

The Proof Angel Quick Guide

Plain English

Think about your format

- Think about how you would talk to the reader. Now write it down.
- Keep paragraphs short.
- Leave space between paragraphs and columns to guide the eye.
- Use headings and lists to make things clearer.

Think about your words

- Use simple words when you can. There is often an easy alternative.
 - Buy is better than purchase.
 - Extra is better than additional.
- Use words shorter than 4 syllables. Use the simple form of each word:
 - Complete rather than completion.
 - Arrange rather than arrangement.
- Use active verbs. "The group decided..." is better than "It was decided by the group..."

Think about your sentences

- Put who or what the sentence is about close to the beginning.
- Aim for 15 to 20 words in a long sentence.
- Have one idea per sentence.
- Be wary of putting too many clauses in one sentence.
 - Try to avoid reported speech.
 - Be careful with weak verbs like "to be" and participles ending in "-ing".



The Proof Angel is the trading name of Sarah Perkins, freelance editor and proofreader.

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