



Writing Tips

from the Business Communication Center



Know Your Purpose

- Identify your general purpose
- When writing a report, identify specific purposes
- Determine if you will develop an informational or persuasive message

Know Your Audience

- Identify your primary and secondary audiences
- Evaluate your credibility with the audience
- Anticipate your audience's likely response
- Judge audience's knowledge of your topic
- Evaluate audience's unique qualities

Pre-writing Activities

- Create a comfortable writing environment
- Use Brainstorming or Mindmapping to develop ideas
- Write down your main message and supporting messages
- Develop an outline and create a paragraph plan

Technique

- Keep your tone and style conversational and professional
- Match vocabulary use to your audience
- Determine if you need to use direct or indirect approach
- Use most effective person of address (1st, 2nd, 3rd)
- Use most effective voice (usually active not passive)

Mechanics

- Check grammar as you compose
- Use proper punctuation
- Check spelling

Design

- Use strong, effective visuals when needed
- Use appealing headings and sub-headings

Sentence Level Attention

- Trim excess from sentences
- Use powerful words
- Control sentence pace (how quickly it is read) by moving phrases and clauses

Paragraph Level Attention

- Build paragraphs on points from your secondary messages from your paragraph plan
- Focus and unify each paragraph
- Use conventions that make your paragraph compelling
- Use paragraph linking techniques

Document Level Attention

- Craft an introduction that grabs your audience
- Make strong transitions between main ideas or sections
- Make sure your conclusion puts main points in a broader perspective and provokes thought
- Use proper format conventions for document type (memo, letter or report)
- Know style required (MLA, APA, Chicago, etc.), and style conventions, this will include works cited, "in text" citations, page numbers and the like.

Post Doc: Editing and Proofreading

- Run your spell- and grammar- checking before proofreading
- Wait an hour or more to proofread important documents
- Proofread for sense, clarity, and correctness
- Proofread the body of the text, then return to headers, tables, graphics and other parts of the document
- Ask someone else to read your document