



**GLEN ELLYN
PARK DISTRICT**

Tips for Writing Better Program Descriptions



Writing "Lean" Isn't Easy

"I didn't have time to write a short letter, so I wrote a long one instead." —Mark Twain

Why worry about your program descriptions?

The brochure is still the number one source for patrons and the primary sales tool for your program. All other marketing collateral is created from brochure copy. If it is good the first time, it will help sell your program and it saves work for everyone.

Who reads the brochure?

You don't know for sure. But you do know that grownups make decisions for children, and adults make decisions for themselves. Write to your audience.

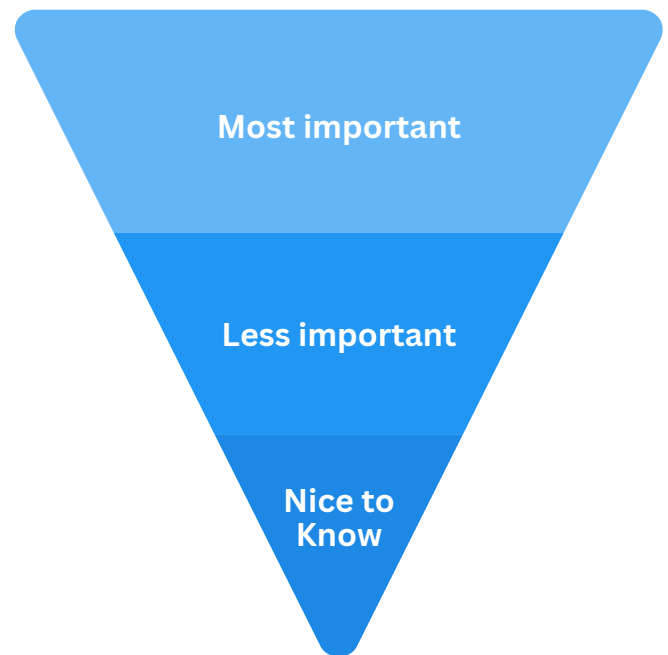
Know your audience, know your programs

- How much selling do you need to do?
- What are some programs that sell themselves?
- Which programs need help?

Use the inverted pyramid

Extra information is just clutter. Simple messages are easier to understand, easier to remember, and easier to act upon.

- Grab the reader's attention
- Include the important information
 - Why should they sign up?
 - What will they learn?
 - What will they do during the class?
- Include the secondary information
 - This information is helpful but not crucial. Examples include additional fees or what to bring or wear.
- Then add details if needed and if space permits
- Take out the "fluff" or TMI (too much information)



What to do with your fluff/TMI

- Put it in Active Net
- Send an email before the activity begins
- Send home a participant letter on the first day
- Give verbal instructions on the first day

Program descriptions should...

- Begin most sentences with a verb.
- Be participant-centered and explain how the reader would benefit from the program.
- Be written in present tense and active voice.
- Be inclusive e.g., instead of “boys and girls” say kids or children.
- Be true and accurate. Be prepared to deliver what you promise. Don’t exaggerate.

Every word counts

- Avoid using more words than necessary.
- Cut filler words and tighten sentences to make your description snappy and attention-grabbing.
- Vary sentence style and structure to reduce repetition and add emphasis.

Borrow better English

Other park districts and organizations with similar offerings (Morton Arboretum, Chicago Botanic Garden, Forest Preserves, etc.) are amazing resources. Use other publications to inspire program ideas, program names, and strong descriptions.

Check your descriptions

- Does the class title sell the class?
- Is the description benefit driven?
- Is the description concise and appealing?
- Did you use any outworn words or phrases?
- Did you check your spelling?
- Did you check your grammar?
- Did you use the thesaurus?
- Did you read it aloud?

Do it right the first time

- Be responsible for your programs.
- Get a second proofer.
- When you are the second proofer, take it seriously. Don’t be afraid to mark up the copy.
- Don’t take the comments you receive personally.

Overused phrases:

Kids of all ages	And best of all
User-friendly	Roll up your sleeves
Quick and easy	Unique
There's no better way to	This class...
There's nothing like it	In this class...
Not only.... but also	You will learn
Adults and children alike	Please
A wide variety	Be sure to
A wide range	Something for everyone
A great variety	State-of-the-art
A good way to	

Weak words:

Great
A lot, lots, lots of
Really, very, quite
Like
Things
Got
Each and every
Fun

Contractors

- Add verbiage to all contractual agreements that we reserve the right to edit program descriptions provided by contractual organizations and individuals.
- Staff should read descriptions from contractors.
- Talk to your contractors to get a better understanding of the class.

Original: Join us on an adventurous journey through space! Build a world where rebels and the dark side start epic battles. Using our proprietary LEGO® project kits and model plans, the students will use their engineering skills to build different moving models each day. We'll build motorized models that represent spacecraft from Star Wars and models related to the NASA space program. Our one-of-a-kind models incorporate beams, gears, axles, motors & battery packs! Are you a budding astronaut? An adventurer who loves space exploration? Then you'll love our space theme projects. We'll provide the bricks; all you need to bring for this adventure is your imagination! Our creative camps feature LEGO® mosaics, 3D LEGO® color kit Builds, motorized technic LEGO® projects, daily take home arts and crafts, creative free play, and more.

Revised: Explore all things LEGO® through the popular theme of the Star Wars universe. First, build projects inspired by cool machines while applying real-world concepts in engineering and robotics. Then, get ready to embark on your LEGO® Jedi journey as we raise our X-Wing from the Dagobah swamp, challenge the AT-AT walkers on Hoth, and fly the Millennium Falcon through the Kessel Run.