Criteria for More Effective Writing

How much of an Extension professional’s time is devoted to communication—the placing of words in some kind of logical order? A lot, I’d guess. (Has anyone tried measuring that?)

I’d like to share with you the criteria used by our Editorial Committee members as they evaluate manuscripts. I have two reasons for doing so. First, the criteria should be useful to you as you prepare manuscripts to submit to the Journal. Second, they should help you as you develop written materials in your everyday work.

Two sets of criteria are used by Editorial Committee members—one set on content and the other set on readability.

The content criteria ask: to what extent is the manuscript—
- appropriate to the Journal audience?
- clear?
- communicative?
- consistent?
- likely to make a significant contribution?
- documented?
- innovative?
- integrated with current theory and practice?
- valid?
- visible (seen as important)?

The readability criteria ask: to what extent is the manuscript—
- coherent?
- familiar?
- imaginative?
- lively?
- logically organized?
- retentive?
- simple (meaning easy to understand, not meaning insignificant)?

I’m confident that if your day-to-day writing shows evidence that these criteria are met, your readers will judge that communication as being effective.

And, that manuscript you submit to the Journal will have a definite competitive edge.