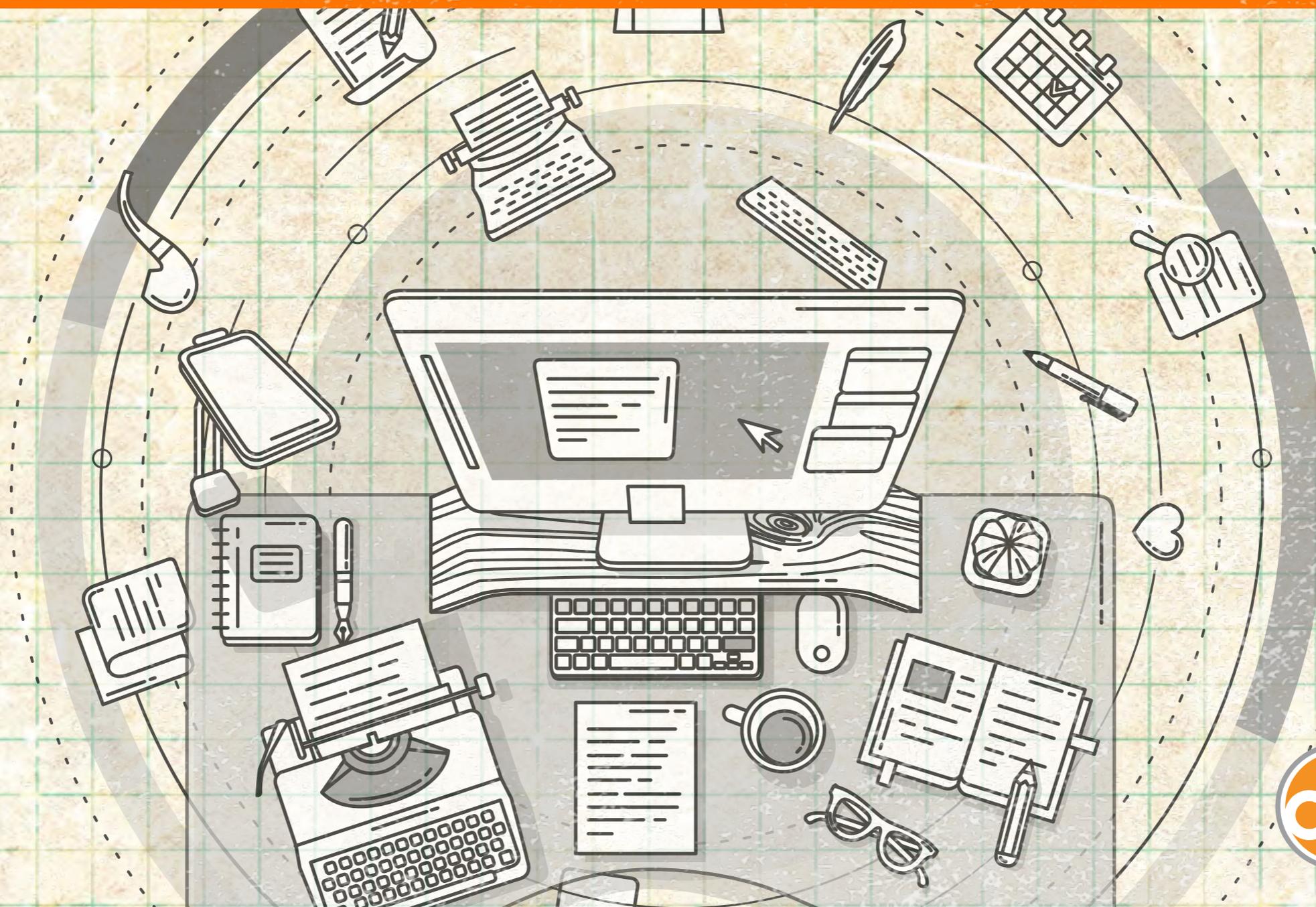


# CONTENT MARKETING WRITING SECRETS:

BETTER, STRONGER, FASTER



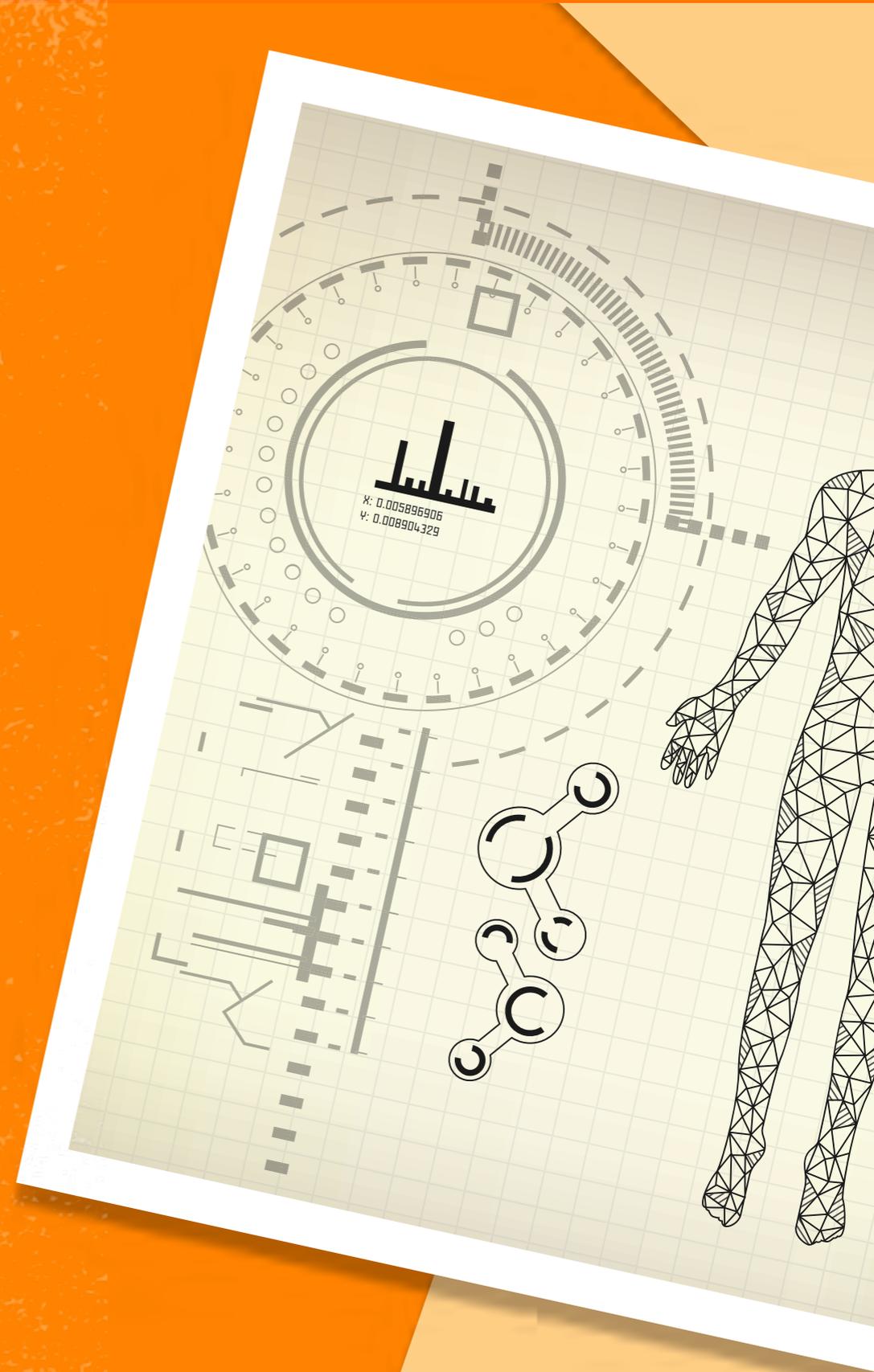
CONTENT  
MARKETING  
INSTITUTE™

**M**astering content marketing writing takes time and practice. No magic formula can guarantee creative ideas. No technology automatically turns rough drafts into polished content that keeps audiences hanging on your every word and asking for more.

But you can improve. The systems, exercises, and tips in this guide – gathered from successful marketers – will help you:

- ▶ Sharpen your storytelling
- ▶ Speed up your creative processes
- ▶ Strengthen the marketing impact of your words

**With this guide, you can make your content marketing writing better ... stronger ... faster.**



## INSIDE THIS GUIDE:

- ▶ The Basics: Make It Easy
- ▶ Everything You Need to Know to Write Faster
- ▶ Ledes With Strength
- ▶ 10 Exercises to Make Your Writing More Powerful
- ▶ Keep Your Skills Sharp



# The Basics: Make It Easy

**H**ere's a basic truth: Content that's easy to read won't frustrate your audience. You may not find secrets in this section. But you will find handy reminders to help you smooth the friction from the reading process – so readers keep gliding along with you.

The tips in this section cover how to:

- ▶ Structure for easy reading
- ▶ Make smart word choices
- ▶ Create a shared understanding
- ▶ Write to drive action



## STRUCTURE FOR EASY READING

- ▶ **Make it scannable.** Respect readers' time by guiding them through the content. Use bold type, italicized fonts, and bulleted or numbered lists.
- ▶ **Keep it short and sweet.** Avoid high-concept words when simple ones will do. Break thoughts into shorter sentences when possible.
- ▶ **Set the right reading level.** Aim for a reading level of grade eight for general audiences. You can adjust the sophistication up or down based on your readers' expectations and preferences. Just don't mistake complicated for sophisticated. Use a readability assessment tool to check your content's reading level.

### READABILITY ASSESSMENT TOOLS

Try one of these tools to assess the reading level your copy requires:

- [Flesch Reading Ease](#)
- [Gunning Fog Index](#)
- [SMOG Readability Formula](#)

## MAKE SMART WORD CHOICES

- ▶ **Resist qualifiers and superlatives.** Words meant to make something sound important – like best, biggest, or largest – tend to have the opposite effect. They make savvy readers want proof that the comparison is justified.
- ▶ **Use active voice.** Passive verbs make readers work harder. But don't make a sentence awkward just to remove a passive verb.
- ▶ **Cut the fluff.** Drop buzzwords, clichés, and marketing-speak from your writing. They don't help readers, and they make your writing seem lazy or uninspired. Start by avoiding these words and phrases:
  - Leveraging
  - Synergies
  - Robust
  - Digital transformation
  - Unprecedented

## CREATE A SHARED UNDERSTANDING

- ▶ **Use comparisons to illustrate unfamiliar concepts.** Liken a new idea or approach to something the audience is already familiar with.
- ▶ **Mirror your audience's language.** Have conversations with audience members about your topic. Pay close attention to the language they use. Feed that language into your writing for relevancy.
- ▶ **Ask (a few) rhetorical questions.** Rhetorical questions get readers thinking, rather than simply taking in information. But avoid asking too many or you'll give the impression that you have no answers. Aim for no more than two rhetorical questions per 500 words (and spread those out).



### **Stay in the lines (or not).**

Coloring is probably one of my favorite ways to combat a work slump. Not only does it reduce anxiety, relieve stress, and increase my focus, it's also fun and fosters a creative mindset.

– **Angela Reina**, creator, The Blogger's Buzz

## WRITE TO DRIVE ACTION

- ▶ **Tell readers what you want them to do.** Ask readers to share their comments, forward the article to colleagues, share it on social, or sign up for your newsletter at the end of your piece.
- ▶ **Give them a reason.** Tell a story about how sharing information with collaborators helped a team get work done more efficiently.
- ▶ **Tap into feelings.** People are more likely to share or take action based on stories that elicit emotional responses (even negative ones, like anger, frustration, or anxiety) than content that didn't engage their emotions. Pack your writing with powerful emotionally charged words to spark your readers' passion.



**Get out of your everyday environment.** Take yourself and a colleague (or your team) offsite for a brainstorming session. Make sure there's no access to work emails or any of the other distractions that tend to dominate proceedings in the office. Even taking just an hour out of your day can fuel the fire and ignite ideas.

– **Jason Scott**, digital marketing freelancer and blogger

Get more writer's block busters in this [article](#) on the Content Marketing Institute site.

# Everything You Need to Know to Write Faster

**W**hen you're paid to write, you can't afford to take hours to craft the perfect piece or luxuriate for weeks waiting for inspiration to strike. Here are the secrets to teaching yourself to write faster:

- ▶ Set up for success
- ▶ Organize your research
- ▶ Schedule time to write (and to finish)
- ▶ Minimize distractions
- ▶ Resist the urge to edit
- ▶ Start at the top
- ▶ Build your structure
- ▶ Refine your work
- ▶ Sweat the headline, lede, and conclusion
- ▶ Work the system



## SET UP FOR SUCCESS

If you know where you're going, you'll get there faster. Gather everything you'll need before you write a word.

Create a Word or Google document before you do any research or interviews. Save it using "(TOPIC NAME) – NOTES." List these questions, then answer them:

- ▶ Who will read this piece?
- ▶ What will they get from this piece?
- ▶ How will they consume this piece (e.g., company blog post, e-book, guest article)?
- ▶ Where will they consume this piece (i.e., distribution channel)?
- ▶ Why is the brand creating this piece?
- ▶ How will the brand know if this piece is successful?

**TIP:** Create a template for your notes document so you can pull up the question format every time you start the content process.

## ORGANIZE YOUR RESEARCH

Label the resource at the beginning of the document or section. If it's a person, include the name, title, company. If it's an online resource, include the URL. Use a format similar to what you'll use in the article. That way you can just cut and paste the information into your draft.

Then, go through your notes and highlight key quotes or insights. Use the highlight feature, bold the words, or even type asterisks before the helpful quote so it stands out. List any backlinks or social handles from your sources if you plan to include them in the content.

Create subheads in your notes. Put all related content under the appropriate subhead, recording the source for each one.



**Set up work-in-progress (WIP) folders.** I collect screenshots of things like unpublished articles, ideas that have worked for other writers, and cut-and-paste text from engaging emails and Skype conversations. If I ever get stuck, I dig through them and find idea gems that would normally be long forgotten.

– **Jason Lavis**, managing director, Out of the Box Innovations Ltd.

## SCHEDULE TIME TO WRITE (AND TO FINISH)

Block out time on your calendar to write your article. This approach keeps you from treating writing as an “I’ll get to it when I can” item on your list. It also tells colleagues you prioritize writing – and you’re not available for anything else during that time.

Schedule a call or other activity immediately after your writing time to impose a deadline. If you know you *must* stop writing, you’re more likely to stop agonizing and get it done.



I’ll force myself to write whatever comes into my head – even if that means that I’m writing about not knowing what to write about. Most of what I write is pure stream-of-consciousness nonsense, but more complex and concentrated thoughts start to appear that can be developed further. After a while, without even realizing it, the writing mojo is back.

– **Jordan Harling**, former lead copywriter, Wooden Blinds Direct

## MINIMIZE DISTRACTIONS

Don't let your busy computer screen overwhelm you.

- ▶ Open only one browser window and add the tabs you need for writing. Consider including one tab with the AP Stylebook, another tab for a thesaurus, and an empty Google search screen.
- ▶ If you need any resources from your inbox, copy and paste them into a Word document and turn off your email. Otherwise, you'll pop into your inbox for a file and find five new emails that you just have to read.
- ▶ Turn your phone to "do not disturb" so only those must-take calls or texts can get through – or at least turn it face down.
- ▶ Close your door or put on headphones. If you need noise, pick music that blends with your work.

## RESIST THE URGE TO EDIT

Once you sit down to write, read your answers to the questions about audience and brand to remind yourself about the article's purpose.

The key to writing faster? Don't overthink it. You can edit in a separate stage.

Not happy with a word choice? Move on.

Waiting for creative inspiration to strike for the perfect lede? Perfect is impossible – and better only happens when there's something to improve in the first place.

Unsure of a source's title? Add question marks so you can add it later.



Whether you interview clients, vendors, or staff members, real conversations are an easy way to energize a lackluster campaign. Interviews often reveal new topic ideas, a different point of view, and, if you keep the interview format, even a new voice.

– **Lisa Hirst Carnes**,  
co-founder and chief  
operating officer, ArcStone

## START AT THE TOP

Start by writing three to five headlines that set the tone and focus for the piece. Don't stress about keywords or whether it grabs the reader's attention.

Read through your notes to identify the most surprising, fascinating, helpful, or relevant aspects. Consider using those in your lede.

Feeling stuck? Write "This article is about (TOPIC) because you are interested in the topic and will learn (XYZ)" as a placeholder. You can fix it later.

Include a nut graph – a sentence or two describing the reason the audience needs to know about this story now – in the first few paragraphs of the introduction.

## BUILD YOUR STRUCTURE

Review the subtopic subheads from your notes or create them now. Decide if those are the key topics the article should address. Does the order make sense for the story?

Take time to get this step right. Subheads create structure for your content. Without a solid structure, you'll spend a lot of time trying to shore up your story.

Fill in the sections underneath your subheads using each relevant resource you collected.



I set up Google Alerts around the topics I am actively writing about. Every morning, I read through the articles to find relevant news pieces to associate with the content I am writing. I find pieces that inspire a competing opinion or provide insight into mundane topics.

– **Brittany J. Maroney**,  
owner, Cheers Marketing  
and PR

## REFINE YOUR WORK

Now that your draft is complete, shift into editing mode. Read through the content that comes after the introduction. Ask:

- ▶ Does the article make sense as a whole? Does each section transition well to the next one?
- ▶ Could more specific or descriptive words convey emotion?
- ▶ Are the verbs active?
- ▶ Is it easy to read?

## SWEAT THE HEADLINE, LEDE, AND ENDING

It's time to revise your headline and introduction (lede) to match the article's tone, flow, and narrative and to entice people to read it.

Make sure the headline and intro grab the reader's attention and accurately reflect the article. If none of your draft headlines fit those requirements, push yourself to write more.

Write or edit your conclusion to relate to your new headline and introduction. The best endings tie themselves to the beginning. Summarize the article's main points and lead the reader to the next logical step.



One thing I do to help keep my mind from reaching a creativity block is daily meditation. I use various apps, such as Headspace. They make meditation simple and effectively help me clear my mind from unnecessary noise, reduce stress levels, stay focused, and boost my creative thinking.

– **Matt Edstrom**, vice president of marketing – gifting, Mrs. Fields Famous Brands

## WORK THE SYSTEM

You'll inevitably encounter writer's block, delays, and missteps. It's part of the process.

But don't throw up your hands and wait for the writing gods to inspire you. With this system in place, you'll feel more in control of your writing process.

The more you do it, the better – and faster – you'll get.

*A version of this [article](#) ran on the Content Marketing Institute blog. Check out the discussion in the comments section for more secrets to writing faster.*

# Ledes With Strength

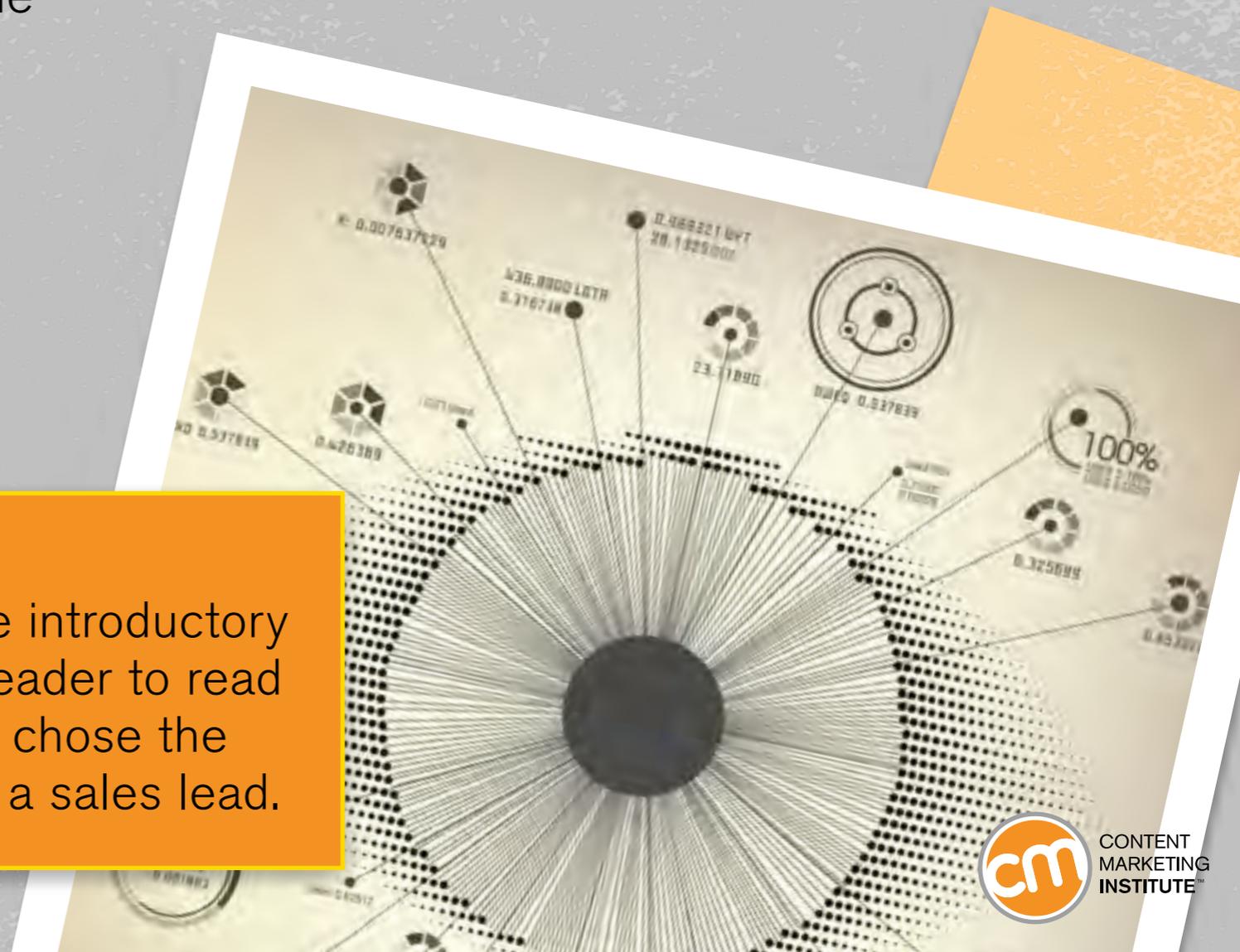
**N**ext to the headline, the lede is everything. It hooks readers in by convincing them the article is worth their time. You can easily find articles, formulas, and tools to help you craft a great headline. But help for great ledes is all too rare.

Try your hand at improving these examples. Then see the approach we took – and the secrets behind why.

- ▶ Set the scene
- ▶ Get to the point
- ▶ Make it compelling
- ▶ Play with curiosity

## What is a lede?

In journalism, the term *lede* means “the introductory section of a news story to entice the reader to read the full story.” *Lead* is also correct. We chose the journalistic spelling to distinguish from a sales lead.



## SET THE SCENE

This example of a good-not-great lede came from an article on the Glassdoor blog. The lede on the original article painted an appealing, relatable picture. Can you spot areas for improvement?

### How Taking a Sabbatical Can Boost Your Career

*After spending too many late nights at the office, who among us hasn't fantasized from time to time about leaving all of our responsibilities behind and heading to some far-off location – perhaps the white-sand beaches of Mexico, the rugged mountains of Switzerland, or the stunning traditional architecture of Japan. But inevitably,*

Career Advice. Watercooler

### How Taking a Sabbatical Can Boost Your Career

November 26, 2018 | Posted by Emily Moore



Share



After spending one too many late nights at the office, who among us hasn't fantasized from time to time about leaving all of our responsibilities behind and heading to some far-off location – perhaps the white-sand beaches of Mexico, the rugged mountains of Switzerland or the stunning traditional architecture of Japan. But inevitably, reality sets in: You've got work to do, chores to finish and a steady drumbeat of bills, loans and expenses to pay.

*reality sets in: You've got work to do, chores to finish and a steady drumbeat of bills, loans and expenses to pay.*

*What if that fantasy didn't have to remain a fantasy, though? What if there were a way you could take off months, or even a year or more, and come back re-energized and ready to take on the corporate world, with a healthy bank account to boot?*

### **Tips to make it better:**

- ▶ **Paint the picture with fewer strokes.** Pretend your content platform limits the number of words or characters. You may be surprised how much better you can make your lede when there's a word count stop sign.
- ▶ **Don't ask obvious questions.** If you're writing a what-if or other question that elicits the same response from every reader, delete it. Use declarative or definitive statements instead and fulfill that promise in the article.

**Write your version:**

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**Our revision:**

*After spending too many late nights at the office, you fantasize about leaving your responsibilities and heading to some far-off location – the white-sand beaches of Mexico, the rugged mountains of Switzerland, or the stunning architecture of Japan. It doesn't have to be a fantasy.*

**Why:** The revised lede clocks in at 44 words (down from the original 120). We cut the paragraph containing several questions because the new opening lines sufficiently set the aspirational scene. The new version hooks the reader but also gets them to the article's purpose more quickly.

## GET TO THE POINT

This stairclimber-or-treadmill article from MyFitnessPal blog does plenty of things right – eventually. But it buries the point below a paragraph that obscures the article’s purpose. How would you improve it?

### What’s a Better Workout: Stairclimber or Treadmill?

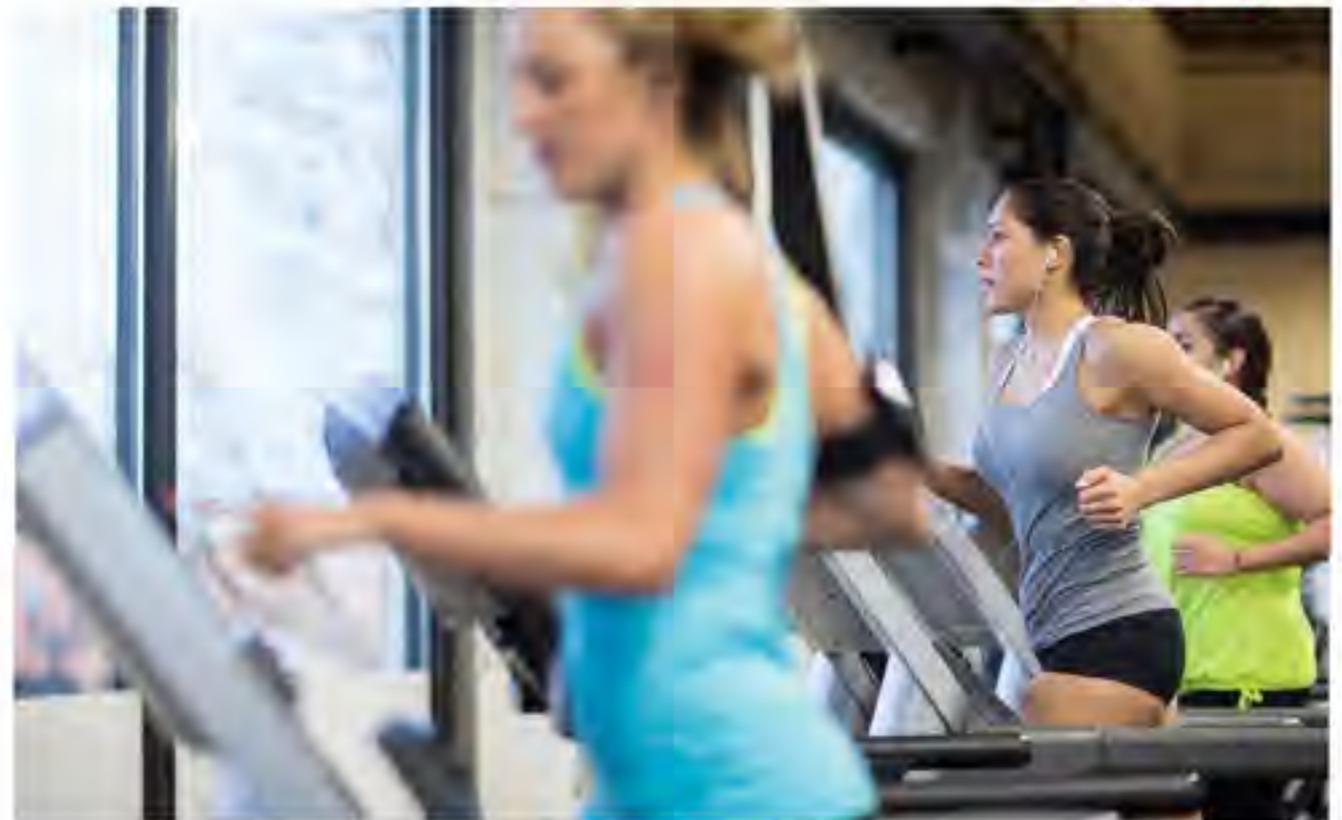
*Whether you’re a fan of lacing up your sneakers for a walk or like to swim laps at the pool, there’s no denying it’s important to get a regular dose of cardio. Not only does it help to burn fat and assist with weight management, but it also has other science-backed benefits, like improved mental clarity and preventing muscle loss.*

### What’s the Better Workout: Stairclimber or Treadmill?



BY EMILY ABBATE | NOVEMBER 25, 2016 | 4 COMMENTS

SHARE IT!    



Whether you’re a fan of lacing up your sneakers for a **walk** or like to swim **laps at the pool**, there’s no denying it’s important to get a regular dose of **cardio**. Not only does it help to burn fat and assist with weight management, but it also has other science-backed benefits, like **improved mental clarity** and **preventing muscle loss**.

## Tips to make it better:

- ▶ **Make every word count.** Think brevity. In most cases, target 25 to 45 words for your lede.
- ▶ **Use active verbs.** Eliminate “to be” verbs and sentence structures that don’t pack a punch.

## Write your version:

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## Our revision:

*Whenever you find time to squeeze in exercise, you want to use equipment that maximizes your effort. Is that a treadmill or a stairclimber?*

In just 24 words, the revised lede shows an understanding of the reader (a person pressed for time to exercise) and sets the expectation that the article will reveal which workout is more efficient – the treadmill or stairclimber.

## MAKE IT COMPELLING

This narrative lede from the American Heart Association's Stories From the Heart series keeps readers moving from sentence to sentence to find out what happens next. Do you spot any flaws?

### It Took Heart Attack to Reveal Her Heart Defect

*Growing up, Alanna Gardner learned she couldn't be too active. If she was, she would faint. Sometimes the spells prompted an emergency room visit. Doctors, however, never diagnosed the cause.*

*Reluctantly, she gave up participating in sports.*

## It took heart attack to reveal her heart defect

By American Heart Association News



*After a heart attack, Alanna Gardner learned her childhood fainting spells were triggered by an undiagnosed heart defect. (Photo by Danielle Massi)*

Growing up, Alanna Gardner learned she couldn't be too active. If she was, she would faint.

Sometimes the spells prompted an emergency room visit. Doctors, however, never diagnosed the cause.

*But after going away to college, Alanna started to wonder if the fainting was a signal that she simply wasn't in shape. She began exercising – slowly at first. She maintained a healthy diet. And she had no more mysterious episodes.*

*At 25, she trusted her body enough to sign up for Philadelphia's 10-mile Broad Street Run. Her training plan called for her to run a 10K event a few weeks before.*

*Alanna considered herself to be in the best shape of her life. So when fatigue hit during the event, she felt "defeated." And soon she was. As she crossed the finish line, she fainted for the first time in seven years.*

*"I couldn't find my friend or an ambulance, but I wasn't worried because it was such a normal thing," she said. "So I just sat down figuring someone would find me."*

*The next thing she remembers is waking up in the hospital.*

**Tips to make it better:**

This is a great example of a narrative, immersive lede that works as it is. We suggest adjusting the headline to avoid revealing the whole story.

**Write your version of a headline that preserves suspense:**

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## PLAY WITH CURIOSITY

Use your audience's innate curiosity to capture their interest. Delayed identification ledes encourage readers to continue because they want to know who or what is being described. You also can create curiosity with suspense as Mashable did with this lede:

*A rider's first hang-gliding flight turned harrowing after the pilot forgot to hook the man into the tandem safety harness.*

*Chris Gursky shared his extremely frightening near-death experience hang-gliding in Switzerland on YouTube on Monday. In the footage, Gursky quickly realizes just after takeoff that he's not hooked to the glider's harness.*

**Why it works:** The author reveals the hang-glider survived in the second paragraph. So the suspense is short-lived. But it's just enough to prompt readers to watch the video – not to see if he survived but how he did.

*A version of this article ran on the Content Marketing Institute blog.*

# 10 Exercises to Make Your Writing More Powerful

**T**he digital format doesn't force writers to edit down their work. But that doesn't mean readers will tolerate flabby writing. The secret to keeping your work sharp? Work out your writing muscles.

Try these exercises:

- ▶ Limit "I" and "we"
- ▶ Hunt for weasels
- ▶ Resist qualifiers and intensifiers
- ▶ Question "to be"
- ▶ Cut prepositions
- ▶ Show, don't tell
- ▶ Avoid erroneous quote marks
- ▶ Be indirect (when it helps)
- ▶ Craft a meta description
- ▶ Use repetition intentionally (and sparingly)



## EXERCISE 1: LIMIT “I” AND “WE”

Don't insert yourself into the content unless it's relevant. If you're part of the story, you don't need to use “I” and “me” a lot. The reader should be able to tell it's your story through the broader exposition.

### **Original:**

In this article, I'm not going to reinvent the wheel, but I will detail how to build a content marketing program that I know will produce great results.

### **Your revision:**

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**Our revision:**

Without reinventing the wheel, I'll show you how to build a content marketing program that will produce great results.

**What changed?** The revised sentence includes only one first-person reference rather than the original three. Yet, the revision still reflects the author's opinion.

**Why?** Studies show that people are more likely to perceive those who use multiple first-person references as less confident and less assured. Those findings come from research led by University of Texas at Austin's James W. Pennebaker, who penned [The Secret Life of Pronouns: What Our Words Say About Us](#).

## EXERCISE 2: HUNT FOR WEASELS

Write what you mean, without “weasel words” that weaken the impact.

### **Original:**

With all due respect, ABC Cakes believes healthy living requires the occasional sweet treat. That being said, the mini cupcakes make an excellent choice.

### **Your revision:**

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**Our revision:**

ABC Cakes believes healthy living requires the occasional sweet treat. Mini cupcakes make an excellent choice.

**What changed?** The revision eliminated the phrases “with all due respect” and “that being said” without changing the meaning.

**Why?** “Weasel words are used when the speaker wants to make it seem like they’ve given a clear answer to a question or made a direct statement, when actually they’ve said something inconclusive or vague,” writes Leslie Ye on HubSpot.

## EXERCISE 3: RESIST QUALIFIERS AND INTENSIFIERS

Review your content for qualifiers and intensifiers (very, too, quite, so, rather) and delete every unnecessary use.

### **Original sentence:**

Subject matter experts generally are rather excellent resources for content. Talk to them before writing as they can be particularly helpful in identifying very relevant topics.

### **Your revision:**

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**Our revision:**

Subject matter experts are excellent resources for content. Talk to them before writing as they can be helpful in identifying relevant topics.

**What changed?** The qualifiers (generally, rather) and intensifiers (particularly, very) were deleted.

**Why?** “A qualifier weakens or lessens the impact of a word or phrase,” according to K.L. Wightman’s grammar guide.

## EXERCISE 4: QUESTION “TO BE”

It's difficult to write without using “to be” or a form of passive voice. Try writing one draft without thinking about passive or active voice. Then go through your content and revise to only use active voice.

### **Original sentence:**

When you are forced to write succinctly, you do it. When you are not forced, you aren't pressured to edit your content to pack more of a punch using fewer words.

### **Your revision:**

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**Our revision:**

When forced to write succinctly, you do it. When not forced, you don't edit your content to pack more punch using fewer words.

**What changed?** We removed forms of “to be” were removed.

**Why?** “Using ‘to be’ can weaken the impact of your writing,” as the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill’s Writing Center [explains](#).

## EXERCISE 5: CUT PREPOSITIONS

Review your prepositional phrases. Eliminate each one to make it easier to check that you're using the right subject-verb combination. Put back only those prepositional phrases whose meaning can't be more succinct.

### **Original sentence:**

With the acquisition of XYZ Widgets in January 2019, the employees at the Scranton plant opted to throw a party in celebration of their new employer.

### **Your revision:**

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**Our revision:**

To celebrate the company's January 2019 acquisition, XYZ Widget's Scranton plant employees threw a party.

**What changed?** Five prepositions were removed.

**Why?** "A string of multiple prepositions in a single sentence can make the text choppy and potentially confusing for your audience," according to American Journal Experts.

## EXERCISE 6: SHOW, DON'T TELL

Don't waste an interview or a site visit. If you've seen what you're writing about, show your audience by including details you could only gather by being there.

### **Original sentence:**

The day began with nice weather.

### **Your revision:**

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**Our revision:**

Temperatures hovered in the 70s as the sun rose. Fluffy clouds dotted the ocean-blue sky.

**What changed?** The revised text describes what nice weather feels and looks like. It also defines what “nice weather” means from the writer’s perspective.

**Why?** Readers benefit when they can visualize what the text conveys. Don’t settle for telling readers something when you can show them with words.

Use descriptive words and avoid vague words. Set the scene, describe your source, show how the product works in real life – the options to show are almost endless.

## EXERCISE 7: AVOID ERRONEOUS QUOTE MARKS

Quotation marks can indicate a word is being used loosely or ironically, but that technique is often misused. Quote marks for emphasis are NOT necessary.

### **Original sentence:**

Did you know he's going to paint the house "purple"?

### **Your revision:**

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**Our revision:**

Did you know he's going to paint the house *purple*?

**What changed?** We removed the quotation marks from “purple” and italicized the word for emphasis.

**Why?** As Grammarly explains, the use of quote marks to emphasize a word or phrase was legitimate in the pre-word processor days. Writers couldn't create italics on their typewriters or in typesetting. But now we do.

Emphasize sparingly. Italicizing a word or phrase in every paragraph is like using all caps in every tweet.

## EXERCISE 8: BE INDIRECT (WHEN IT HELPS)

Use direct quotes sparingly – when only the speaker’s language, sentiment, or explanation will do.

### **Original sentence:**

“In order to accomplish the goal of survival, we are planning to implement a reduction in force of at least 20% because we can’t keep going at the same payroll we have today. With advances in technology, we now can do the same output with fewer people,” said CEO Jennifer Loudon of PDQ Company.

### **Your revision:**

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**Our revision:**

PDQ Company plans to lay off 20% of its workforce as a cost-cutting measure. However, production output is not expected to change thanks to efficiencies gained in technology implementation, said CEO Jennifer Loudon.

**What changed?** We rewrote the direct quote to convey the information more clearly.

**Why?** Writers often mistakenly act like transcriptionists. They regurgitate what a person said word for word. Yet few people speak in a way that conveys their thoughts succinctly.

Use your writing muscles to simplify an explanation, get to the point more quickly, and remove pauses and clunky transitions. Indirect quotes let you maintain the meaning and provide attribution without bogging down the text.

## EXERCISE 9: CRAFT A META DESCRIPTION

Too many writers use their intro sentence as the meta description (or assume Google will). But if your intro sentence isn't explicit about your topic or perspective, it's less likely to attract clicks.

### **Original sentence:**

When I graduated college, my dad gave me one of those super-duper, deluxe tool sets. It had everything. There was a 330-piece socket wrench set, a two-gim...

### **Your revision:**

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**Our revision:**

New Content Marketing Institute research shows the struggle with content management strategy lies in the unused junk drawer of once shiny technology.

**What changed?** The original version is the first 155 characters of this [article](#) by Robert Rose. We wrote a unique meta description so searchers would know the article is about new CMI research.

**Why?** Robert's wonderfully descriptive and intriguing lede entices someone who is already on the page to read further. But the truncated version of the intro doesn't provide enough information for someone searching for information about content technology research.

## EXERCISE 10: USE REPETITION INTENTIONALLY (AND SPARINGLY)

Repeating words can be helpful to emphasize a point and to create a rhythm in your text. But use repetition with purpose.

### **Original sentence:**

The CMO attended a board meeting with the CEO. At the meeting, they discussed the marketing strategy for the coming year.

### **Your revision:**

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**Our revision:**

The CMO attended a board meeting with the CEO to discuss the marketing strategy for the coming year.

**What changed?** The revision contains a single use of “meeting,” but conveys the same meaning as the first.

**Why?** Efficient writing is easier for the audience to consume. Revise your content to eliminate unnecessary repetition and don’t think keyword stuffing will make your content more attractive to search engines.

But don’t go to unnecessary lengths to avoid repeating words. Julie DeSilva’s example of a botched revision of a famous quote shows why eliminating repetition isn’t always the better option. “We have nothing to fear but alarm itself” doesn’t have the power of Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s original.

*The tips in this article come from two posts on the Content Marketing Institute blog.*

*Read the originals [here](#) and [here](#).*

# KEEP YOUR SKILLS SHARP

The secrets in this guide will help you become a better, faster, stronger writer. But the best content creators keep challenging themselves to perfect their craft and expand their skills. Think of this reading list as continuing education for content marketing writers:

- ▶ **[Stop With the Overused and Incorrect Words in Your Writing](#)**
- ▶ **[Help Your Writing With These 2 Short Tips](#)**
- ▶ **[Whip Up a Tantalizing Blog Post With These 9 Ingredients](#)**
- ▶ **[3 Secrets to Writing Better Video and Audio Scripts \[Examples\]](#)**
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## About Content Marketing Institute

Content Marketing Institute is the leading global content marketing education and training organization, teaching enterprise brands how to attract and retain customers through compelling, multichannel storytelling. CMI's Content Marketing World event, the largest content marketing-focused event, is held every fall in Cleveland, Ohio, and ContentTECH Summit event is held every spring in San Diego, California. CMI publishes Chief Content Officer for executives and provides strategic consulting and content marketing research for some of the best-known brands in the world. Content Marketing Institute is organized by Informa Connect. Learn more at [ContentMarketingInstitute.com](http://ContentMarketingInstitute.com).

