

CONCISENESS

To do our work, we all have to read a mass of papers. Nearly all of them are far too long. This wastes time, while energy has to be spent looking for the essential points.

I ask my colleagues and their staff to see to it that their reports are shorter.

The aim should be reports, which set out the main points in a series of short, crisp paragraphs.

If a report relies on detailed analysis of some complicated factors, or on statistics, these should be set out in an appendix.

Let us end such phrases as these:

‘It is also of importance to bear in mind the following considerations’, or ‘consideration should be given to the possibility of carrying into effect’. Most of these woolly phrases are mere padding, which can be left out altogether, or replaced by a single word. Let us not shrink from using the short expressive phrase, even if it is conversational.

Reports drawn up on the lines I propose may first seem rough as compared with the flat surface of officialese jargon. But the saving in time will be great, while the discipline of setting out the real points concisely will prove an aid to clearer thinking. (Sir Winston Churchill, 9 August 1940)

*¹ [http://books.google.com/books?id=rf_e5H05eHcC&pg=PA70&lpg=PA70&dq="to+do+our+work+we+all+have+to+read+a+mass+of+papers](http://books.google.com/books?id=rf_e5H05eHcC&pg=PA70&lpg=PA70&dq=)