



Welcome! We will begin shortly.

Creating Clarity in Your Crime Novel

Presented by Hayley Milliman

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The Five Principles of Creating Clarity



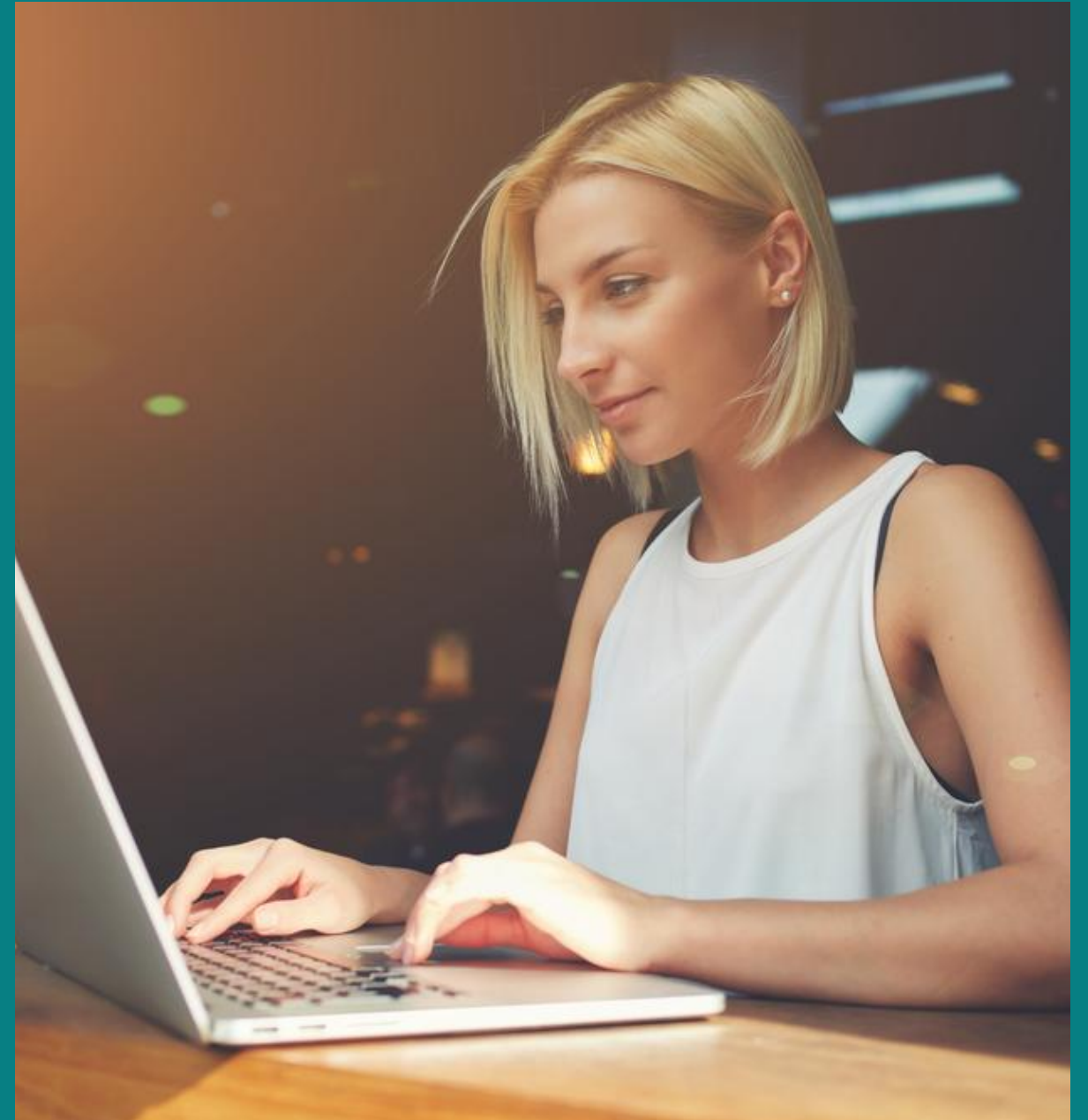


Hi, I'm Hayley!

Head of Education at ProWritingAid

Today:

- 01** Understand...
Why clarity is the most important goal for all writers
- 02** Discover...
Five key principles that will make your writing more clear
- 03** Learn...
How to apply those principles to your writing to make it more effective

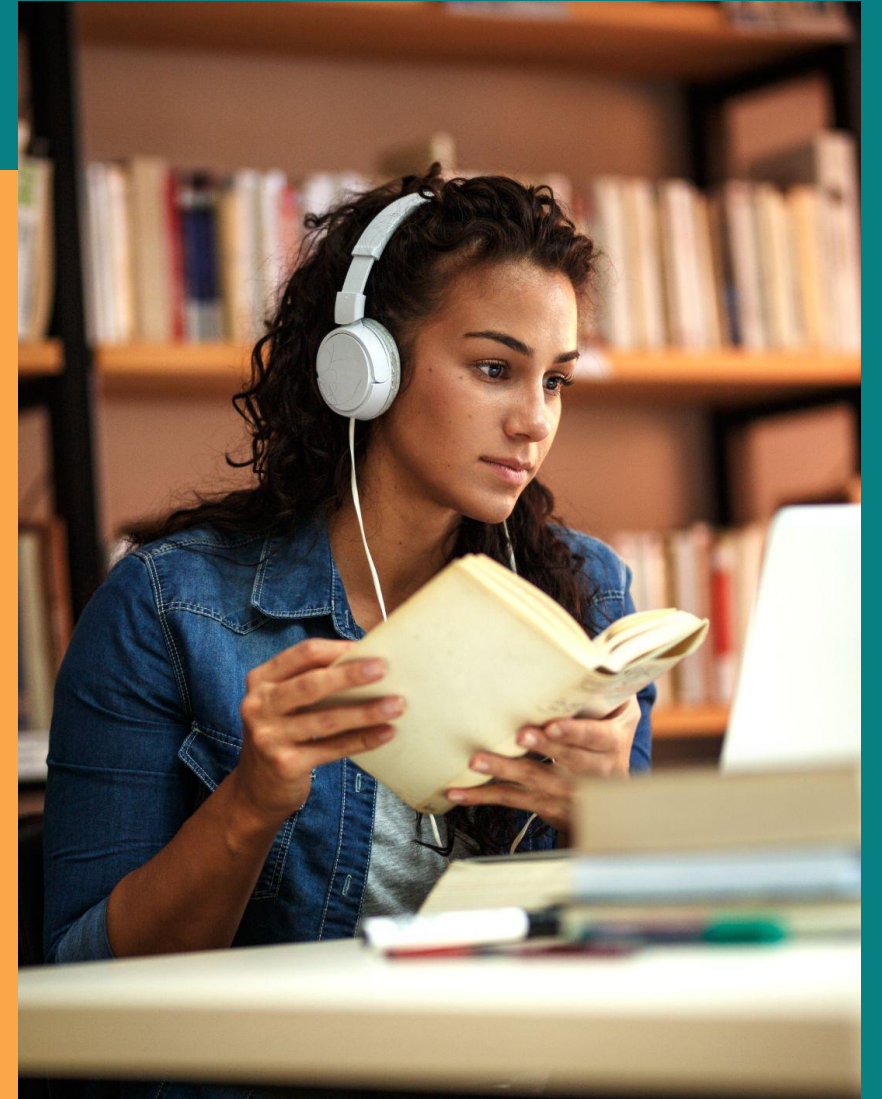




**Clarity is an essential part of
storytelling.**

Clarity is...

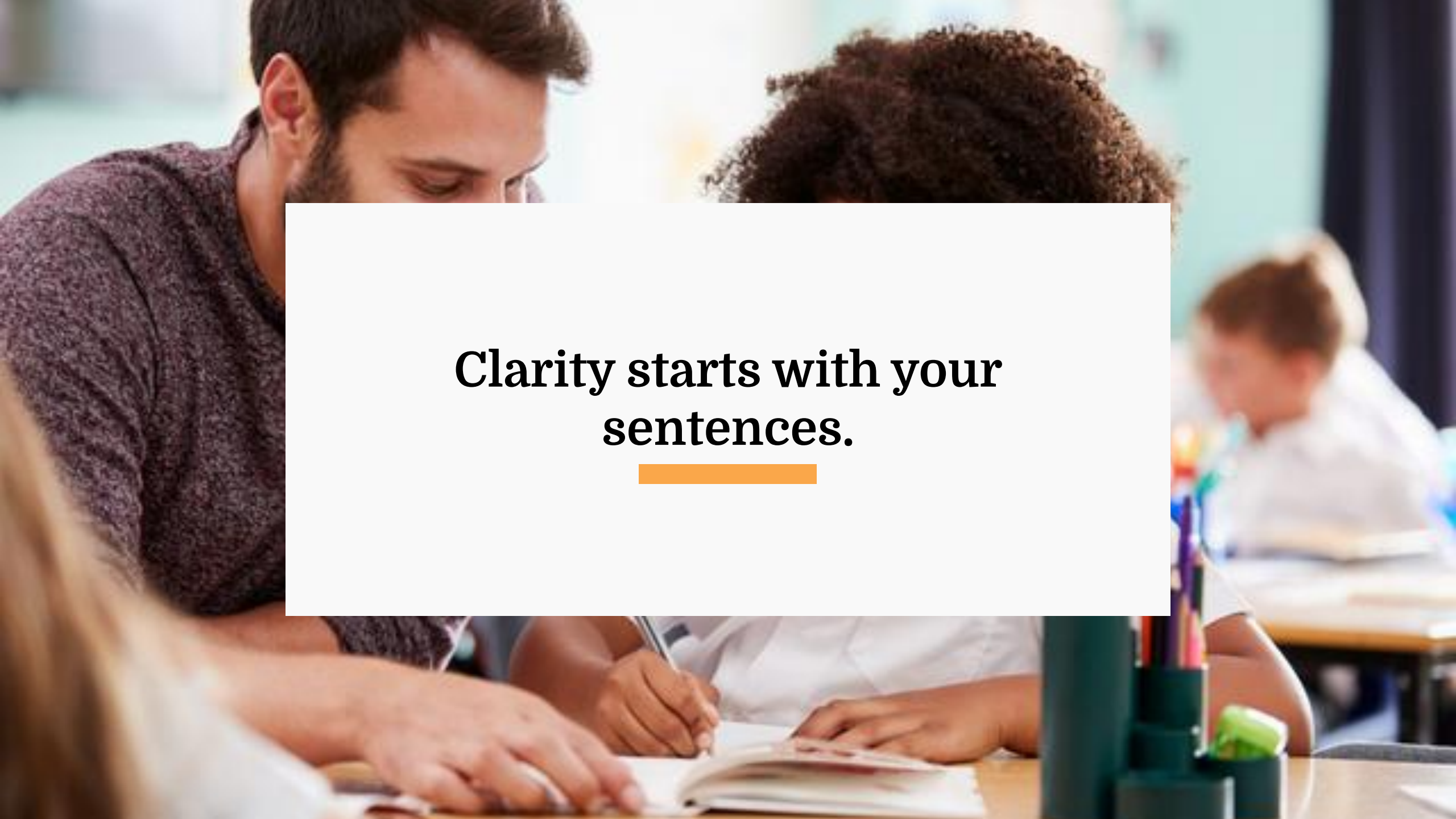
1. How easy your writing is to understand
2. Whether or not your sentences are set up in a reader-focused way
3. Rich, specific language that adds to your reader's understanding



Clarity isn't...

1. How simple or juvenile the ideas in your writing are
2. Whether or not your prose is engaging, unique, and exciting



A photograph of a classroom setting. In the foreground, a man with dark hair and a beard, wearing a dark sweater, is leaning over a desk, looking down at a notebook. To his right, a young girl with curly hair is also writing in a notebook. In the background, another student is visible, slightly out of focus. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a well-lit classroom. A white rectangular box is overlaid on the center of the image, containing the text "Clarity starts with your sentences." and a small orange horizontal line below it.

**Clarity starts with your
sentences.**

**Sentences
are like
mini movies.**





Five Principles of Creating Clarity

Make your
subjects stars.

Reduce glue
words.

Use powerful
verbs.


Target correct
readability.

Choose specific
words.

Principle One

01

Make your subjects stars.



**Subjects are the stars
of your sentences.
Treat them that way.**



Passive voice

Object before subject

“The present was opened by Jane.”

**Passive
voice is too
wordy and
confusing.**



When to use it



Subject is unknown

“Stonehenge was built around 5,000 years ago.”

Subject is irrelevant

“The Time & Life building was constructed in 1959 and changed the skyline.”

Deliberate choice

“Mary realized a suspicious package had been left on her door.”



Passive voice

How to fix it

“Jane opens the present.”

Fix it yourself



Find the word “by”

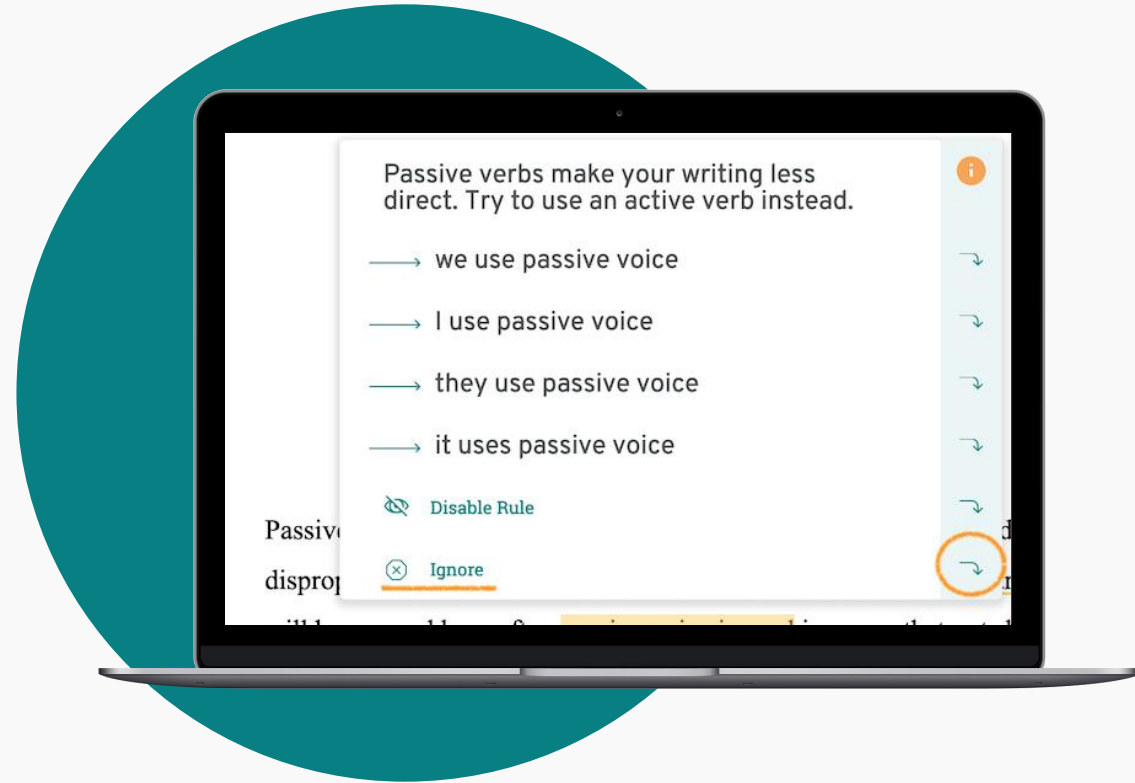
“The present was opened by Jane.”

Find “to be” + verbs

“The present was opened by Jane.”

The do-er comes first

“Jane opens the present.”



Fix it with ProWritingAid

Principle

Two

02

Reduce glue words.



**Prioritize working words
over glue words.**

An open book with a white text box overlaid on it. The text box contains the title 'Working Words' and a definition. The book is open, showing the pages and the spine. The background is a light blue-grey color.

Working Words

Words that contain a sentence's most essential information. You can't change them or the meaning of the sentence will change.

Glue Words

Glue words tend to make the essential pieces of the sentence stick together. You can reduce, remove, or replace them.

**Too many
glue words
make the
sentence
sticky.**





Sticky sentence

What are the working words?

Dave walked over into the backyard of the school in order to see if there was a new bicycle that he could use in his class.



Sticky sentence

What are the working words?

Dave walked over into the backyard of the school in order to see if there was a new bicycle that he could use in his class.

A person wearing a blue denim shirt is sitting at a desk, writing in a notebook. The notebook is open, and the person's hand is visible holding a pen. A white text box is overlaid on the image, containing the text "There isn't one way to fix a sticky sentence." Below the text is a small orange horizontal line. The background is slightly blurred, showing a desk with a white bowl and some papers.

**There isn't one way to fix
a sticky sentence.**



Sticky sentence

Try to fix this sentence.

Dave walked over into the backyard of the school in order to see if there was a new bicycle that he could use in his class.



Sticky sentence

My new version:

Dave checked the school's backyard for a new bicycle to use in class.

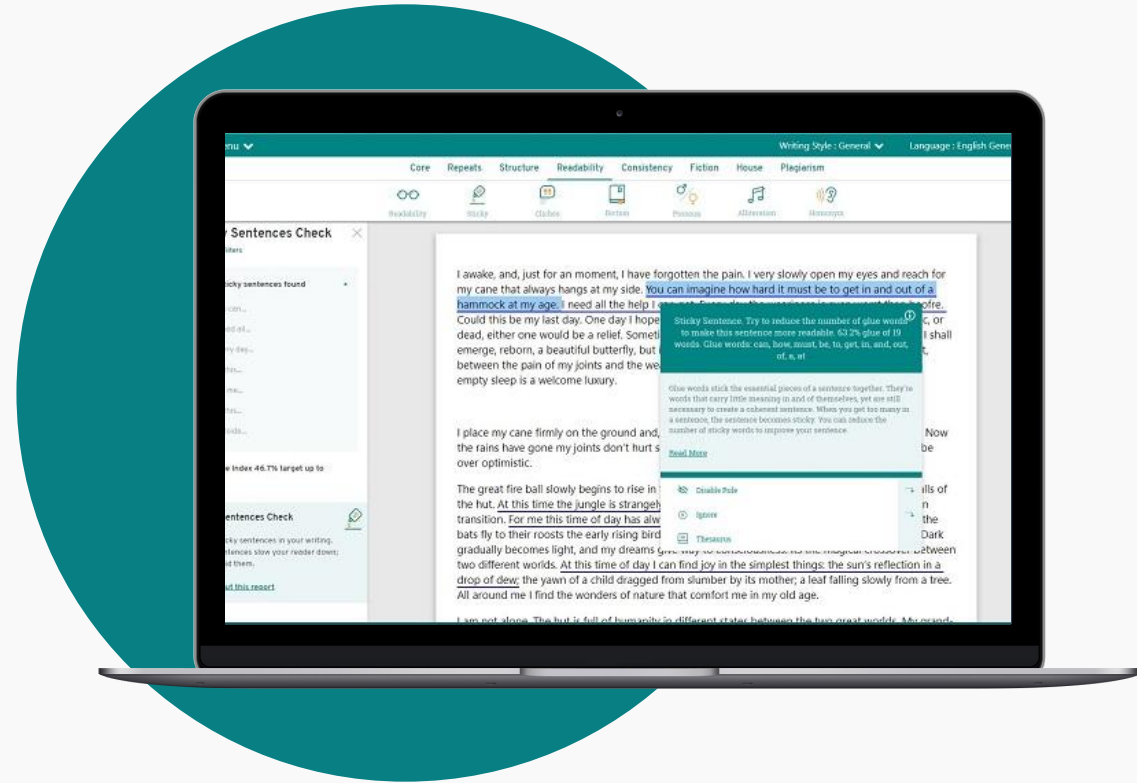
Fix it yourself



Find overly long sentences
Anything over 18 words long is probably too long.

Look for glue words
Words like prepositions, conjunctions, and articles.

Rewrite reducing glue words
Remember, there's not one way to fix a sticky sentence.



Fix it with ProWritingAid

Principle Three

03

Use powerful verbs.

**Verbs are the engines of
our writing.**

**Many
writers
use weak
verbs.**





Hidden verb

Also known as nominalization

We will **make an announcement** of the winner on Friday.



Weak verbs

Need words like “very”

I ran quickly towards the bus.

A close-up, low-angle shot of a person's foot in a purple and white sneaker stepping onto a running track. The background is a bright, hazy sunset or sunrise, with the sun low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow. The track surface is dark asphalt with a lighter-colored lane. The overall mood is energetic and inspiring.

**Let your verbs power
your writing.**



Show the verb

Remove the nominalization

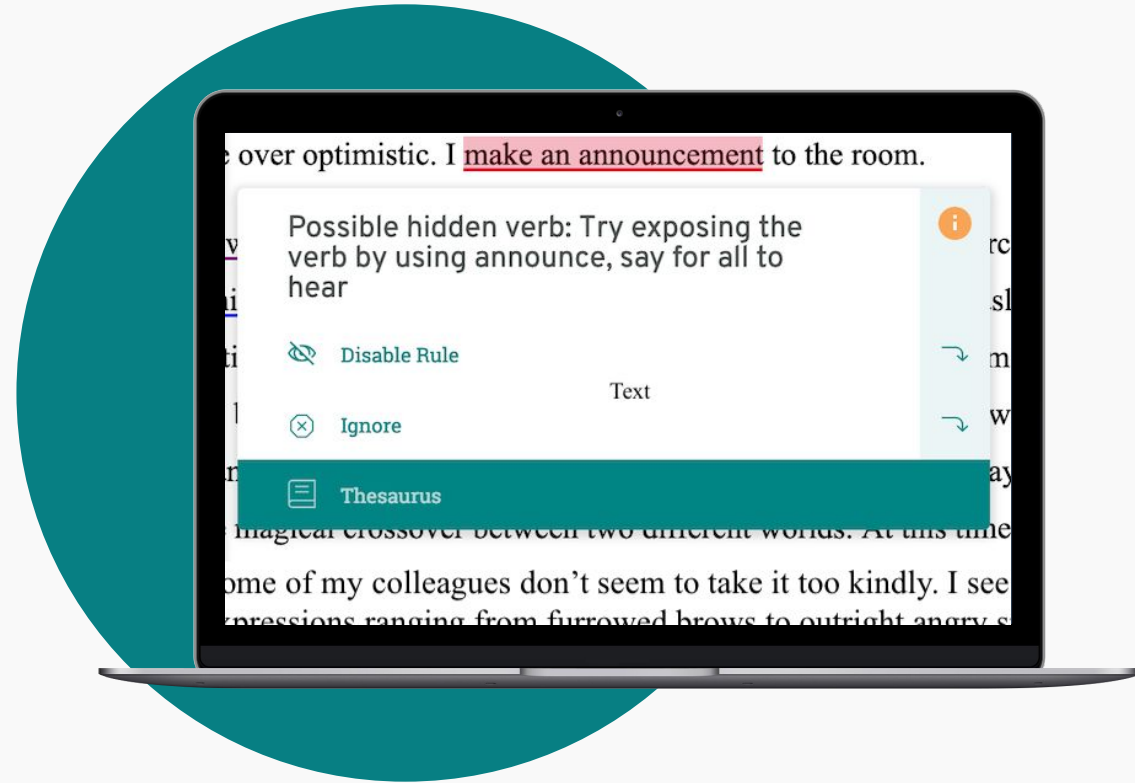
We will **announce** the winner on Friday.



Use strong verbs

Pick words that say what you mean

I **dashed** towards the bus.



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Principle Four

04

Target correct readability.

A man with short dark hair and glasses is sitting at a wooden desk in a bright, modern office. He is wearing a light blue button-down shirt and is focused on writing in a spiral-bound notebook with a blue pen. To his right is a silver laptop. In the foreground on the left, there is a white and maroon coffee cup with a lid. The background shows a large window with a view of a city, and a blurred desk lamp is visible on the left. A white rectangular box is overlaid on the center of the image, containing the text.

**Audiences prefer works
that are easy to read.**

What it means



Ideas are the stars

Readable work lets ideas shine so audiences don't worry about word choice.

You choose words carefully

You don't have to forego all interesting words—just be choosy.

Audience matters

Every audience is different. Consider yours when targeting readability.

What it doesn't



Your prose is boring

You can use unique words and structures. Just do it consciously.


Your writing is dumbed down

Complicated ideas deserve clear language.



Readability Scores

Readability scores predict who will be able to read your writing. There are many types of readability scores to choose from.



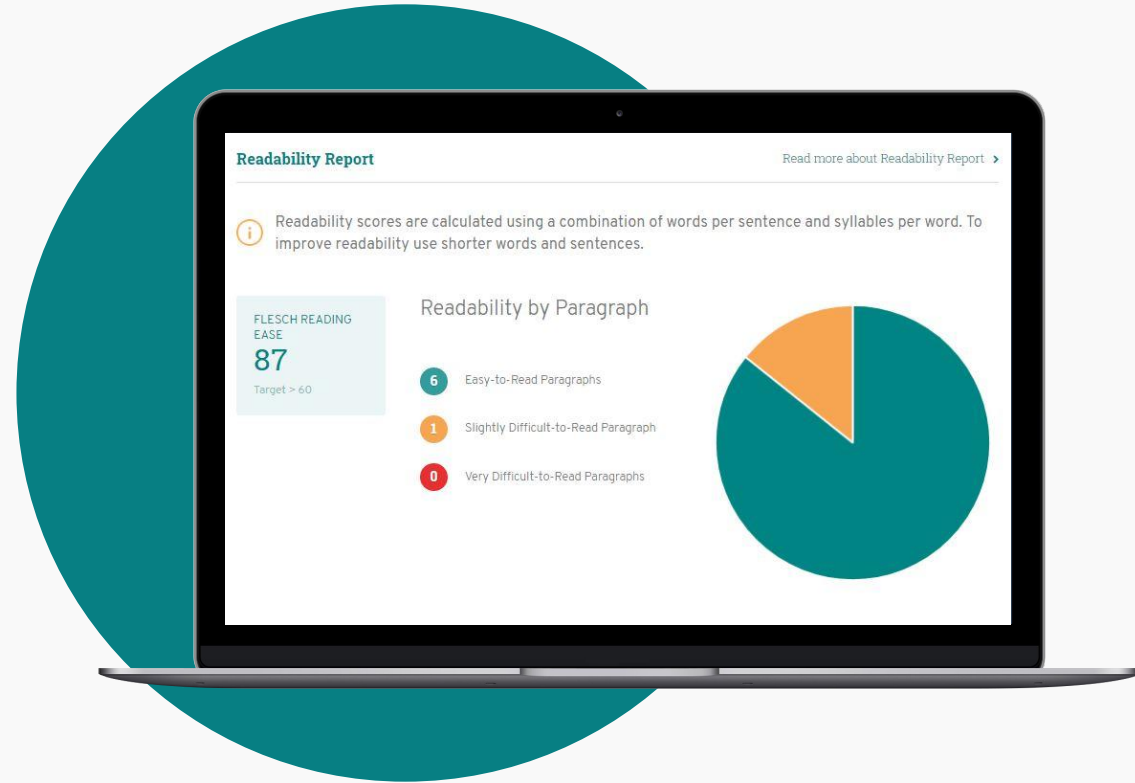
What to do if your score is too high

Use easier
vocabulary.

Shorten your
sentences.

Remove any
jargon.

Use active
voice.



**Fix it with
ProWritingAid**

Principle Five

05

Choose specific words.

A man with dark hair and glasses is sitting at a desk, looking at a laptop screen. He is wearing a brown and black checkered shirt. His hands are near his face, suggesting he is in deep thought or looking at something on the screen. The background is a bright, modern office with a window and a green plant.

**Vague words lack the
specificity readers need.**



Vague sentence:

What do you picture?

Kate made some improvements to her cabin and it's now worth more.




Specific sentence:

What do you picture?

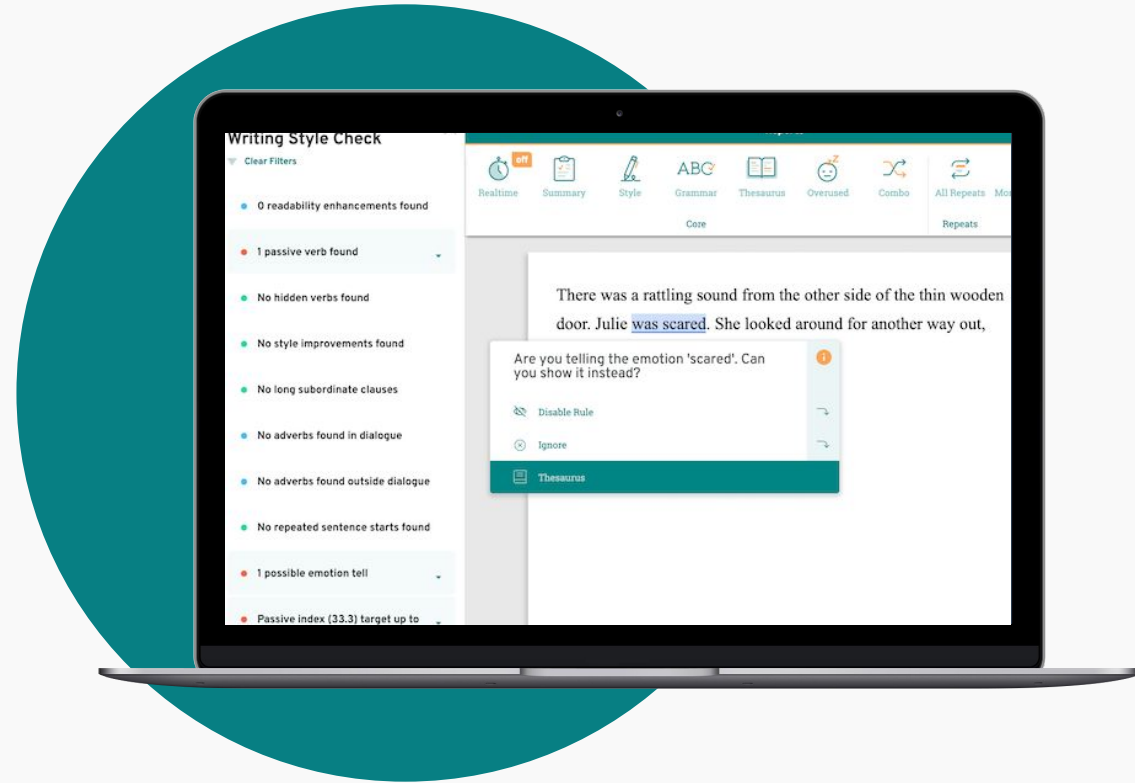
Kate replaced the bathroom suite, repainted the living room, and laid hardwood floors in her cabin, increasing its value by 10%.

**Clarity
doesn't
always
equal
brevity.**

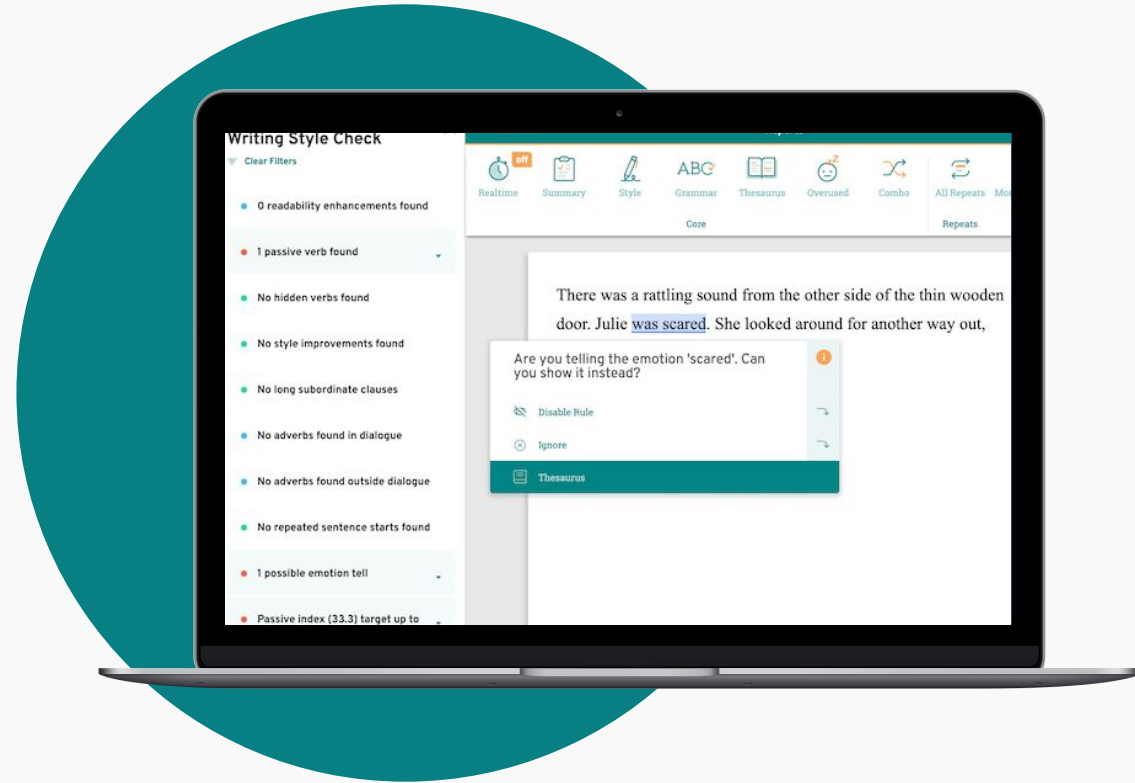




**Ask yourself: is the movie
a reader playing in their
head accurate to what I'm
trying to show?**



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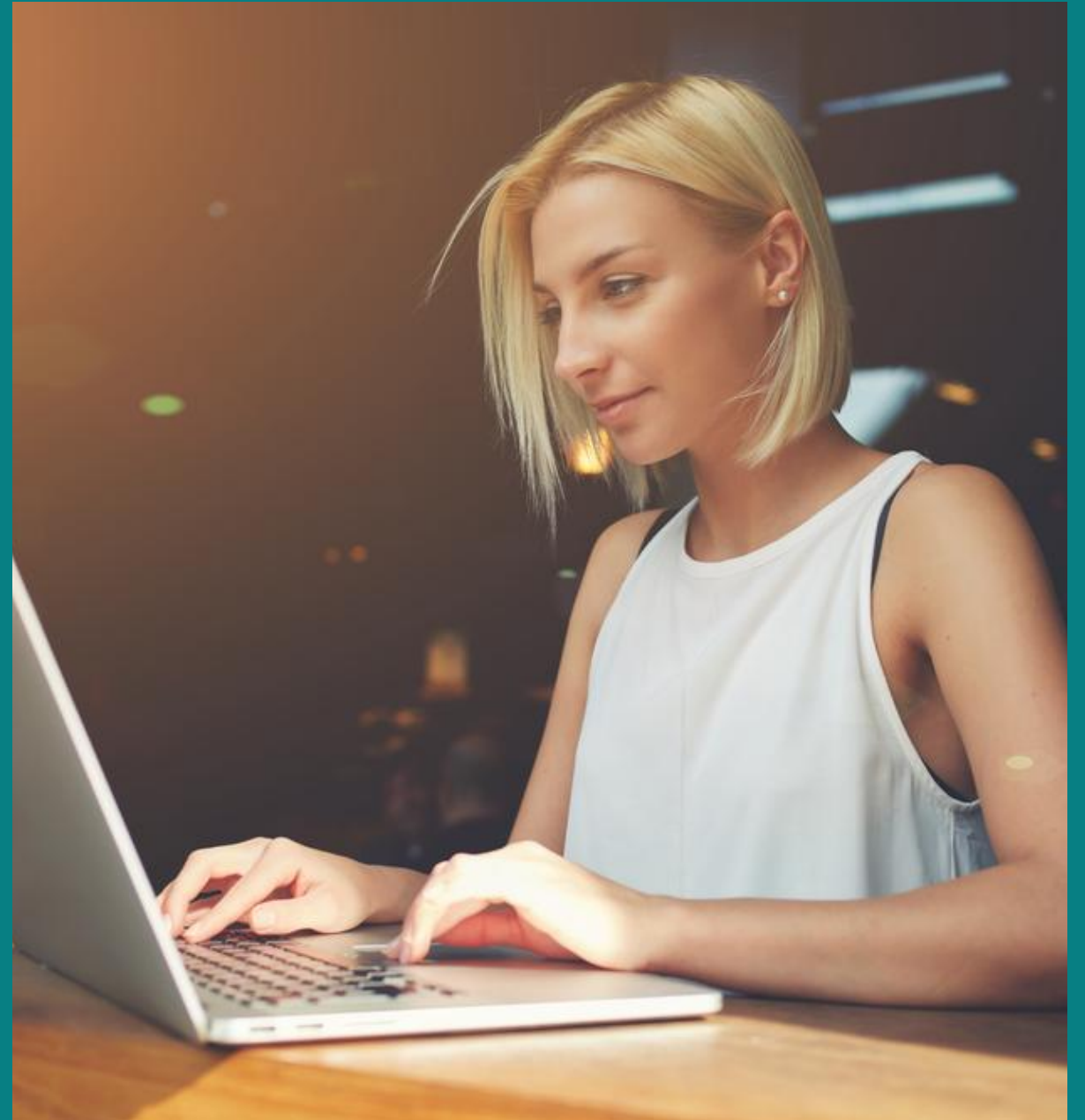
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Questions?

