



Advanced

Business Writing

Designed to take your writing to the next level.

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GSA Schedule



Advanced Business Writing

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Workshop Objectives



This workshop will give you the tools you need to:

- Write and proofread your work for clarity, conciseness and completeness.
- Build great sentences and paragraphs.
- Use tips to make your writing simpler and easier to read.
- Determine how readable your work is.
- Save time and energy when writing e-mail.



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CHAPTER 1 - Becoming an Excellent Writer



This manual is for those who already are good writers. We all know what good writing is. It's the book we can't put down, the quote that we never forgot and the speech that changes the way we view the world. Good writing is the memo that gets action and the letter that says what a phone call can't.

In business writing, the language is concrete, the point of view is clear, and the points are well expressed. Good writing is hard work, and even the best writers sometimes get discouraged. However, it's just about using simple techniques to keep your writing current and targeted.

Not Much Good Writing Out There

Many would-be writers are defeated by the attitude that writing is an overwhelming task, so they do whatever they can to avoid it. These people do not have confidence in their skills and have not learned to trust themselves with language. Sometimes they go to their files to see what has been done in the past to try to make those documents fit their purpose instead of composing their own quality document. To overcome insecurities, they may even try to write to impress. They hunt for big words to sound like an authority on the subject. They pad their reports thinking that indicates thoroughness. But they actually may leave their readers wanting what's not there. Readers want to understand, use what they need and not be weighed down with an excess of words.

With a good attitude, a knowledge of how words work together and how usage techniques work, your writing can be clear, concise, complete, correct and hit the mark as easy to read.

Say what you mean in the simple language you would use with a colleague. Make adjustments in your wording until you're sure you are saying what you want to say, and then read it again to ensure your reader will understand what you are saying.

In taking your writing skills to the next level, here are some tips:

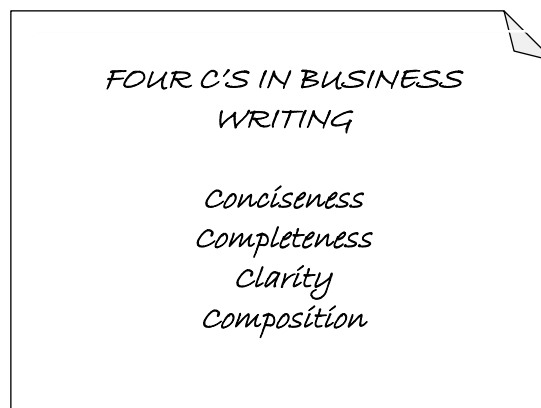
1. It takes practice to write well. Your tenth letter will be easier to write than the first few, and believe it or not, the tenth report will be easier to write as well.

2. Find personal reasons for wanting to write well and for wanting to communicate with others. Then, turn off the internal editor that's slowing you down and just write.
3. Get feedback to tell how you're doing. Is your writing working? **People don't learn to write well from being corrected; they learn not to write at all.** Look at feedback as an opportunity to find better ways to write, not as an affront to your delicate sensibilities.

Being familiar with the English language, you undoubtedly talk easily and well. Others, no doubt, understand you. So the leap from talking to writing doesn't need to be difficult if you think about what you're writing and what kind of message you want to share. Capture your talking on paper, at least the first draft.

The Four C's in Business Writing

Before putting pen to paper or going to the keyboard, there are several things to think about. They are things you think about whether you are talking or writing. They are the four principles of communication or the four C's. Attempt to write and edit with a keen eye on: **conciseness, completeness, clarity and composition.**



CHAPTER 2 -Conciseness

People are inundated with things to read. If you tend to pad your writing with extra words and phrases, readers will probably feel that they are wasting their time. Poorly written documents will go to the bottom of the pile and may never get read. Consider that a one-page letter may get read - two pages and not a chance.

Writing concisely means saying exactly what you mean in the fewest words possible. That means writing to the point.

Often, when you rewrite a sentence to make it more concise, it will also make it clearer. So concise writing includes only those ideas that readers need, and it gives those ideas no more words than they deserve.

Consider that office workers **read most information on a computer screen**. Many people use an even smaller screen like a smart phone or e-reader. The more scrolling you make your reader do, the less likely he or she will read your document.

If your document is going to be read on-line, the reader will be looking for an easy to read format. And don't forget, an attractive one too. Think about having a blend of white space and text, using easily readable fonts in a reasonable size and making your work look good.

Before you start writing, ask yourself a few questions to help you focus your writing on what's important to your reader. This keeps you from wandering. Consider these questions before writing:

ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS BEFORE WRITING:

- What is my purpose?
- Who are my readers?
- What do they already know?
- What do they need to know?
- What don't they need to know?
- How and where will they read this?
- What results do I want from them?
- What will make it easy for them to understand or act?
- Do I need an appendix for people who want more detail?



CONCISENESS

*Eliminate wordy expressions
Include only relevant material
Avoid unnecessary repetition*

Once you've decided what your readers need, the next step is to give your ideas no more words than you need. Prune paragraphs to sentences, sentences to clauses, clauses to short phrases, phrases to words, words that evoke pictures, or strike the ideas entirely. Keep only what contributes to the meaning.

Next are some common problems of wordiness that are easy to spot and avoid.

Watch Out for Adverbs

Adverbs can add unnecessary bulk to your sentences. In his writing essay, *On Writing*, Stephen King wrote, "*The road to hell is paved with adverbs.*" Let nouns and verbs do the work. Words ending in *-ly* often over modify writing. They neither save weak ideas nor improve strong ones.

Weak

I absolutely believe
we certainly agree
when totally complete

Strong

I believe
we agree
when complete

Rephrase a sentence to target adverbs:

The cat moved much more quickly than the dog.

The cat moved quicker than the dog.

Don't be Redundant

Have you ever seen a sentence like, "*I watched the colorful sun set in the west,*" or, "*I took off the blue colored shirt?*" Now, if the sun were setting in the east, that would be something to comment on, but we all know that the sun sets in the west. Likewise, you can safely assume that your readers know that blue is a color.

Similarly, watch out for words that mean the same: "*The mechanic drained and emptied the gas tank,*" could be replaced by, "*The mechanic emptied the gas tank.*"

These doublings seem to satisfy a yearning for symmetry. Don't be fooled. They are redundant. Here are additional examples:

Pleased and delighted
Stimulating and interesting
Review and comment on
Help and support