



## Tips for Crafting Concise Descriptions

Whether you're writing for a print calendar of events, online newsletters, social media, or the web, remember that one word is better than two.

### **Create strong titles.**

Make them short and fact-based, not cutesy. The title should match the description.

Say this: Learn About Space

Not that: Explore a Universe of Fun!

### **Avoid redundancy.**

If your description leads with a title, location, time, and date, don't state them again in the body.

### **Leave out unnecessary details.**

Do your patrons need to know to join them in the community room of your library? It's probably assumed. Don't add every little detail in the off chance one person complains. And don't give the program away in the description; if you tell them every detail, will they need to come?

### **Say this:**

Fiction Fanatics Book Group

Stafford Library

Third Wednesdays, 6:30 p.m.

Join us for a lively discussion of classic and contemporary fiction.

### **Not that:**

Fiction Fanatics Book Group

Stafford Library

Third Wednesdays, 6:30 p.m.

Are you a fiction fanatic? Join us in the community room of Stafford Library on the third Wednesday of each month. This book group discusses a mix of classic and contemporary fiction.

### **Write business casual.**

Avoid the tendency to provide a formal narrative and/or jargon; write like you're speaking to someone. People respond best to informal, conversation-like language. Try reading it aloud. Does it sound like something you'd say to another person?

### **Use white space.**

It makes text more readable, separates unrelated elements, and people remember chunks of information best.

### **Pretend you have a character/word limit even when you don't.**

A tweet is max 140 characters (or 280!) and requires serious trimming. Apply this skill to all of your descriptions.

### **Write for the small screen.**

Pew Internet states that 77% of Americans own smartphones, which means many patrons may access your library's information through their mobile devices. They'll pay more attention to short, mobile-friendly chunks of information than to long paragraphs.

### **Resources:**

*Write to Influence!* by Carla D. Bass, Orlean Press.

*To the Point: A Dictionary of Concise Writing* by Robert Hartwell Fiske, W.W. Norton & Co.

"Twelve Tips to Better Writing for the Mobile Web," David Lee King in *Information Today*.



## Say this...not that

	Say this	Not that
<b>Substitute a single word for a phrase.</b>	how much	the degree to which
	around	in the neighborhood of
	During	over the duration of
	if/should	in the event that
<b>Eliminate verb phrases.</b>	concluded	reached the conclusion
	distinguish	make a distinction
	explains	provides an explanation of
<b>Eliminate superfluous adverbs and weak words/phrases.</b>	need to be involved	need to be actively involved
	referring to ideas	referring back to ideas
	history	past history
	joined	joined together
<b>Avoid circumlocutions</b>	one	a limited number
	most	an overwhelming majority of
	soon	in the near future
<b>Avoid euphemisms, clichés, and idioms</b>	layoffs	economic adjustments
	cute	cute as a kitten
	briefly	in a nutshell
<b>Shorten polysyllabic words.</b>	require	necessitate
	later	subsequently
	event	eventuality
<b>Reduce couples.</b>	compare <i>or</i> contrast	compare and contrast
	pick <i>or</i> choose	pick and choose
	various <i>or</i> sundry	various and sundry
<b>Uncover hidden verbs</b>	Please answer the questions below.	Please provide answers to the questions below.
	I asked her to attend the meeting.	I sent her a request to attend the meeting.