

# The Clear Writing Rubric

Brevity	Style	Grammar	Tone
<p><u>Clear writing avoids</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Redundancies</li> <li>Empty phrases</li> <li>Unnecessary information</li> <li>Wordy writing</li> <li>Heavy words</li> </ul>	<p><u>Clear writing avoids</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vague writing</li> <li>Wishy-washy writing</li> <li>Subjects far from predicates</li> <li>Modifiers far from heads</li> <li>Dense sentences</li> <li>Jargon</li> <li>Cliches</li> </ul> <p><u>Clear writing uses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clear subjects</li> <li>Strong verbs</li> <li>Precise vocabulary</li> <li>Varied sentence structure</li> <li>Interesting phrases</li> <li>Clear antecedents</li> <li>Parallel structure</li> </ul>	<p><u>Clear writing avoids</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Run-ons</li> <li>Fragments</li> <li>Misused words</li> <li>Agreement errors</li> <li>Article errors</li> <li>Case errors</li> <li>Comparison errors</li> <li>Idiomatic errors</li> <li>Modification errors</li> <li>Punctuation errors</li> <li>Spelling errors</li> <li>Verb tense errors</li> <li>Word order errors</li> <li>Other grammar errors</li> </ul>	<p><u>Clear writing expresses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Culture Distance (Formal, Serious, Casual, Intimate)</li> <li>Power Distance (Submissive, Polite, Direct, Commanding)</li> <li>Courtesy (Friendly, Inoffensive, Offensive)</li> </ul>

<b>Opaque</b> "I have no idea what this is."	<b>Babbling</b> Filled with redundancies, etc.	<b>Floundering</b> Filled with vague writing, etc. No clear subjects, etc.	<b>Lost</b> Filled with errors	<b>Tone Deaf</b> Undesired tone ensued
<b>Obscure</b> "This might mean...."	<b>Windy</b> Many redundancies, etc.	<b>Awkward</b> A lot of vague writing, etc. No obviously clear subjects, etc.	<b>Troubled</b> Many errors	<b>Dissonant</b> Likely to be read in an undesired way
<b>Foggy</b> "I think I get it."	<b>Lengthy</b> Some redundancies, etc.	<b>Limited</b> Some vague writing, etc. Few clear subjects, etc.	<b>Bothersome</b> Some errors	<b>Questionable</b> Could be read in an undesired way
<b>OK</b> "Ah, I see."	<b>OK</b> Few redundancies, etc.	<b>OK</b> Little vague writing, etc. Some clear subjects, etc.	<b>OK</b> Few errors	<b>OK</b> Likely to be read in the desired way
<b>Clear</b> "Got it."	<b>Vigilant</b> No obvious redundancies, etc.	<b>Polished</b> No obviously vague writing, etc. Many clear subjects, etc.	<b>Clean</b> No obvious errors	<b>Welcome</b> Appropriate tone ensued
<b>Crystal</b> "Wow. Well said."	<b>Efficient</b> No redundancies, etc.	<b>Compelling</b> No vague writing, etc. Filled with clear subjects, etc.	<b>Spotless</b> No errors	<b>Pitch Perfect</b> Writing naturally exudes desired tone.
<b>SCORE:</b>	<b>0 1 2 3 4 5</b>	<b>0 1 2 3 4 5</b>	<b>0 1 2 3 4 5</b>	<b>0 1 2 3 4 5</b>

Comments:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Obscure		Foggy				OK				Clear				Crystal					

## Notes:

1. Score each category from 0 to 5. Then total the category scores to create a final score out of 20.
2. You might think of the six levels as letter grades. Opaque is an F. Clear is an A. The Crystal Level is a place to recognize exceptional skill.
3. These are guidelines, not rules. Ignore guidelines that obscure a message.
4. Visit [stuartmillenglish.com](http://stuartmillenglish.com)! You can find more details on the rubric, writing exercises, (writing teachers!), and helpful videos on how to write well.



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