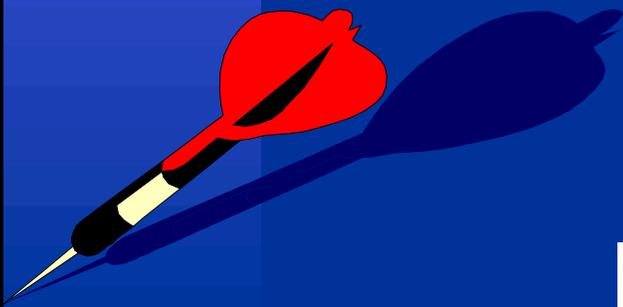


# Write

# On Target



435 MSS/DPCE



# Award Writing Guide

- Define and distinguish bullet statements from other forms of writing
- Identify the components of effective bullet statements
- Develop effective three types of bullet statements

## What is a bullet statement?

Bullet statements are:

Specific: state the impact with numbers, percentages, what happened

Accurate: Don't falsify records

Concise: Short, sweet, and to the point, but if too short it can lose its meaning

Single Accomplishment or Achievement

Impact (stated or implied)

If you bullet doesn't fill in at least 2/3 of the line; start over

## General rules for developing effective bullet statements

- **Action Verb Bullets**

Combine action verbs with accomplishments/achievements and impact.

Action Verb	Accomplishment	Impact

- **Modified Verb Bullets**

Adding a verb modifier increases the strength of the bullet statement and creates a more vivid picture of the achievement for the reader.

Modifier	Action Verb	Accomplishment	Impact

- **Single Accomplishment Bullets**

Impact is implied based on strength of accomplishment/achievement; adding impact would diminish power of statement.

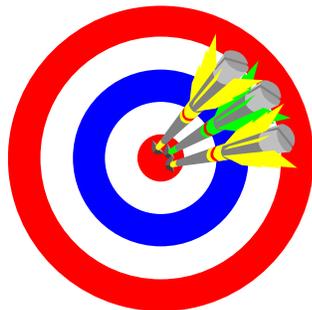
Modifier/Action Verb	Accomplishment	Impact (implied)

- **Sub-bullets**

When using sub-bullets ensure they are directly related to original bullet. Used when a single accomplishment has multiple impacts.

## Award Winning Tips

- Biggest bullets/impact first
- Statement should fill at least 2/3 of a line
- Mix things up a little (left/right combination)
  - Some action verb bullets
  - Some modified verb bullets
  - Some single accomplishment bullets
- Don't have to mention the person's name in the justification. The name is listed on the top in the heading
- Don't use personal pronouns, he, she, etc.
- Watch punctuation, no period, can use commons—it should sound choppy
- Lose “that” and “which.” They are not effective
- Take out “to.” Instead of “to keep” use “keeping”
- Mix things up. Put the “What—so” in front of the “So—what” sometimes
- Use adverbs too. Solely, single-handedly, personally; these show greater responsibility



**Recommended Action Verbs**

Abetted	Animated	Agitated	Applauded	Analyzed
Assessed	Administered	Allocated	Achieved	Adjusted
Addressed	Abstracted	Assigned	Arranged	Appraised
Answered	Attained	Advised	Anticipated	Assembled
Assured	Awarded	Advocated	Attended	Assisted
Assumed	Arbitrated	Applied	Acted	Appointed
Audited	Adapted	Accelerated	Advanced	Approved
Aroused	Asserted	Aspired	Avoided	
Balanced	Brought	Budgeted	Bargained	Built
Bolstered				
Counseled	Composed	Coordinated	Cooperated	Conceived
Chaired	Communicated	Collected	Conducted	Created
Collaborated	Competed	Clarified	Covered	Calculated
Contracted	Consulted	Chose	Consolidated	Contributed
Completed	Cut	Conceptualized	Controlled	Contacted
Coded	Computed	Classified	Collated	Compiled
Compared	Changed	Corrected	Commissioned	Committed
Centralized	Converted	Correlated	Consulted	Capitalized
Circumvented	Commended	Compiled	Complicated	Conceived
Confronted	Contrived	Created	Cultivated	
Developed	Designed	Distributed	Diagnosed	Disbursed
Debated	Determined	Displayed	Delegated	Doubled
Designated	Discovered	Described	Decided	Delineated
Decreased	Dispersed	Detailed	Demonstrated	Decided
Directed	Drafted	Defined	Dealt	Drew
Delved	Deterred	Devised	Dominated	
Evaluated	Enlisted	Established	Explained	Estimated
Examined	Encouraged	Enforced	Exercised	Engaged
Expressed	Edited	Experimented	Educated	Exhibited
Edited	Executed	Exceeded	Effected	Elected
Enable	Ensured	Earned	Engineered	Elicited
Emerged	Embodied	Emulated	Energized	Enforced
Enriched	Enticed	Eradicated	Erupted	Escalated
Exceeded	Excited	Exhorted	Expedited	Exploited
Explored	Expostulated			
Forecast	Founded	Facilitated	Formulated	Focused

Funded	Freelanced	Filed	Fixed	Functioned
Formed	Fabricated	Fine-tuned	Fortified	Fulfilled
Generated	Guided	Gathered	Glorified	
Handled	Helped	Hired	Headed	Hastened
Honed	Hurdled			
Initiated	Instructed	Interviewed	Interpreted	Increased
Introduced	Influenced	Implemented	Inspected	Improvised
Investigated	Incorporated	Informed	Integrated	Illustrated
Introduced	Invented	Identified	Involved	Installed
Inspired	Invited	Instituted	Improved	Immerged
Immersed	Imposed	Impressed	Improved	Improvised
Incited	Ignited	Induced	Infected	Infused
Innovated	Instigated	Instilled	Integrated	Intrigued
Invigorated				
Justified	Judged	Joshed	Juggled	
Kindled				
Lectured	Listened	Lobbied	Located	Learned
Led	Launched	Licensed		
Motivated	Managed	Maintained	Mobilized	Monitored
Modified	Moderated	Marketed	Medicated	Molded
Manipulated	Mapped	Mingled		
Nominated	Negotiated	Nourished		
Organized	Operated	Obtained	Ordered	Observed
Oversaw	Originated	Outlasted	Overwhelmed	
Presented	Prepared	Participated	Publicized	Perceived
Provided	Persevered	Projected	Performed	Produced
Processed	Purchased	Packaged	Proposed	Programmed
Procured	Planned	Perpetuated	Perplexed	Preserved
Persisted	Prodded	Proliferated	Propelled	Purged
Quantified	Quickened			
Responded	Restored	Restructured	Renegotiated	Recruited
Recorder	Recommended	Reorganized	Reproduced	Reviewed

Revitalized	Represented	Reacted	Refined	Reevaluated
Reconciled	Reported	Reduced	Recognized	Redesigned
Received	Reasoned	Reflected	Referred	Rewrote
Risked	Rallied	Rectified	Redressed	Reformed
Refuted	Rehabilitated	Rejuvenated	Renewed	Renovated
Reserved	Revived			
Scheduled	Selected	Structured	Systematized	Succeeded
Screened	Stimulated	Symbolized	Suggested	Serviced
Supervised	Synthesized	Supported	Started	Submitted
Simplified	Surpassed	Surveyed	Shaped	Styled
Staffed	Solicited	Studied	Sought	Solved
Summarized	Served	Spoke	Sold	Set
Sparked	Spearheaded	Stimulated	Strengthened	Striven



## Award Writing Pitfalls

- Too many write-ups amount to a reiteration of the individual's job description
  - Points are not given based upon the level/scope of job responsibility but on what the individual accomplished with the assigned responsibilities
  - Recommendation: If writer wants to include information for the board which described the nominee's duties, then limit it to one bullet max; always try to tie in an accomplishment that shows how the individual excelled in performing these duties
- Write-ups often arrange bullets under the wrong categories resulting in a lower board score for the nominee
  - For example, attempting to come up with some bullets for each of the categories, supervisors will arrange bullets under the various headings. Some bullets could qualify for two categories, others do not. If the bullet clearly does not fit the category, no points are awarded
  - Recommendation: Supervisors need to review the wing/group OIs prior to writing a nomination package. Pay particular attention to the categories, what should be included in each. In the same vein, if an individual has strong accomplishments on the job, but is weak in the community, don't waste these bullets by putting/trying to slip them in the wrong category.
- Bullets often fail to emphasize results or the result does not come clearly across to the reader
  - All bullets should be composed of two elements; 1) the accomplishment or what the person did, 2) and the result, i.e. what was changed/saved/improved based upon this accomplishment. Where possible, quantify results if possible. The statement "revised test procedures which slashed test time 50%" has more impact than "...dramatically reduced test time." The later bullet, however, is better than no impact at all, i.e. "revised test procedures."
- Avoid jargon and acronyms that the reader may not understand. If it is necessary to use these, make sure you explain so that all readers understand the importance of the accomplishment and the result
  - Not all people, even if they have a common background, will be familiar with the multitude of jargon and acronyms that exist—this is particularly true if your nominee reaches wing level. If a board member does not understand the bullet, the nominee is not going to maximize his/her point score
- Make certain that the accomplishment actually occurred during the award period

-- Most violations of the rule occur in the self-improvement area where off-duty education in pursuit of a degree is an ongoing process that often overlaps several periods



**WRITING NOMINATION GUIDANCE**  
**FOR THE**  
**DECORATION FOR EXCEPTIONAL CIVILIAN SERVICE (DECS)**  
**MERITORIOUS CIVILIAN SERVICE AWARD (MCSA) AND**  
**NON-AIR FORCE AND NON-FEDERAL ORGANIZATION**  
**COMPETITIVE AWARDS**

**WRITING TIPS:** The keys to a well-written nomination are clarity, action, and tone. Clarity ensures the readers understand what the writer meant. Action keeps the focus on what the nominee did and tone conveys the nominee's contributions. Follow a simple, logical progression in each statement. The most common and successful pattern is:

*What* the nominee did, *How* the nominee did it, and the *Impact* of that action

- Before writing your nomination consider the following pointers that may help you achieve a good write-up

- Use hard-hitting, fact-filled words and statements
- Do your words paint an accurate picture of the nominee to the reader
- Can the reader pick out the nominee's specific achievements/accomplishments
- Does the write-up demonstrate command-wide (MCSA) or Air Force-wide (DECS) impact and describe the results of that impact

- When you think you have finished your write-up, let it sit for a day or two, then go back and read it

- Does it say what you want it to say
- Do the words you used meet the test of directness, emphasis, and impact
- Did you edit to eliminate non-impact words that could compromise the significance of the award
- Do your ideas flow smoothly
- Have you used strong action verbs

**CLARITY:** Do not use terms that your readers (incentive award committee members and award approving officials at the base, MAJCOM, and Air Force) are unlikely to understand. It is safe to assume your readers are military members or DoD civilians. Although they are familiar with many terms, they probably will not be familiar with the language specific to a particular specialty or function. Use the simplest terms possible to describe your nominee's accomplishments. Spell out full titles the first time they appear and include the acronyms in parentheses after them

- Avoid ambiguous words and phrases. Don't leave your reader wondering what you meant

-- Present strong evidence for strong statements. Kudos like “Best in the Air Force” are credible only when backed up with facts

-- Choose your words carefully. Be accurate. Was this person the team leader, a team member, or the team’s most valuable player? Cut all extraneous words. This sharpens the impact of your words and saves space. Be specific. This shows impact and lends emphasis to your statements

-- Ask someone outside of your organization to read the nomination and give you their impression of it. If the reader understands it and feels the criteria for the award has been met, chances are board members will too

You can help board members judge the relative merits of your nominee’s performance if you can help them understand the importance of his or her contributions. You can do this by repeatedly asking yourself “so what?” and then writing the statement to answer

-- How rare is the nominee’s skill? (one of three experts in command, only one in the DoD)

-- How much time, money, or resources were saved? (shaving 3 months from the test schedule, cutting production time by 25 percent)

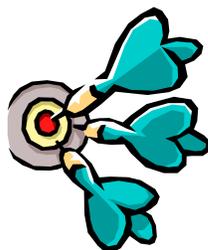
-- Were defects reduced or eliminated, improving the product? (making the system more reliable, improving system performance)

-- Where was the impact of the action felt? (command, Air Force, DoD)

-- How important was this effort to the command, Air Force, or DoD? (database has been adopted by all USAFE, Air Force, DoD)

**ACTION:** The easiest way to emphasize the nominee’s action is to write in active voice. In an active voice sentence, the subject performs the action. This should follow naturally because the nominee is the subject of all statements. Another factor in emphasizing action is your choice of verbs and descriptive words. Vivid or action verbs make your comments compelling. Bland verbs do not. The same principle applies to the other characterizing words. Strong descriptive words leave a lasting impression with readers. Dull and monotonous accounts of what someone did will give your reader the impression the person you are talking about is average at best

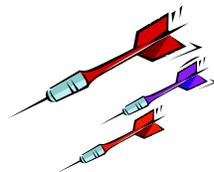
**TONE:** It is very important to give readers a sense of how much the nominee’s contributions are valued. Enthusiastic narratives convince readers the nominee is a valued contributor. Sedate nominations do not. Writing in active voice helps convey a sense of enthusiasm because it emphasizes what the nominee accomplished. Also keep in mind that enthusiastic words will not impress anyone if they are not coupled with specific examples. Write with enthusiasm, but rely on the evidence you present to impress your readers. Convey not only what the nominee did, but how well he or she did it and how it impacted the command, Air Force, or DoD



## **GRAMMAR GUIDANCE**

Nomination packages need to be reviewed more closely before being submitted to the headquarters. For guidance, please refer to the *Tongue and Quill*, AFH 33-337, mechanics of writing section. The following guidelines address the most common mistakes often found in the narratives submitted for honorary awards and the Non-Air Force and Non-Federal Organization competitive awards.

- Do not justify narratives
- Watch jagged margins; do not leave large gaps in the correspondence
- Always use a period after Mr., Mrs., Ms., and Dr. but not after military ranks
- At the end of a sentence, always put two spaces after the period
- Do not separate names; e.g. Mr. Sample -- putting Mr. on one line and Sample on the next. Also, do not separate the words Air Force
- Dates can be separated as long as the month and the day stay together. However, for appearance, when abbreviating dates do not separate
- Be consistent throughout the document with abbreviating/not abbreviating dates; e.g., 1 Mar 96 or 1 March 1996. The only exception will be the 2000 plus years
- Do not hyphenate
  - The last word in the first line of a paragraph
  - The last word at the page break
  - The last word in the first line of a new page
  - More than three lines in a row
- Acronyms may be used. However, they must be spelled out the first time with the acronym following in ( )
- Do not use contractions within the body of the narrative
- Numbers expressing time, money, and percentages should be written as figures even if they are less than ten



- The words “command” and “headquarters” or “commander” and “directorate” should only be capitalized when using them with the full name of the organization

- When you abbreviate Air Force Base as AFB, you must also abbreviate the state/country without the comma between AFB and the state/country. If you spell out Air Force Base, then you must also spell out the state/country and use a comma between Base and the state/country

- Command-wide and Air Force-wide are hyphenated when they are placed before a noun

- Use these words correctly:      advice/advise              effect/affect              lead/led

ACCEPTABLE

NOT ACCEPTABLE

Ramstein AB GE

Ramstein AB, Germany

Ramstein Air Base, Germany

Ramstein Air Base GE

This command will

This Command will

The headquarters personnel have  
have

The Headquarters personnel

DoD

DOD

as the directorate’s focal point

as the Directorate’s focal point

warfighter

war fighter

work force

workforce

workload

work load

worldwide

world wide

multimillion

multi-million

25 Jun 98

25 Jun 1998

3-year project

three-year project

5 percent / 7 hours

5% / seven hours

10- to 20-year period

10 to 20-year period

FY99

FY1999

FY2000

FY00

ACCEPTABLE

NOT ACCEPTABLE

“The impact . . . for the C-130\_”

“The impact . . . for the C-130”\_

command-wide impact

command wide impact

impact is command wide

impact is command-wide

federal service

Federal service

government workers

Government workers

US / Federal Government

U.S. / federal government

