Words Matter: Eschew Obfuscation, Espouse Elucidation

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Words Matter: Eschew obfuscation, Espouse elucidation.
“If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head.

If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart.”

– Nelson Mandela
Protection
Acute Viral Rhinopharyngitis

Common Cold
RISK

ISC² CBK - “the potential for harm or loss”

m-w.com - “to expose to hazard or danger”

NIST - “impact*likelihood”
Stewardship

The responsible overseeing and protection of something considered worth caring for and preserving.
Written Communication
Plain language is the simplest most straightforward way to express an idea.

- Write for your audience.
- Write short sentences. Express only one idea in each sentence.
- Limit a paragraph to one subject. Aim for no more than seven lines.
- Be concise. Leave out unnecessary words.
- Use active voice.
- Find a positive word to express your meaning.
Style is critical.

The first impression of a document is based upon its style and organization. If the reader is immediately intimated, the contents become irrelevant. How the document flows and the words you use will make all the difference. Know your intended reader and write in a way that is understandable. Use terminology that is relevant.

Most importantly, keep it simple.
A Plain English Handbook
How to create clear SEC disclosure documents

One unoriginal but useful tip: Write with a specific person in mind. When writing Berkshire Hathaway’s annual report, I pretend that I’m talking to my sisters. I have no trouble picturing them: Though highly intelligent, they are not experts in accounting or finance. They will understand plain English, but jargon may puzzle them. My goal is simply to give them the information I would wish them to supply me if our positions were reversed. To succeed, I don’t need to be Shakespeare; I must, though, have a sincere desire to inform.

by Warren E. Buffett
Your Words Matter.

- Be inspiring – use positive words that align with your objectives.
- Be a teacher – create a common language.
- Be a steward – honor the public trust.
- Learn more about using plain language @ http://plainlanguage.gov
- Share how you’ve made a difference @words_matter

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