A Presentation for
American Public Works Association
For information on this course and others, please contact
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Success skills today are fast paced, ever changing and built on individual initiative.

Tips to increase your learning:

- Identify your training goals and clarify what you need to learn.
- Meet fellow attendees and begin constructing a support network.
- Browse the resource library to continue your learning.

Some people thrive in formal learning situations. Others prefer a self-directed approach such as listening to audio programs, viewing videos or interacting with CDs and manuals.

Whatever your learning style, the benefits you receive will be unequivocal if you focus on the following ideas:

- Use all your senses as you train.
- Get involved, discuss issues and use the workbook as a tool.

The workbook is your agenda, reference guide, review source and note-taking device. Accelerate your learning by using it to trigger ideas, provide follow-up and extend the training.

Learning never stops for highly effective individuals. Knowing how to learn is what differentiates levels of excellence.

### Skills Needed for 21st Century Thinking

- Taking charge when you are not in charge
- Gaining acceptance for your plan of action
- Building “webs”
- Replacing authority with information
- Managing ideas, not resources
- Becoming comfortable creating change
- Being perceptive: “seeing the patterns”
- Balancing imagination and logic

This training provides you with continuing education credit from Rockhurst University Continuing Education Center, Inc. If you are a licensed professional who needs special documentation or would like information about our other credit seminars and self-study programs, call our Continuing Education Specialist at 1-800-258-7246.
Workshop Agenda

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Practical Solutions to Real-World Writing Challenges ......................................................28
Suggested Resources .............................................................................................................32
Ms. Jane Smith, Vice-President  
Acme Plumbing Co.  
86772 West Monroe  
Chicago, Illinois 46892-302

Dear Ms. Smith;

Upon receipt of your letter dated, December 7, 2003, I put in the mail to you some up-to-date information about our line of waterless products. I’m sure you have received it by this time.

Irregardless of your background with waterless appliances, I think you will find this new product meets the needs of your customers. It’s most popular features are listed in the brochure. We have been up to our elbows in new orders.

I would like for you to think about the possibility of handling this product. An Order form is attached for you to order your prototype. We hope to hear from you soon.

Very truly yours:

Mr. William Bowen  
President  
Strategic Industries, Inc

Enclosure
Turn Ideas Into Writing: Tips for Getting Started Quickly, continued

Answering Three Key Questions Can Cut Your Writing Time 30 to 40 Percent

1.

2.

3.

Five Simple Ways to Plan and Organize Even the Most Complex Writing Tasks

1. Define your purpose for writing.

2. Brainstorm and cluster.

3. Freeform write.

4. Revise, edit, format.

5. Proofread.

Step 1. Define Your Purpose for Writing
Step 2. Brainstorm and Cluster

Clustering ideas is an essential preliminary step for the writer to gain clarity about what he or she intends to say. The process of stating the ideas and concepts and organizing them alerts the writer to sloppy thinking, redundancies, lack of specificity, weak arguments and contradictions.

Other Uses of Clusters:

- Solving problems.

- Planning projects.

- Appraising performances.

- Making “to-do” lists.

- Clarifying goals.

- Outlining a major report or proposal.

- Preparing for a complex phone call.

- Studying. Cluster textbook sections as you read them instead of “highlighting.” Put the page number of the text at the bottom of a cluster page. Keep clusters in order in a notebook. Study for tests from clusters. If unsure of what a particular cluster means, review that section of the text. That’s the only part of the book you have to read a second time.

- Preparing for confrontation. Make clusters of emotional issues and responses before beginning this difficult conversation.

- Taking notes. Jot down ideas that come to mind as others are talking. You’ll better retain what you want to say when it’s your turn to talk.

- Generating group ideas. This is good way to elicit contributions from the most hesitant of team members. It is also a good way to get candid input, since it can be done anonymously, and it allows ideas to be judged on their own merit instead of by who contributed them.
Turn Ideas Into Writing: Tips for Getting Started Quickly, continued

Step 3. Freeform Write

- Turn off the interior editor.
- Set a time limit and write as fast as you can without stopping.
- Don’t worry about spelling, punctuation, grammar or style.
- If you can’t think of a sentence, write a sentence fragment or a list of words.
- If you run out of things to say, write the same sentence over again until something occurs to you.

Step 4. Revise, Edit, Format

Expect to do a draft or two!

Step 5. Proofread

Proofreading is a technical skill that will develop with practice.
Make Sure Your Message Is Clear and Your Writing Is Error-Free

Six Questions Every Piece of Writing Should Answer

1. Who:

2. What:

3. Why:

4. Where:

5. When:

6. How:

Commonly Confused Word Pairs and Groupings You’ll Never Mix Up Again

Find a full list on page 16 in your reference guide Business Grammar & Usage.

A  An article used before a singular word with a consonant sound: We will spend a month in Vermont and a week in Maine.
An  An article used before a singular word with a vowel sound: She ate an apple and an orange.

Accept  To take, agree: I accept the offer.
Except  To exclude, omit: It’s OK, except for this.

Affect  To influence or produce change in: The new policy does not affect our job situation.
Effect  To bring about a result, cause: The president will effect many changes.

Assure  To declare confidently: I assure you everything is all right.
Ensure  To make sure or certain: To ensure quick payment, file your taxes now.
Insure  To protect against risk or loss with insurance: I need to insure my car.
**Make Sure Your Message Is Clear and Your Writing Is Error-Free, continued**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Between</th>
<th>Used when speaking of two: Just between you and me, I don’t agree. There were no secrets between Jane and John.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Among</td>
<td>Used when speaking of more than two: He was among a prestigious group of three who were honored at the ceremony.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cite</td>
<td>Refer to: He cited new sales figures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site</td>
<td>Location: The new building site is in Dallas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sight</td>
<td>Scene: The skyline was a beautiful sight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprise</td>
<td>To include, contain: The whole comprises parts. The country comprised several republics and states.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compose</td>
<td>To make up: The whole is composed of parts. The country is composed of several republics and states.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicit</td>
<td>Clearly expressed: The rules are explicit and cover every situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implicit</td>
<td>Implied: The implicit manner she used left me guessing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farther</td>
<td>A greater actual distance: The journey to Tokyo was farther than the previous trip to Taiwan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further</td>
<td>To a greater degree or extent: This move will further our sales impact on the western states.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fewer</td>
<td>Refers to physical numbers of items: He ordered fewer magazines this year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less</td>
<td>Refers to matters of degree or value: It was less important to her than it was to him. The boy drank less milk than his sister.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imply</td>
<td>Suggest: I do not mean to imply that we move forward on this idea.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infer</td>
<td>Conclude, deduce: I inferred from the article that time management is key in all business areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Its</td>
<td>The possessive form of it: The performance of its CEO will determine the outcome.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It's</td>
<td>A contraction of it is: It’s the nature of the business.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lay</td>
<td>To put or place an object: He lays neatly folded newspapers on the tray.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lie</td>
<td>To recline: I lie in bed as I write this.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That</td>
<td>Refers to inanimate objects or animals without a name; used to introduce phrases or words that must remain part of the sentence: The tree that died will be cut down.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which</td>
<td>Refers to animals without a name or inanimate objects; used to introduce parenthetical or explanatory phrases: I’m wearing my favorite dress, which happens to be blue.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Make Sure Your Message Is Clear and Your Writing Is Error Free, continued

Present Details Clearly and Explanations Simply

• Be specific.
• State your conclusion first.
• Use bulleted lists to make long, tedious details more readable.
• Avoid beginning sentences with “it is,” “there are,” etc.
• Highlight important points (sparingly).
  — **Underscore**
  — **Bold face**
  — *Italics*
  — Larger font sizes
  — **ALL CAPS**
  — Use white space intentionally

Four Simple Cures for the Most Common Sentence Ailments

1.

2.

3.

4.
Make Sure Your Message Is Clear and Your Writing Is Error Free, continued

Avoid Errors Most Commonly Made in Letters and Memos

Use These Six Surefire Ways to Eliminate Errors

1. Use a spelling checker.

2. Read backwards.

3. Read out loud.

4. Highlight as you move along if you’re working on-screen.

5. Read hard copy line by line.

6. Double-check by looking for these common errors:
   - Run-on sentences and sentence fragments.
   - Punctuation in general.
   - Commas in particular.
   - Quotations.
   - Subject-verb agreement.
   - Sentence length.
   - Apostrophes.
   - Capitalization.
   - Spelling.
   - Paragraphing.
   - Omissions.
Make Sure Your Message Is Clear and Your Writing Is Error Free, continued

Shortcuts to Handling Grammar and Spelling Problems

Make Good Grammar a Habit

- Conscientiously apply the rules of grammar to your conversation. Eliminate spoken grammatical errors and watch them disappear from your writing.

- Pay special attention to subject-verb agreement and pronoun usage, case (subjective and objective), and number (singular and plural).

- Use words you know.

- Use a spell checker, but be aware of its limitations.

- Perform the daily exercises in your working reference Business Grammar & Usage.

Quick References You’ll Want to Keep Close by Every Time You Write

- Check out the NPP handbook, The Essentials of Business Writing. The more you know, the more confidence you’ll have in your ability to communicate well.

- Use a spelling dictionary. Mark words you look up. If you look up the same word three times, put it on your spelling “hit list.”

- Use a hit list. Create a list of words you use often and that give you spelling headaches. List the words in alphabetical order, and keep it on your desk for easy reference. Take two or three words from the hit list and place them on an index card taped to your computer. These words may become “sight words”; you will know on sight if they are spelled correctly.

- Use memory tricks. Mnemonic devices are helpful with certain words, e.g., in “desert” the “s” means sand; in “dessert” the double “s” stands for strawberry shortcake. Develop a memory trick for every word on your hit list.
Using Contemporary Writing Techniques and an Inviting Tone to Stimulate Reader Interest

Do the Grammar Rules You Learned in School Still Apply? Don’t Let the Myths Hold You Back!

Revisiting Some Rules

- Never end a sentence with a preposition.
- Do not begin a sentence with And or But.
- Never split an infinitive.

Assessing Some Trends

- Use of contractions in business correspondence
- Use of short words, short sentences, short paragraphs and bulleted lists
- Use of gender-neutral nouns and pronouns

How to Use an Active Voice and a Conversational Tone to Enhance How Much Your Reader Will Remember

What do active verbs do?

- They indicate immediate action.
- They are more emphatic.
- They indicate responsibility on the part of the writer.

A Quick Tip for Active Verbs

Although not always true, most passive verbs contain some form of the verb “to be.” Look for “was,” “were,” “have,” “has,” “have been” and “has been” in your writing. Whenever you find it, eliminate that form and use an active form of the verb. Avoid using “You have been late all week.” Instead, try “You came in late all week.” Notice how action and responsibility are evident in the second sentence.
Using Contemporary Writing Techniques and an Inviting Tone to Stimulate Reader Interest, continued

When Is Jargon Appropriate?

Jargon is only appropriate if it facilitates communication between two people who both understand and use it.

Cut Stiff, Outdated Lingo From Your Documents and Replace It With Sharp Images That Enhance Understanding

Skill Practice

Rewrite the letter below to make it more effective business communication.

Due to the fact that the item you requested in your recent letter of June 23rd has now been temporarily discontinued, we are taking this opportunity to apprise you of this situation before you begin the construction to which you alluded in said letter. Subsequent to your letter, our company arrived at the conclusion that all such requests should be forwarded to our engineering department, whose expertise in the field in which you are currently engaged would make them the logical choice for further discussion and consulting as to the possibility of substitute stock items, should such items be available. At your earliest convenience, may we request that you be in correspondence with Mr. Norris regarding your particular needs? Pending receipt of your further correspondence, we will apprise Mr. Norris of your situation.
Conveying Professionalism and Credibility in Your Writing

Words That Are Never Appropriate in Business Writing

- You
- But
- Can’t
- Always or never
- Should have or ought to have

Align Your Writing With the Image Your Organization Wants to Project and Gain Recognition for Being a Business Writer Who Gets Results for Your Company

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

How to Trim the Fat From All Your Business Documents

“Keep It Short and Simple” and “Use Transitions” are quoted from Fat-Free Writing Business: Writing for the Information Age by Carol Andrus, Crisp Publications.

- Keep it short and simple.
- Write shorter sentences.
- Create must-read reference lines.
- Get to the point
- Close with a bang.
- Write shorter paragraphs.
- Use transitions.
Use Transitions

Without smooth transitions from one thought, section or idea to the next, the reader will experience a bumpy road wondering where you are headed! Also tells the reader that you are adding a similar thought. However instantly conveys “Here comes something different.”

Sentences and phrases can also serve as transitions:

- “That brings us to the next step, which is …”
- “Now that we’ve settled that problem, let’s look at …”
- “Unfortunately, in this case, we won’t be able to …”
- “In addition to budget constraints, there’s another matter we have to discuss.”
Writing Letters, Memos and Reports That Are Organized and Reader-Focused

Three Characteristics All Good Business Letters Share

1. They are short.

2. They are clear.

3. They are personal.

How to Prepare Correspondence That Says “Professional”

- Appearance (letter style, placement on the page, font style and size) is the first indication of a professionally written letter, memo or report.

- The second is no spelling or typographical errors.

- Third, the grammar is correct.

- Finally, professional correspondence is succinct, and its meaning is clear.

Malcolm Forbes’ Advice on Writing Good Business Letters

- Know what you want; state it clearly.
- Call the person by name. Get it right!
- Be positive and natural. Tell your readers what’s in it for them.
- Give it your best effort. Make it look good — clear copy, centered and clean.
- Keep it short. Underline a couple of the most important words or phrases, but don’t overdo it.
- Maintain the reader’s interest. Don’t present opinions as facts.
- Make it correct. Errors leave your readers with only two possible reactions: The writer is either ignorant or careless.
- Say what you have to say and get out.
Writing Letters, Memos and Reports That Are Organized and Reader-Focused, continued

A Guide for Writing Any Letter

What do all letters have in common? A beginning, middle and end. Review the beginning (B), middle (M) and end (E) of the following seven familiar types of correspondence.

1. **Information or acceptance**
   
   B: State the topic.  
   M: Discuss or explain it.  
   E: Say what you want done about it.

2. **Sales or persuasion**
   
   B: Capture your reader's attention with an idea or offer.  
   M: Bombard the reader with convincing facts and emotional appeal.  
   E: Urge the reader to act (or to agree) immediately.

3. **Request**
   
   B: Disclose what you want.  
   M: Describe, when appropriate, why you want it.  
   E: Thank your reader for the help you hope to get.

4. **Complain**
   
   B: Announce what's wrong.  
   M: Provide details enabling your reader to help.  
   E: Say what you expect your reader to do next.

5. **Rejection**
   
   B: Build a bridge of sympathy to your reader.  
   M: Bury the rejection in the middle, justifying it while allowing the reader to save face.  
   E: Emphasize anything good you can say about the situation.

6. **Collection**
   
   B: Courteously present the details of the overdue payment.  
   M: Ask politely for immediate payment.  
   E: Mention any action you plan if payment is not made immediately and enclose a return envelope.

7. **Goodwill**
   
   B: Express thanks, praise, congratulations or sympathy; extend an invitation.  
   M: Support expression with personal details.  
   E: End on a warm note.

Writing Letters, Memos and Reports That Are Organized and Reader-Focused, continued

One Simple Technique That Will Make All Your Writing Easier to Read and More Powerful

1. Eliminate errors: Learn to proofread.

Proofreading Tips

- Scan. Read out loud. Read silently. Read backwards. Read slowly.

- Check proper names and little words. “Or” and “of”; “it” and “is”; and “for,” “form” and “from” are not interchangeable.

- Proof for one or two types of mistakes at a time (see list of common errors).

- Make a list of YOUR common errors and look for them specifically.

- Ask someone else to read the document.

- Proof headings separately and carefully.

- Look away (to a distant point) from the copy every few minutes to avoid eyestrain.

- Read down columns in a table.

- Avoid on-screen proofing. Read hard copy line by line.

- If you must proof on-screen, change font color and size.

- Use a different-colored pen to check off corrections made in the latest version.

- Work from enlarged text.

- Proof in four- to seven-word chunks.
Writing Letters, Memos and Reports That Are Organized and Reader-Focused, continued

Tips for an Effective Written Report or Proposal

- Highlight important points.
- Use bulleted lists for ease of readability.
- Number sequential steps.
- Leave plenty of white space.
- Make each paragraph eight lines or fewer.

The Formal Report

Report formats vary from company to company. However, most long or formal reports have 11 elements. Not every report will contain all 11 parts. You may want to omit some part, depending on the kind of report and on your reader’s needs; nonetheless, you should be aware of the purpose and function of each part.

Preliminary Materials

1. Title page — The title page contains all the identifying information.
   - Title of the report
   - Issuing company
   - Recipients
   - Date
   - Writer’s name

   Most companies have their own formats for title pages so check copies of previous reports to see which format your company uses.

2. Letter of authorization — This letter follows a blank sheet of paper after the title page and is formatted according to the company standard for business letters. The person who authorized the report should write the letter. It should outline the purpose of the material and should authorize the research and writing of the report.

3. Letter of transmittal — This letter, in the form of a regular business letter or memo, addresses the receiver of the report and explains the purpose of the report. It may contain a checklist of all persons who will receive a copy of the report.

4. Table of contents — The table of contents lists all the topics and materials in the report. Use lowercase Roman numerals to number all the preliminary report materials except the title page. Number the body of the report with Arabic numerals. Each company may have a slightly different format for the table of contents. Check previous reports to establish the format. You may put the table of contents in uppercase and lowercase or in all caps. You may want to list the titles of appendices by letter. You will indent the appendix titles under the heading “Appendices.”
Writing Letters, Memos and Reports That Are Organized and Reader-Focused, continued

5. **Summary or abstract** — Other terms you can use for this section of the report are preface, synopsis, foreword or digest. This section gives the reader a quick, concise overview of the report. It is usually one-half page to one page long and does not include data or figures.

A good summary:

- Provides enough information to specify the aims and results of your project.
- Is brief without omitting essential information.
- Is written in a fluid, easy style.
- Is consistent in tone and emphasis with the body of the report.
- Makes use of accepted abbreviations to save space, but it does not include any tables or illustrations.

**Body of the Report**

6. **Introduction** — The introduction describes the reason for the report. It contains the purpose, methods of gathering data, sources, definitions and a brief plan of the report. A good introduction arouses the reader’s interest and gives some background information on the subject, preparing him or her for the contents of the report.

7. **Body** — Include in this section all the pertinent data you have gathered and analyzed. State your case and substantiate your points, presenting the results of our research and analysis. You may also include illustrations — charts, graphs, pictures — to support or enhance your discussion.

Organize your report under various headings. Major headings indicate the main points of the report. Subheadings and sub-subheadings indicate subordinate and supporting ideas. You’ll notice that this use of headings is similar to the traditional outline that you learned to make in your early grammar classes. Where you place the various categories and headings will depend on your company’s preference, but, in general, follow these guidelines:

- First category — centered, in capitals
- Second category — left margin, in capitals
- Third category — left margin, initial capitals, underscored
- Fourth category — indented five spaces from left margin, initial capitals, underscored
- Fifth category — left margin, initial capitals

Generally, you’ll need only three categories; however, you can use additional headings if necessary.
Here is a general outline of where to put the various elements on the page:

- **Page numbers** — Number second and succeeding pages either at the top center or top right-hand side, four lines from the top of the page. Alternatively, you may place page numbers at the bottom center or right-hand side, approximately four lines from the bottom of the page.
- **Major heading** — center and capitalize
- **Subheading** — left margin, capitalize
- **Margins** — left margin, 1 1/2 inches; right margin, 1 inch; 1-inch to 1 1/2-inch top and bottom margins
- **Body of report** — double-space
- **Long quotes** — single-space long quotes, end footnotes, tables and bibliographies

8. **Conclusion** — Readers may skim through the body of the report to get to the conclusion section. They want to know what the data and supportive materials mean. What patterns, trends or observations did you find in your research? You should state your conclusions briefly and clearly, preferably in a series of numbered statements. Make sure that your conclusions are logical outcomes of your data, supported by the information and research you have completed.

9. **Recommendations** — Take your conclusions to the next step and answer such questions as:
   - What should be done?
   - How do we achieve the desired outcome?
   - How can we persuade people to agree with our plan of action?

Your recommendations should be action steps or suggestions for action that give the reader a starting point for the next phase in the process.

**Supplementary Materials**

10. **Bibliography** — List in the bibliography all sources used in writing your report. List the names of people you’ve interviewed or with whom you have corresponded. Give the complete information on all books, reports, articles, documents and other references so that your readers can locate and review these materials if they wish.

   Alphabetize entries in the bibliography by the author’s last name or by the document’s title if there is no author. The articles and, a, and the are not used as the first word.

11. **Appendices** — Include in this section information that supports the data in the body but is too lengthy or detailed to include in the text. You can include charts, questionnaires, short reports or documents, photographs, explanations of statistical methods or computer programs used to gather data, transcripts of interviews or any other data you think the reader would find valuable.
12. Illustrations

Note: Number illustrations consecutively within a chapter or throughout the report if you do not have chapters. Give them a designation: Table 1 or Illustration 3.

- **Graphs**
  - Are visually more interesting than tables.
  - Allow the reader to easily spot trends, cycles and other movements.
  - Condense a large amount of material into a small space.

- **Tables**
  - Present information in columns.
  - Summarize changes or compare information over time.
  - Include more detailed or complex material than graphs.
  - Contain some narrative or explanation.

- **Photographs**
  - Are good when discussing site locations or new facilities.
  - Are excellent for showing damage for insurance purposes.
Writing Letters, Memos and Reports That Are Organized and Reader-Focused, continued

Memos

Memos are less formal than business letters, but your recipients will expect your memos to adhere to the standard memo format, designed for quick and easy perusal of the contents.

Header: Date
To (don't include titles)
From (initial next to your name prior to distribution)
Subject (be very specific)

Body: Your purpose for writing
Why it is important for your reader
Suggested or recommended action

Sample Memo

M E M O R A N D U M

Date: March 30, 2004
To: All Staff
From: Michael Smith
Subject: New Parking Policy

Effective next Monday, April 2, the west parking lot will open at 7 a.m. and close at 9 p.m. The additional parking should more than compensate for closing the south lot during our expansion.

Thanks for your flexibility during this exciting time.
Writing Letters, Memos and Reports That Are Organized and Reader-Focused, continued

Capitalize on Your Personal Style to Make Your Readers Comfortable

- Write the way you speak.

- Use words with punch. The short word is often the best word.

- Avoid unnecessary words.
  - Greatest maximum possible — maximum, most
  - Meet together — meet
  - With the exception of — except
  - Because of the fact that — because
  - The question as to whether — whether
  - Until such time as — until
  - Repeat the same — repeat

- Use personal words.
  - Compare “One’s job deserves one’s full attention” to “Your job deserves your full attention.”
  - Compare “We request your attendance” to “We invite you to attend.”

- Use contractions.
  - Compare “I will call you tomorrow” to “I’ll call you tomorrow”; “We are redesigning” to “We’re redesigning.”
  - Most style authorities now agree that contractions are acceptable in modern business writing.
How to Influence, Persuade and Sell!

Simple Ways to Add Impact to Every Sentence

• Use the recipient’s words and phrases.
• Use active voice rather than passive voice.
• Avoid beginning sentences with “It is” or “There are …”
• Write at the seventh-grade level.
• Use strong verbs. Minimize adjectives and adverbs.

Seven C’s of Convincing Business Writing

1. Complete

2. Correct

3. Constructive
   • Positive words
   • Potentially dangerous words

4. Conversational
   • Eliminate
   • Use instead
   • Forget

5. Clear

6. Concise

7. Concrete
How to Influence, Persuade and Sell! continued

Two Tips That Will Add Punch to Every Paragraph

1. Write in the present tense whenever possible.
   Writing in the present tense creates a sense of immediacy and readily allows for the active voice and stronger verbs.

2. Vary sentence length and structure.
   Add interest to your writing and help your reader get the message by making use of different kinds of sentence structures.

Refresher — Sentence Structure

Phrases
A phrase is two or more words without a subject and a predicate, that is used as a noun, an adjective or an adverb.
Example: ... going to the meeting. The hall, crowded with guests ...

Clauses
A clause contains both a subject and a verb. There are two kinds of clauses.

- **Independent clauses** can stand alone as complete sentences. They are often joined to another clause, either independent or dependent, when the contents of both clauses are closely related.
  Examples: I am going to the meeting.
  The hall, crowded with guests, was stifling.

- **Dependent clauses** cannot stand alone. They do contain both a subject and a verb, but they also contain a connecting word or phrase that “depends” on other information to be complete. Dependent clauses by themselves are sentence fragments.
  Example: When I go to the meeting ...
  When I go to the meeting, I’ll see my old friends. (Dependent clause is followed by an independent clause)

Sentence
If the document arrives tomorrow, I’ll bring it to your office on Friday.

If the document arrives tomorrow  dependent clause  
I’ll bring it to your office  independent clause  
on Friday  phrase
How to Influence, Persuade and Sell! continued

Sell Anything — Products, Ideas, Services, Even Yourself — With Greater Success Than Ever Before

You Can Be More Persuasive, Especially When You Expect Considerable Resistance From Readers

- Write in your own voice. Be enthusiastic, but don't gush.
- Stress benefits, not features.
- Solve a problem. Point out the problem and then fix it.
- Use powerful words: authentic, reliable, valuable, simple, classic, guaranteed, ultimate, innovative, revolutionary, etc.
- “Free” is a magic word. Offer something for added value.
- Tell a story. It's hard to resist reading a story especially if it sounds like someone who has a situation similar to your own. People love success stories.
- Talk intimately with the reader. Chat informally with short sentences and simple words. Make it easy for the reader to quickly understand your points. Most people will give your letter a three-second look before deciding to read it or toss it.
Imagine your reader before you begin writing and keep that person in mind as you write. For example:

- If you’re writing a memo to six people, and you know one of those people, write as if you were writing to that person. If you’re writing a memo to six people, and you know them all, write as if you were writing to the one who knows the least about the subject of your memo. In doing so, you will give full information to all your readers.

- If you are writing to a group of people (such as the general shareholders), think of someone you know who would fit into their category: age, gender, occupation, interests, etc. That person may not be a general shareholder, but by writing with him or her in mind, you immediately add a personal flavor to your correspondence that makes it more effective.

- If you’re writing to a large segment of the population (such as government bulletins), write as if writing to your Aunt Sally, your mother or your sister. Write to one person. Otherwise, your writing is impersonal, cold and formal in style.

In her book *Fat-Free Writing*, Carol Andrus describes the upheaval in business communication that has taken place in recent years. She recommends a less formal, more engaging style to keep today’s reader with you.

**Shirtsleeve Strategies**

- Use short, familiar words.
- Get rid of word weeds.
- Eliminate time-wasters.
- Avoid stuffiness and clichés.
- Be positive in tone.
- Be specific and concrete.
- Don’t use jargon.
- Keep terms consistent.
Practical Solutions to Real-World Writing Challenges

Deliver Bad News With Tact

Do

- Begin on a neutral or positive tone.
- Give reasons for your decision.
- Mention conditions for reconsidering (if appropriate).
- End on a positive note.

Don’t

- Use a form letter.
- Hide behind company policy.
- Patronize.
- Repeat the bad news.

How to Write “No” Letters With a “Yes” Sound

Your message: This register is closed.
You say: We will be happy to help you at the next register.

Your message: We cannot process your incomplete application.
You say: Please complete the highlighted sections of your application and return to us for processing.

Your message: The bank is closed on Saturdays.
You say: The bank is open for your business Monday through Friday.

Your message:
You say:
Practical Solutions to Real-World Writing Challenges, continued

Use Positive Words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To Make Matters Worse</th>
<th>To Get Things Back on Track</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Your mistake caused…”</td>
<td>“To address the problem, we suggest…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“You don’t realize…”</td>
<td>“Have you considered…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Your failure to comply…”</td>
<td>“Unfortunately, the deadline is passed.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Your thoughtless behavior…”</td>
<td>“This unexpected situation…”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Write Complaint Letters That Get Immediate Action

To Write an Effective Letter, Answer These Questions First

- What do I want to achieve?
- Who is the person most likely to help me?
- What does my reader know about the situation?
- Can I document the problem?
- Has my anger distorted my perception of what happened or what an appropriate resolution would be?
Practical Solutions to Real-World Writing Challenges, continued

Respond to Complaints With Relationship-Building Success

According to Carol Andrus in the book *Fat-Free Writing*, “Negative apologies leave a negative impression.” Ms. Andrus says, “Affirm your reader’s right to complain and state positively what you will do to rectify a mistake.”

Negative: We’re sorry this mistake occurred.
Positive: You are right to point out that...

Negative: We are indeed sorry the information was sent to the wrong person.
Positive: We’ll make sure the information gets to you next time.

Keep Your Readers’ Goodwill by Following These Suggestions

• Acknowledge the complaint.

• State your solution.

• Thank the customer for giving you the opportunity to clear up a problem.

Instructions, Procedures and Explanations

Concrete Tips to Simplify Writing Instructions, Procedures and Explanations

• Tell what you’re going to describe. For example: “The policy for paid days off encompasses vacation, sick and personal days” OR “Petty cash is available to managers for approved projects.”

• List all steps, activities or tasks individually.

• Organize activities or steps in the order to be completed.

• Use transitional phrases where necessary to clarify the movement from step to step.

• Ask someone unfamiliar with the instructions, procedures or explanations to review your document for clarity.
Practical Solutions to Real-World Writing Challenges, continued

How to Make Written Requests That Get Favorable Replies

Strategies to Ensure a Positive Response to Your Letters

• Make sure you state the subject of your letter in your reference headline after “RE:” If you feel it’s not offensive, state the request here instead.

• Begin with your real purpose. Rarely are enclosures or attachments your most important point—so don’t begin with them.

• Choose a tone appropriate to the situation. Avoid angry or insinuating remarks if you’re writing a complaint. These will get you nowhere.

• Express your positive expectations for cooperation. A note of warmth always helps.

• Supply only enough background material to orient the reader to the situation. More than this might obscure your request.

• Before you close, be sure your reader knows what to do. Request specific action: what, when and how. Use headlines such as Action Requested, Deadlines and Next Steps.

Taken from Write to the Top: Writing for Corporate Success by Deborah Dumaine, Random House.

Special Situations

Letters of Reference, Introduction, Condolences, Congratulations or Apology

National Press Publications’ manual Business Letters for Busy People offers timesaving, ready-to-use business letters for all occasions. Available at the Resource Table, this book is a valuable addition to a busy person’s library.
Suggested Resources

CD-ROMs

*Powerful Communication Skills*, presented by Joe Healey
*Clip Words*
*Better Business Writing*

Audio Programs

*Business Grammar & Usage*, presented by Kathy Boté
*Communicate With Confidence*, presented by Pamel Jett-Aal
*Powerful Communication Skills*

Business User’s Manuals

*Business Letters for Busy People* (with CD-ROM)
*Prioritize, Organize, 2nd ed.* by Peg Pickering
*Conquer the Brain Drain* by Judi Moreo and Fiona Carmichael
*Lifescripts* by Stephen M. Pollan
*How to Say It At Work* by Jack Griffin

Books

*Franklin Covey Style Guide*
*Better Business English Series (5-vol. set)*
*Webster’s New World Letter Writing Handbook* by Robert W. Bly
*Administrative Assistant’s and Secretary’s Handbook* edited by James, K. Wilson Strorman, Jennifer Wauson and Kevin Wilson
*The Elements of Style, Fourth Edition* by William Strunk and E. B. White
*Fat-Free Writing*
*The Essentials of Business Writing*
*Powerful Proofreading Skills*
*Memory System*
*101 Sample Write-Ups*
*Writing Business Proposals and Reports*
*Technical Writing, 5th ed.*
*Dynamic Communication Skills for Women*

Be sure to order a FREE catalog for a complete listing of training, seminars and products available from National Seminars Group. For more information, visit us on the Web at www.natsem.com or call 1-800-258-7246.
Today's training is a great way to develop your professional skills, stay abreast of changes in your workplace, and initiate balance in your personal life. Learning doesn’t have to stop when the session ends. To perfect newly learned skills, practice the following:

1. **Write a commitment statement.**
   Before the training session, you may have written a learning goal. Review your objectives, what you learned and how it will improve your work. Recommit to those goals.

2. **Stay in touch.**
   Periodically review the training agenda, revisit your notes or talk with a trainer or attendee. Discuss how you’ve applied the knowledge and what outcomes you’ve gleaned.

3. **Keep your managers in the loop.**
   After this training session, meet with your manager to discuss ways to reinforce what you’ve learned. Talk to your manager about how you want to apply the information and how it can improve your work. Get your manager’s support in helping you find ways to put your newfound skills to work.

4. **Establish a support system.**
   There are other people in your workplace, as well as at home, who have had the same training or who experience the same needs. Get an associate to plan with you, or ask a “graduate” to serve as your mentor.
