Sept. 22, 2014
Copy organization & writing tips
Wendy Craft: My notes from Ann Wylie’s “Catch Your Reader” presentation in Phoenix, May 2013:

1. In communication pieces, your content goals should be:
   a. Grab the reader’s attention
   b. Ensure that your content clear
   c. Make sure that it’s brief so it’s remembered more easily
   d. Encourage the reader to act upon your message
2. Most readers think: What’s in it for me? So, you want to get to these things as soon as possible (thinking like a reader):
   a. Features
   b. Advantages
   c. Benefits
3. Most people only spend two hours per day reading: business and leisure – this includes:
   a. billboards, emails, ads, books, etc.
4. Use bulleted and numbered lists plus hyperlinks as much as possible to catch the “skimmers and scanners.”
5. Place the most important information (that will cause your reader to take action and/or keep reading) at the top of your document.
   a. Keep ancillary information (things that may be most important to you or a smaller group of people) at the end, or hyperlink to it.
6. Keep first paragraphs to 25 words or less
7. Average paragraph length that a reader is willing to read: 42 words; no longer than 63 words
8. MS Word readability statistics (see screen shot on p.2):
   a. Counts section:
      i. The average reader reads 200 WPM. To find the average reading time of your content: Take a document word count and divide by 200. E.g.: 460 words/200 = 2.3 minutes
   b. Averages section:
      i. Words per sentence:
         1. 8 words has 100% reader comprehension
         2. 14 words is 90% reader comprehension
         3. Whenever possible, keep sentences at 21 words or less
   c. Readability section:
      i. Aim for 0% passive sentences
      ii. Flesch Reading Ease: Aim for the 50-60% range; the higher the better
      iii. Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level: 7th grade has the widest reach; the Wall Street Journal writes for 11th grade
MS Word readability statistics example: