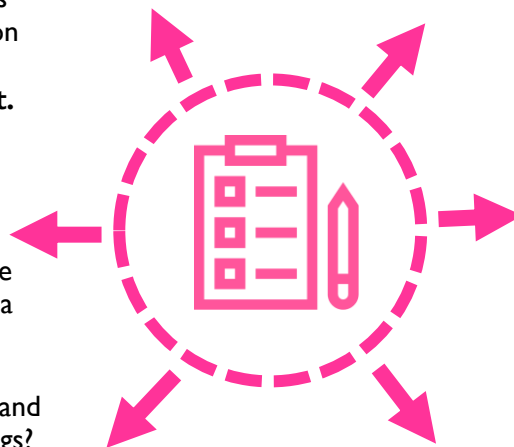
Why concise documents are key to effective communication

In an era where people are inundated by information from multiple platforms and in varying formats, effective communicators need to master the art of creating concise documents that give just enough information without sacrificing clarity.

1 Start with a review of the whole document. This will help you to identify key areas and most relevant information to include. **Develop an outline of your document.**

3 What's the point? Ask yourself what information the reader needs. Do they need a detailed outline of the methodology or can you summarize it two sentences and focus the detail on key findings?

Does the reader want the success story or descriptions of the implementer? **By prioritizing information you will play up some sections and downplay others or completely remove irrelevancies.**



2 Be methodical, use your outline to develop sub-headings under which you will write content. Review the content in the longer document and **summarize each paragraph in one sentence for each heading.**

4 Remove redundant sentences and repetition. Summarize phrases with single words e.g. *instead of saying "We conducted trainings every single day", say: "We trained participants daily"*. **By removing verbosity and condensing sentences your document will become shorter.**

5 Trust your readers. Avoid over-explaining concepts that are already familiar to your reader. Elaborate definitions and explanations can be discovered independently. **Instead, focus on giving a critical idea or observation** in each paragraph.

Editing for conciseness checklist

- **Remove unnecessary qualifiers like really, actually, basically**
Instead, give specific numbers, **locations-quantify** or qualify.
- **Be mindful of the audience you are targeting and the purpose of writing**
Consider what your audience already **know** about the subject matter and the kind of information they are interested in. What is the niche of this document? Why is it different from other documents of similar subject matter?
- **Set aside enough time to edit and proofread**
Step away from the document and return to it after a few hours. Check for relevance, clarity and sufficient supporting information.
- **Use tables, graphs and charts to summarize information.**

Where to find more resources:

Impact and Innovations Development Centre www.iidcug.org