



3Cs MEDICAL WRITING

EDIT 1

Prefer Shorter Sentences



*The first of twelve edits for clear,
concise, coherent English.*

SEAMAN MEDICAL, INC.

Why it matters

Short sentences are easier to read, easier to write, and easier to check.

- 1 Your readers are busy.
- 2 English may be their second or third language
- 3 Long sentences hide errors from the writer, too.

A useful guideline

25

words or fewer per sentence

... especially in your first draft.

Use more words when you need to—
but keep the grammar simple.

A long sentence

43 WORDS

"After the completion of bench tests and studies in laboratory animals in December 2017, phase 2 studies of AB-123, which is a novel steroid-like compound, are scheduled to begin at the end of the phase 1 studies that were initiated in January 2018."

Where is the subject?
The verb? The object?

Most readers cannot find them on the first pass.

Break it apart

First, write each idea as a short sentence.

8 WORDS

AB-123 is a novel steroid-like compound.

14 WORDS

Bench tests and studies of AB-123 in laboratory animals were completed in December 2017.

8 WORDS

Phase 1 studies began in January 2018.

14 WORDS

Phase 2 studies are scheduled to start after the phase 1 studies are completed.

Then combine carefully

Combine the very short sentences into three sentences with simple grammar.

9 WORDS

The study drug AB-123 is a novel steroid-like compound.

21 WORDS

Bench tests and studies in laboratory animals were completed in December 2017, and phase 1 studies began in January 2018.

14 WORDS

Phase 2 studies are scheduled to start after the phase 1 studies are completed.

KEY POINT

When sentences are short,
your meaning shows through.

*Aim for about 25 words per sentence.
Use more if you need to—
but keep the grammar simple.*

