

Writing Better Reports

Austin Chapter Meeting
February 1, 2010

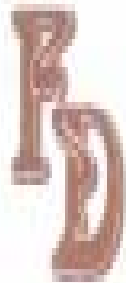
Would you recommend this person for a job?

I been want to move to Luisiana and I am enquiring if there are any opportunities in Luisiana for investigative and forensic accountants.

I have been working in forensics the past five years and in auditing for the last twenty years and I would like to pursue my career in Luisiana.

I am enclosing my curriculum vitae if you know of any interested parties interested in my services.

I thank you in advance.



FASHION DECOR

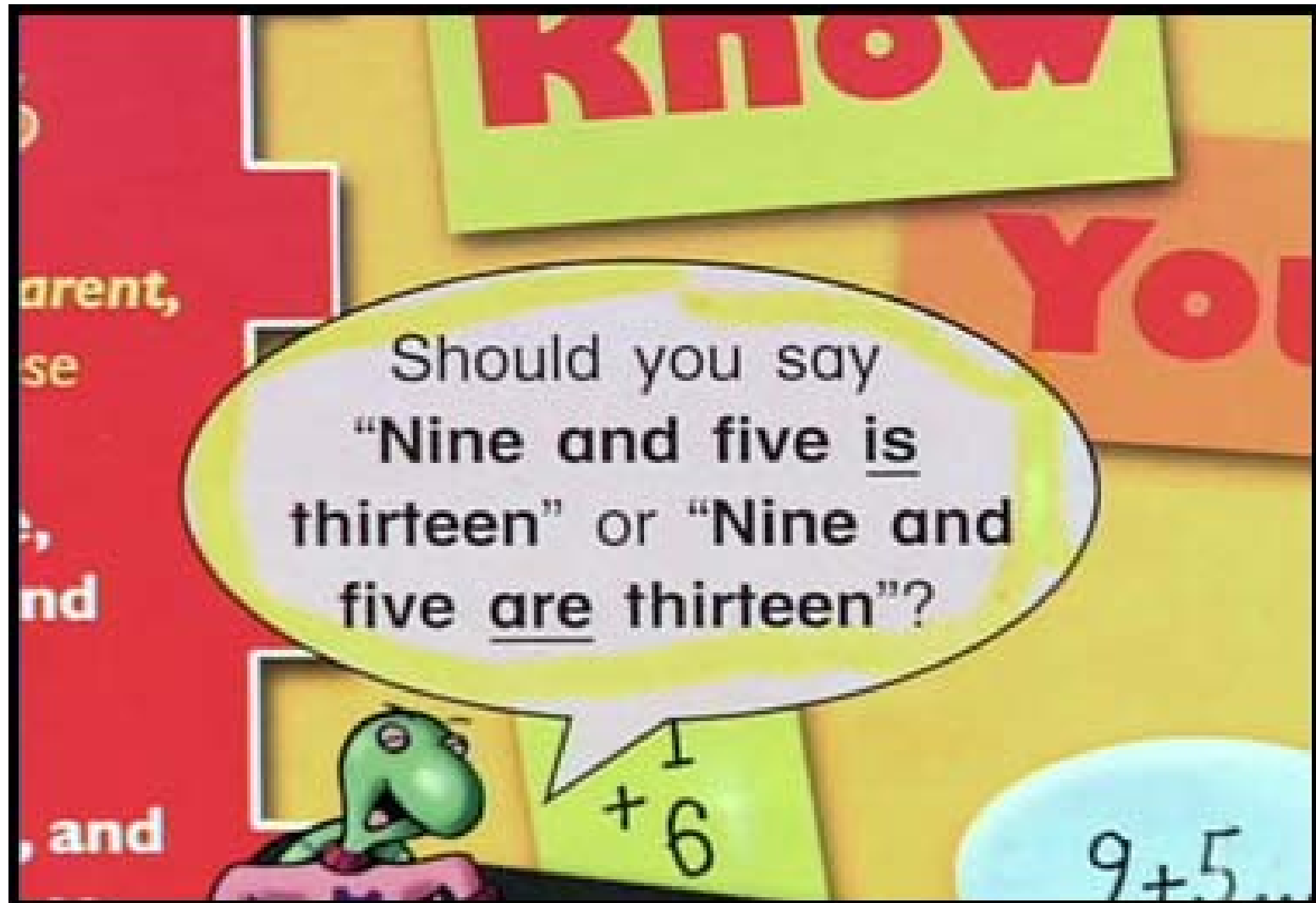
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Neighbors

Women's Whine and Cheese party set

CENTERVILLE — A free Women's Wine & Cheese Networking Party will be from 5 to 7 p.m. June 12 at Benham's

Who May Read the Report

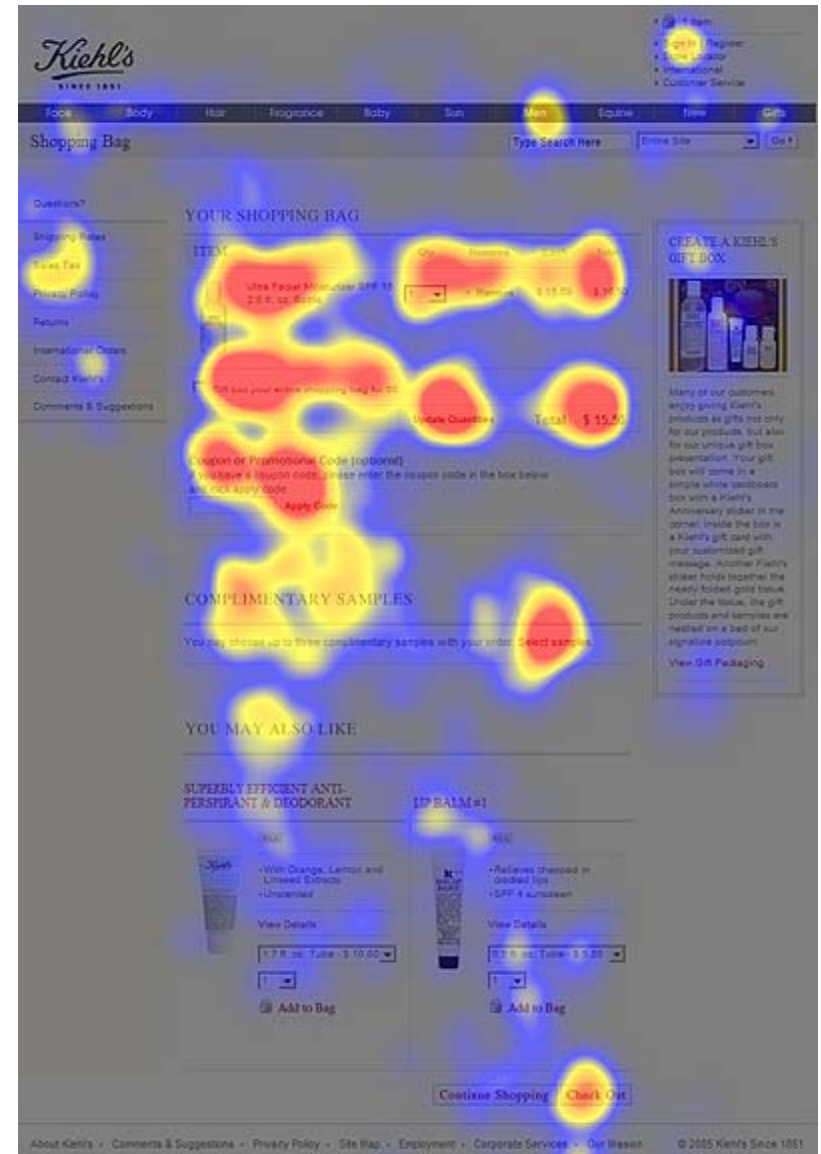
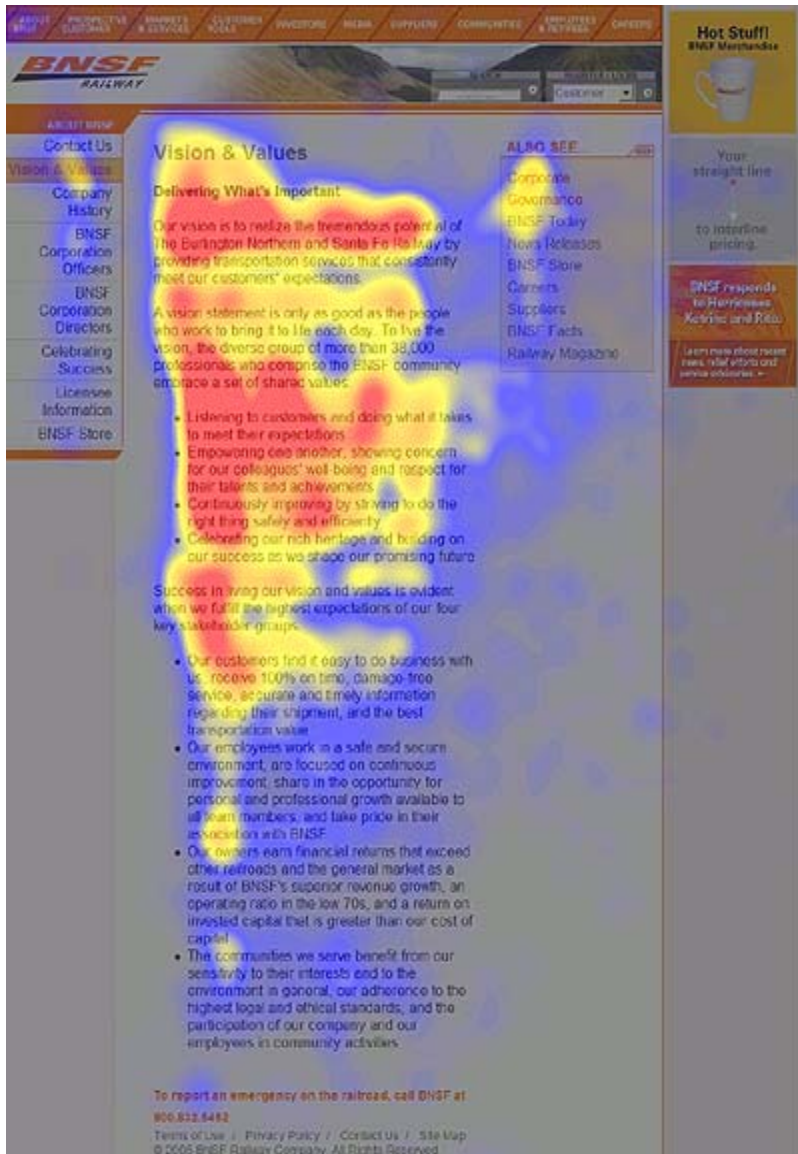
- Company Insiders
- Attorneys
- Defendant(s)
- Witnesses
- Press
- Judges
- Juries



Communicating Your Results

- A fraud examiner may have done a great job in developing evidence, but that information must be communicated effectively to management, counsel, or law enforcement.





Capturing the 21st Century Reader

1. Enable skimming:
 - Headers
 - Short summaries
 - Topic sentences
 - Bullet points
 - Numbered lists
 - Outlines

Capturing the 21st Century Reader

2. Omit needless words.
3. Don't force your readers to think too much; connect the dots for them.
4. Use white space.
5. Put the most important content in the top left of the page.

Developing a Good Style

- Keep sentences under an average of 18 words (15 in an e-mail).
- Limit paragraphs to two or three sentences, no more than seven typed lines.
- Avoid presenting more than seven bullet items to the reader at any one time (preferably fewer than seven).
- Don't bold more than a few words per page.
- Be comfortable beginning sentences (or even paragraphs) with *and*, *but*, *although*, *because* or *I*.

Style Pointers

Example of Imprecise Language

- A review of the anti-fraud literature will find essential agreement with the following concept:

Example of More Precise Language

- The following anti-fraud literature, which I reviewed prior to writing my report, supports my conclusions:

Use First-Person Singular

Weak

- Randall Albert has been in the forensic accounting field since 1985 (CV attached).

Better

- I have been in the forensic accounting field since 1985 (CV attached).

Avoid Pointless Repetition

BEFORE

- The *subject* has been employed with the company for 10 years. When the *subject* was hired, she was an accounts receivable clerk. After 2 months, the *subject* was moved to accounts payable. The *subject* received above average performance reviews in her position, and the *subject* was promoted in August of last year.

Avoid Pointless Repetition (cont.)

AFTER

- The subject was hired ten years ago as an accounts receivable clerk and was transferred to accounts payable after two months. She received above average performance reviews in this position, and she was promoted to assistant controller last August.

Avoid Pointless Repetition (Cont.)

BEFORE

- I reviewed the *list* of checks that the controller provided me. The *list* contained all of the checks written to Romo Supply. The *list* had all of the checks written during the last 24 months. Even a cursory review of the *list* revealed that there were numerous times when checks for the same amount had been issued only weeks apart. Based on this *list*, I asked for a *list* of the invoices received from Romo Supply.

Avoid Pointless Repetition (Cont.)

AFTER

- The controller provided me with a list of all checks written to Romo Supply within the last 24 months. I noticed that there were several instances where two checks for the same amount had been written just weeks apart. I next asked the controller to provide me copies of all the invoices received from Romo Supply.

Passive Verbs

- Always try to use the active voice.
- Sentences that use the passive voice are wordy, indirect, more likely to be ambiguous, and tend to be more awkward.



Revise these:

1. A review of the internal controls will be conducted by the audit committee.
2. Fraud training programs were suggested by the internal audit department.
3. A fraud assessment program was developed by our external audit firm.
4. Consideration of the project is being given by all of our payroll staff.
5. As a result of what has been learned, it is desired that additional testing of transactions be made.

Being Clear

- Avoid Vague and Confusing Language
 - He is of average height.
 - She is a moderate smoker.
 - He won by a huge majority.
 - The company had considerably fewer thefts this year.



Define Technical Terms and Jargon

Consider the following examples:

- **Weak** -The financial statement ratio analysis revealed that the current ratio was fairly steady at around 2.5 between 1995 and 2004, with a slight downturn in 1999.
- **Better** -The financial statement ratio analysis revealed that the current ratio (current assets/current liabilities) was fairly steady at around 2.5 between 1995 and 2004, with a slight downturn in 1999.

Explicitly Explain the Meaning of Abbreviations

- **Weak** -The purchase of VSI insurance where the customer fails to provide insurance under his contract is a subsequent occurrence.
- **Better** -The purchase of VSI insurance (vendor's single-interest insurance) where the customer fails to provide insurance under his contract is a subsequent occurrence.

Use Strong Transitions

- Same direction: *and, also, moreover, in addition*
- Illustration: *for example, for instance*
- Contrast: *but, meanwhile, on the other hand, yet, however, so*

Use Strong Transitions

- Emphasis: *in fact, most of all*
- Concession: *of course, naturally*
- Time: *formerly, meanwhile, after, later, at the same time, in the first place, first, second, finally*

Use Strong Transitions

- Condition: *nevertheless, even though, although*
- Cause/Effect: *it follows that, accordingly, for this reason*
- Comparison: *similarly, in comparison, still*

Proofread

- ***Avoid Typos***
 - Incorrect numbers
 - Incorrect dates
 - Incorrect names
- ***Avoid Spelling Errors***
 - Set up automatic spell checks



Suggested Standard Format

- Background
- Executive Summary
- Scope
- Approach
- Findings
- Summary
- Impact
- Recommendations (optional)



Common Reporting Mistakes

- Conclusions and Opinions
- Use the report to document your steps
- Safeguard original documents
- Include copies of important documents only

Thank you for your attention

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