
SOLID BUSINESS WRITING



INSTRUCTOR GUIDE
4-HOUR COURSE

SOLID BUSINESS WRITING

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Instructional design and learning philosophy

We are committed to providing the best core-skills content possible for Instructor-Led Training (ILT). The following principles are applied in the development of programs:

Sound Instructional Design

All course content is developed using a variety of research techniques. These include:

- Brainstorming sessions with target audience
- Library research
- Online research
- Customer research (focus groups, surveys, etc.)
- Subject Matter Experts (SME)
- Interviews with trainers

Expert instructional designers create imaginative and innovative solutions for your training needs through the development of powerful instructional elements. These include:






- Learning objectives — effective tools for managing, monitoring and evaluating training
- Meaningfulness — connects the topic to the students' past, present, and future
- Appropriate organization of essential ideas — helps students focus on what they need to know in order to learn
- Modeling techniques — demonstrate to students how to act and solve problems
- Active application — the cornerstone to learning — helps students immediately apply what they have learned to a real-life situation
- Consistency — creates consistent instructions and design to help students learn and retain new information
- Accelerated learning techniques — create interactive, hands-on involvement to accommodate different learning styles

Application of Adult Learning Styles






Adults learn best by incorporating their personal experiences with training and by applying what they learn to real-life situations. Our experienced instructional designers incorporate a variety of accelerated learning techniques, role-plays, simulations, discussions, and lectures within each course. This ensures that the learning will appeal to all learning styles and will be retained.

Course timing

Chapter One: Preparing to Write

Type of Activity	Segment	Time
	Solid business writing	20
	How to spend less time writing	30
	What should you include?	10
	What action do you want readers to take?	5
	What type of document is it?	25

Chapter Two: Outlining and Writing

	Practice outlining	10
	Putting pen to paper	10
	Use the active voice	10
	Eliminate wordy expressions	5
	Don't let writer's block bog you down	5



Reading



Written Exercise



Facilitate








Group Activity

Course timing (cont.)

Chapter Three: Electronic Writing

Type of Activity	Segment	Time
	E-writing	15
	Netiquette	20

Chapter Four: Editing and Proofreading

	Edit, edit	5
	Step one: Practice editing	10
	Step two: Proofread	10
	Step three: Final check	15
	Wrap-up	10



Reading



Written
Exercise



Facilitate



Group
Activity

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Course objectives

Successful completion of this course will increase your knowledge of and ability to:

- ◇ Implement techniques to effectively write all types of business documents
- ◇ Utilize outlining to plan documents
- ◇ Follow acceptable e-mail protocol
- ◇ Edit and proofread for complete and professional documents

Chapter One



PREPARING TO WRITE

Reasons to write well

Writing is a critical skill in the workplace because it:

- ◇ Represents your contributions and the importance of a task or project you're working on
- ◇ Creates an image with words
- ◇ Increases communication
- ◇ Represents your level of competence
- ◇ Helps to avoid misunderstandings

Why do we churn out babble that is boring to write and to read? We tend to:

- ◇ Think more words are better
- ◇ Think bigger words are better
- ◇ Present undeveloped ideas
- ◇ Try to impress others

Ingredients of a well-written document

We recognize when they are missing, but it's harder to identify what the necessary components are. Here's the list.

A well-written document:

- ◇ Cuts to the chase
- ◇ Is clear
- ◇ Is correct
- ◇ Is conversational
- ◇ Is easy to read

Why write well?

- Make your contributions known
- Make your competence known
- Create an image



Transition: Acknowledge that many participants don't like to write, then transition to the reasons why it is important to write well (like it or not!). People judge us by the way we write, just as they do by the way we dress or talk. More and more, contact with coworkers and customers is through writing and the telephone. There is less face-to-face interaction. This makes it worthwhile to craft well-written documents.

Ingredients of a well written document

- 1) Cuts to the chase
- 2) Clear
- 3) Correct
- 4) Conversational
- 5) Easy to read

We recognize when a document is not well written. Yet it can be hard to pinpoint what is missing. This list of ingredients provides a fail-safe checklist of the components of a well-written document. If these items are present, then the document is complete. Behavioral goal: Be able to identify the components of a well-written document. The built-in assumption is that this knowledge provides a foundation for the ability to prepare well-written documents.

Start with planning

- Know your readers
- Include all necessary information
- Desired action
- Type of document

Transition: The old adage “less is more” applies to writing. Spend more time planning and less time writing. This will produce better results.

Outline your message prior to writing. When planning what to write, focus 100% on the message and what you intend to say. You are less likely to leave something out or make a mistake.

Audience analysis

Topic:	
Who will receive the document?	
What do they need to know about the topic?	
Why are you writing to them?	
What questions might they have?	
Why should they be interested?	

Activity: Review the sample Audience Analysis form with participants. Have them complete the copy in the appendix for a document they are currently writing or plan to write.

Behavioral goal: Be able to produce a complete outline prior to writing a document.

How to spend less time writing

Plan before you write. This breaks down the writing process, makes it more manageable, and produces better results. Not to mention, you spend less time on the actual chore of writing.

When planning a document, consider who will read it, what information to include, the action you want readers to take, and what type of document will best present the information.

Who will read it?

Before writing you need to consider who the readers will be. Think about their perspective on the topic and what pieces of information they will want to have. This lets you compose a reader-centered document and increases the probability of getting the desired results.

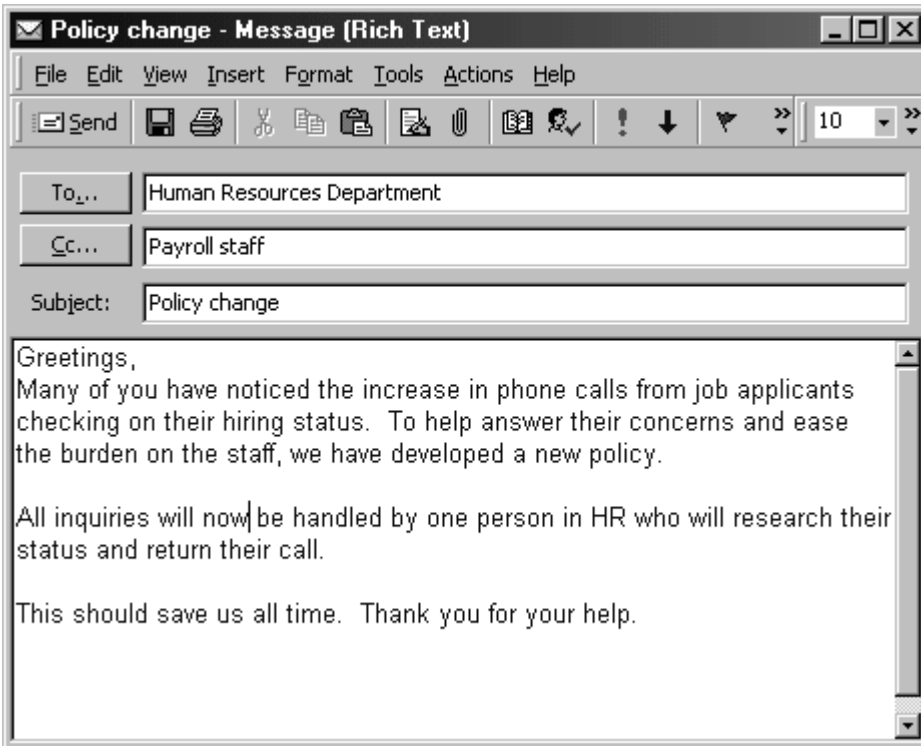
Sample audience analysis	
Topic:	Notify staff of construction in the main parking area and alternative parking arrangements during this time.
Who will receive the document?	Company-wide staff.
What do they need to know about the topic?	They need to know when construction will begin, the anticipated duration, how their parking will be impacted, and where they can park.
Why are you writing to them?	The memo will provide additional information and answer anticipated questions.
What questions might they have about the topic?	How long will the construction last? Where can they park during this period? Why is the construction being done?
Why should they be interested in the topic?	They will not be able to park as close to the building as they are accustomed.

What should you include?

An outline can be created quickly and easily. Remember the five Ws and an H? Answer these questions: who, what, when, where, why, and how, and you have probably addressed everything that needs to be included in the document.

What is missing?

Read the e-mail below for completeness. What information could be added for a better message?



For more complex messages, use the point-and-fact outline method. Write each point you wish to make, and then list the supporting information (or facts) below.

Tip: Write each point on a sticky note of one color and write supporting facts on the same color sticky notes. This allows for visual arranging and rearranging of the information.

What should you include?

Answer these questions:

- Who
- What
- Where
- When
- Why
- How

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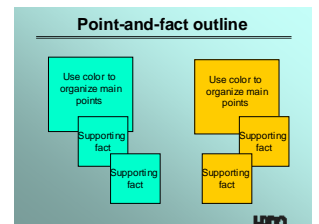
Don't be intimidated by writing an outline. Remind participants that it is not a formal outline, but simply a way to ensure the completeness of information as well as the flow. Exercise: Read the sample e-mail out loud. Review the five Ws and an H to see if all the necessary information is included.

What is missing?

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Answers: The missing information is who will handle these calls, how people will transfer inquiries to this person, what the time frame is for return calls, and when the will policy be effective.

Debrief: Ask participants what their response would be if they received this e-mail. Discuss how much time is wasted to clarify documents that are poorly written.



Transition:

Be clear about what action you want your readers to take. Make it as easy as possible for them to take this action. For example, include a tear-off response form, give a Web site link, etc.

Review the e-mail on this page. Ask, "Does this e-mail follow the four guidelines presented? What action would you take if you read this e-mail? What do you think the writer intended people to do?" The writer of the e-mail was actually delivering good news—that a new locking system had been installed with key-card access. However, all employees need to pick up their new ID badge/key card. How could this e-mail be rewritten to better communicate these points?

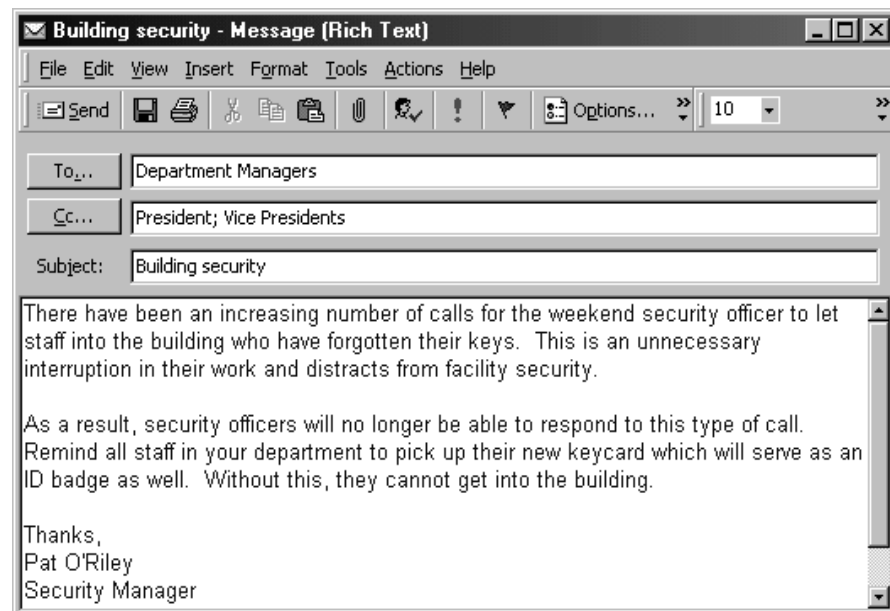
What action do you want readers to take?

The final step in planning a document is to specify what action you want the readers to take, if any.

This makes it more likely that you will get the desired response from readers. Consider the following factors:

- ◇ Is the document simply for the sake of information, or do readers need to respond or take some other action?
- ◇ Be specific and clear about what you want.
- ◇ Give a deadline for the action to occur.
- ◇ Provide a means for the action to happen, and make it easy for people to do what you want.

What would you do?



Tip: Don't forget to include a deadline for response. Otherwise, it could be put on the back burner and never get done.

What type of document is it?

Commonly document types are:

- ◇ Reports
- ◇ E-mails
- ◇ Proposals
- ◇ Letters
- ◇ Memos

Reports

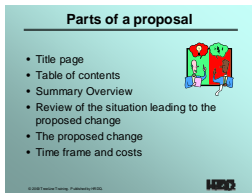
A report is a document that is used to communicate the final findings of a project or investigation. Reports are formal documents that provide supporting information. They generally end with a recommended action. They include a title page, table of contents, an executive summary, an explanation of the methodology utilized, details supporting each major point, conclusions, and recommendations.

Transition: Information should be presented in the most appropriate format.

Reports are the best tool when summarizing information or reporting status.

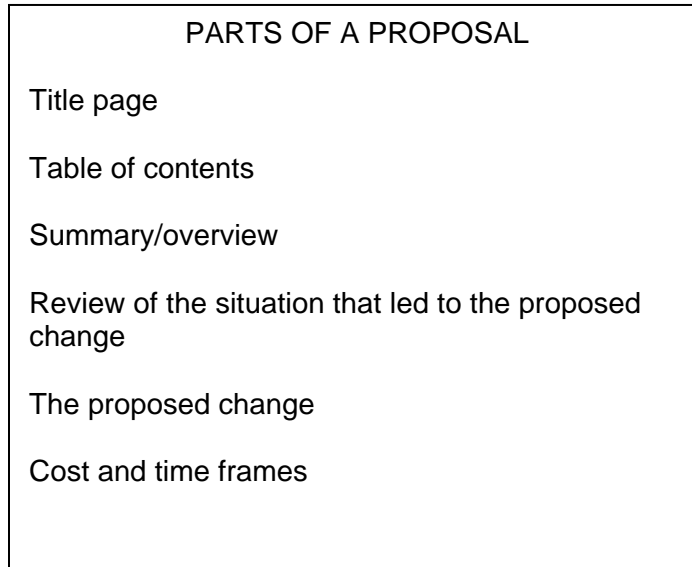
E-mails follow the same protocol as memos. Note that e-mail and netiquette will be discussed in detail later in the program.

A proposal is a combination of a letter and a report, with the specific purpose of asking for something to be done. It is like a letter in that it is more formal and normally goes outside the company. It is like a report in that it summarizes information about why the requested action should be taken. Mention that RFPs (request for proposals) are the most lengthy and formal proposals. Often there are very strict guidelines about how to complete them.



Proposals

When you need to make a request or convince people, write a proposal. Proposals range in length but should be kept as brief as possible.



Tip: Be persuasive and give solid reasons why your proposal should be accepted. Tailor the proposal to the situation and the people involved.

Letters

Letters are written when you need to convey information or make a request. Consider the layout of the letters below. Which would you rather read?

April 4, 2001
Claims Representative
XYZ Insurance Company
8832 Protection Lane
Fort Worth, TX 11111-0012

Dear Valued Customer,
We are writing to inform you of a change in your policy. To date, your policy has included both your vehicles and your homeowner's insurance. Part of our company has been acquired by ABC Insurance. We will no longer be able to offer homeowner's insurance. As a result, your homeowner's insurance will now be handled by ABC Insurance. XYZ will still handle your automobile insurance. There will be no changes in the billing or rates at this time. Further information about the specifics of your new homeowner's policy with ABC will be coming to you in the mail shortly. Be assured that ABC has been in the insurance industry for many years and is a reputable firm. They are known for providing industrial insurance to businesses. Every effort will be made to keep you as a customer of both XYZ and ABC corporations. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to call us. Thank you for your business.

Sincerely,
Claims Representative

April 4, 2001

Claims Representative
XYZ Insurance Company
8832 Protection Lane
Fort Worth, TX 11111-0012

Dear Valued Customer,

We are writing to inform you of a change in your policy. To date, your policy has included both your vehicle and your homeowner's insurance.

Part of our company has been acquired by ABC Insurance. We will no longer be able to offer homeowner's insurance. As a result, your homeowner's insurance will now be handled by ABC Insurance.

XYZ will still handle your automobile insurance. There will be no changes in the billing or rates at this time. Further information about the specifics of your new homeowner's policy with ABC will be coming to you in the mail shortly.

Be assured that ABC has been in the insurance industry for many years and is a reputable firm. They are known for providing industrial insurance to businesses.

Every effort will be made to keep you as a customer of both XYZ and ABC corporations. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to call us.

Thank you for your business.

Sincerely,
Claims Representative

Letters are more formal and "old school." They are used for communication going outside the company. The information conveyed in a letter can either be good news or bad news.

Activity: Have participants look at the two letter formats presented and select the most reader-friendly format. Point out that the format of a letter is key to getting it read.

Debrief: The second format is friendlier to look at and is, therefore, more likely to be read. A more readable letter is more likely to achieve the desired results.

Memos

Write a memo when you need written documentation and a more formal delivery to multiple people.

TO: Darrin Deas
Ann Johns
Peter Lockman

FROM: Manuela Ramirez

DATE: July 28, 2000

RE: Win money for exercising!

The time has come for the annual health program kick-off. It begins Monday, August 14th, and will run for four months, ending December 15th.

You can enter as an individual or form a team of four people. It's simple: just record your exercise activity and the length of time to earn points.

There will be prizes given to the individuals and teams with the highest points. Sign up at the front desk by 5:00 p.m. Friday.

Please distribute this information in your department, and call me if you have questions.

Write subject lines that are succinct, catchy, and provide a quick snippet of what the memo addresses. Practice by rewriting the subject lines below.

Catchy subject lines

Budget update	
Lab sampling results	
Calendar order	