

PERC Writing Assessment

developed by Booher Consultants, Inc.

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Booher Consultants, Inc.

Self Profile For:

Sample Report

06/17/2008

PERC Writing Assessment for Sample Report

Thank you for taking the PERC Writing Assessment. This feedback report interprets your responses and provides explanations and suggestions for improving your writing.

Scoring falls into three categories:

- Productivity
- Effectiveness/Results
- Clarity/Grammar

Productivity Scoring (7 questions):

Because writing is an art, not a science, not all of these questions have a “right or wrong” answer. For example, responses to these questions are based on nonproductive habits, such as having to write multiple drafts of a document or staring at a blank screen, trying to get started. On a few of these items, the scoring allows for two “best” responses.

Effectiveness Scoring (16 questions):

These responses are based on your own perceptions and conclusions. They ask you about how appropriate the language and details are in your documents. Other questions about your writing ask you to draw conclusions based on observable action from your readers. For example, do your readers take the action you want them to take? Here’s where feedback from your peers becomes important. If you respond that your action is always clear or that your tone is always appropriate, but your colleagues say “not so,” then that inconsistency is valuable information for you.

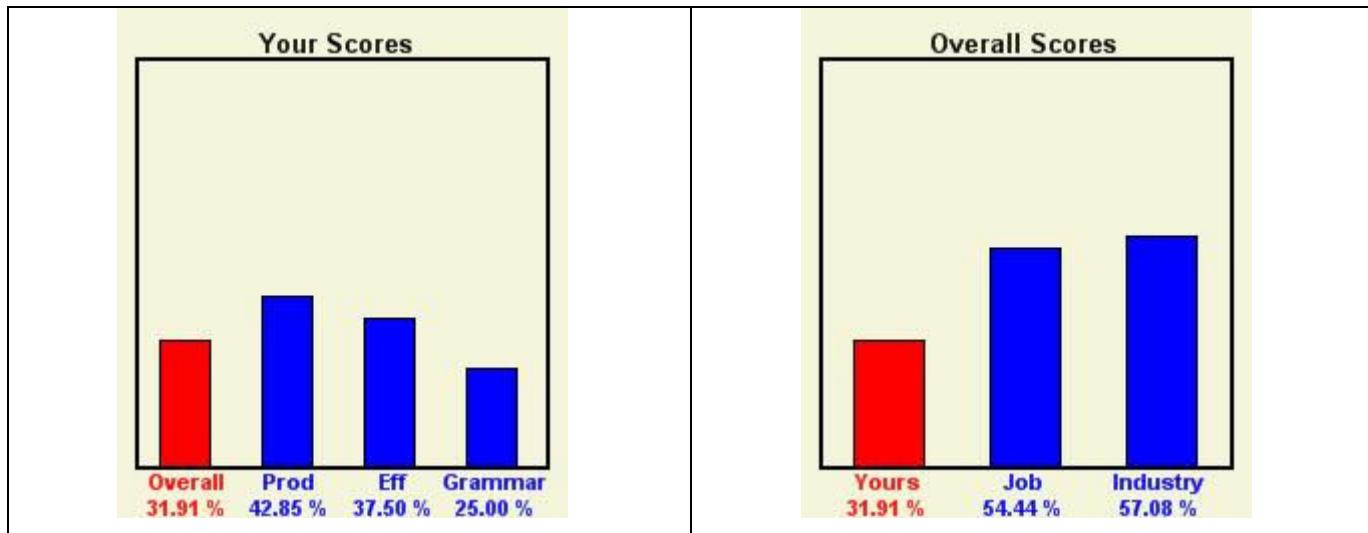
Clarity/Grammar Scoring (24 questions):

The clarity/grammar questions, of course, have a definite right or wrong response.

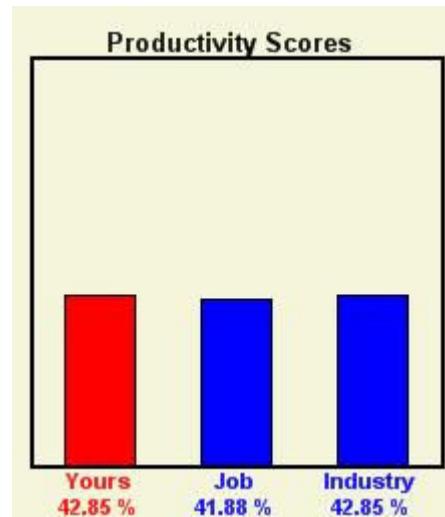
When you review the graphs below, you will see comparisons of your scores with the average of others who share your job title and others who are in your industry. You made the following choices:

- Job Title: Manager
- Industry: Utilities

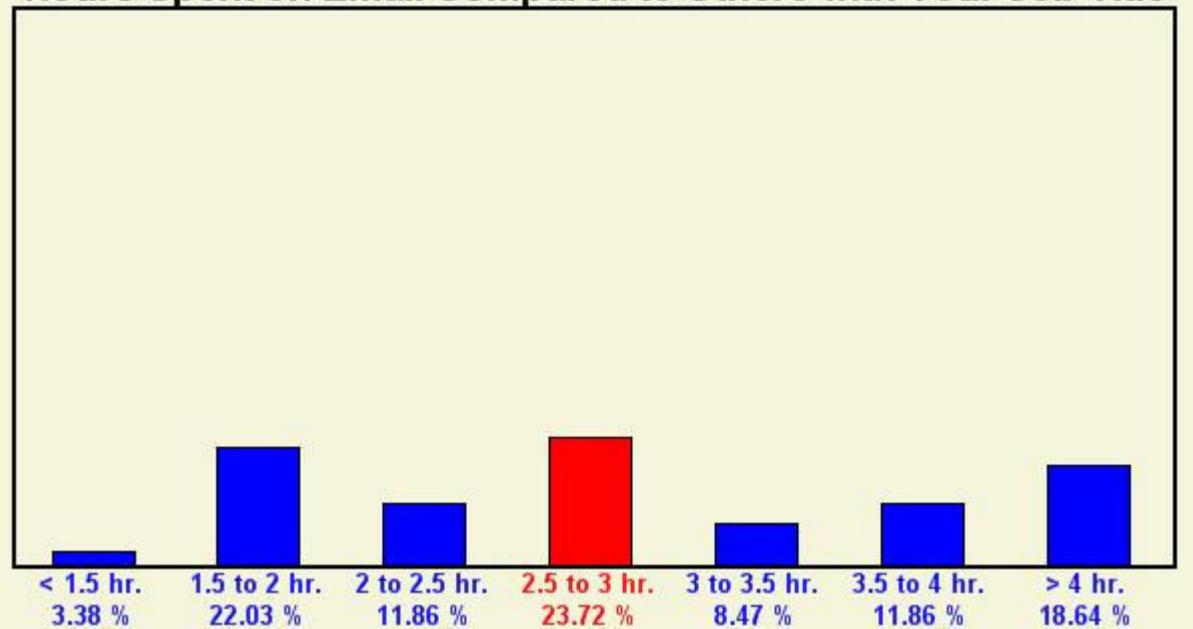
Some areas of the report show tallied or otherwise processed observer responses.. You have had 0 observers complete assessments for you.



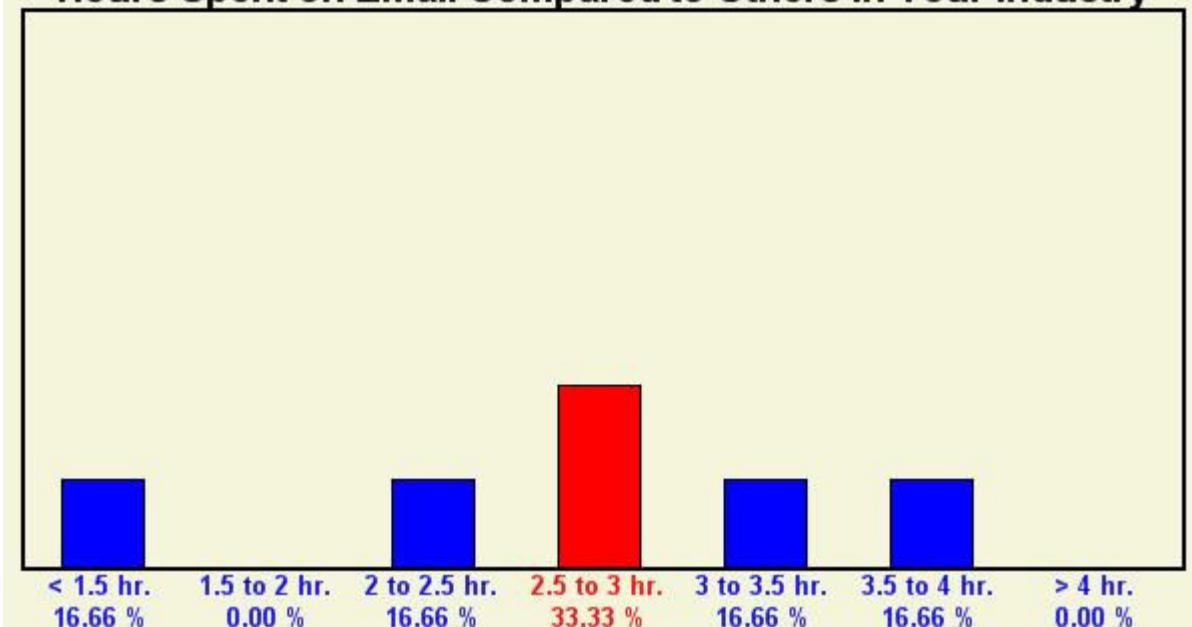
Productivity



Hours Spent on Email Compared to Others with Your Job Title



Hours Spent on Email Compared to Others in Your Industry



Productivity Habits and Characteristics

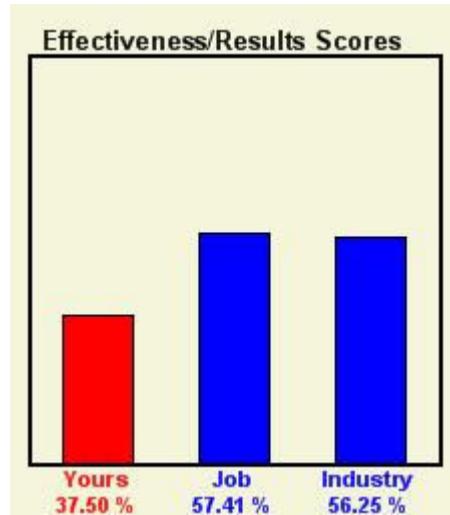
You indicated that you spend 21-30% of your time on writing-related tasks. Multiply your annual salary by this percentage to understand the dollar amount that your writing habits and schedule represent to you and your organization.

You organize well. That's probably the single biggest contributing factor to speed in writing.

Unfortunately, however, you often have to do rewrites because either first drafts are unclear or fail to achieve your desired goal.

You probably could write fewer drafts than you're now preparing with better results if you plan your writing process better, organize your ideas/information well, and improve clarity.

Effectiveness/Results



Characteristics of an Effective Writer

Characteristics		Yes	No
Captures the reader's attention	Self Others		X X
Achieves the goal, gets results	Self Others		X X
Gives clear, concise overviews of key messages	Self Others	X	X
States any recommendations or asks for action clearly	Self Others		X X
Provides accurate, complete, relevant information	Self Others		X X
Uses terms and language appropriate for the audience	Self Others		X X
Uses an appropriate tone for the reader, topic, and situation	Self Others		X X
Constructs concise, clear, grammatically correct sentences	Self Others		X X

You indicate that you write to customers. Improving your writing results with customers should pay off in improved customer interactions--fewer problems and, if you write proposals, possibly higher revenue generation.

You indicate that you write primarily internally. When that's the case, your image rests on those routine writing tasks and documents that you complete every week. These can be more important to your career than those once-a-year "big" writing assignments. Clear writing reflects clear thinking.

Clarity/Grammar



Your peers indicate that they notice grammatical mistakes in your writing. Grammatical mistakes affect clarity, image, and reading and writing speed.

Lack Understanding of Fundamentals of Grammar	Basic Understanding of Fundamentals of Grammar	Understanding of More Complex Grammatical Structures	Mastery of More Complex Grammatical Structures
X			

Strengths	Weaknesses
	Subject-Verb Agreement
	Pronoun Agreement
	Verb Tense, Viewpoint, Voice
	Punctuation
	Parallelism
	Misused Words

Detailed Analysis

Key: * - a correct response >> - your response

1 How authoritative and persuasive is your writing?

*A. My writing almost always gets results.

>>B. My writing gets result in some situations; in other situations, it doesn't.

C. I often fail to get results with my writing. I usually do better in person or on the phone.

D. My writing lacks authority and persuasiveness. I always do better in person or on the phone.

Explanation of best answer:

A primary goal of effective writing is to achieve an objective—to explain something clearly, to “sell” your ideas, to gain approval, to motivate others to action.

Likewise, the measure of good writing is the results you get when you write. If you do better on the phone or in person than in writing, it stands to reason that the problem is not your ideas, your product, your service, or your timing—it's your writing that's not up to par!

Granted, some people may pay less attention to written messages than a phone call or a personal conversation. But that's all the more reason that your writing must be compelling!

Observer Responses:

Fewer than five peer responses on this question make feedback inconclusive.

2 How would you describe the tone of your documents on most occasions?

>>A. Indirect

*B. Direct

C. Abrupt

D. Pleading, or timid, or apologetic

Explanation of best answer:

Your writing style is your personality on the page. Your tone should match the topic of the document, your relationship to the reader, and the purpose for the document.

A direct response is appropriate on most occasions.

Observer Responses:

	A. 1 B. 0 C. 1 D. 2
3	<p>How would you describe your writing style on most occasions?</p> <p>A. Stuffed-shirt (pompous)</p> <p>*B. Formal</p> <p>*C. Informal</p> <p>>>D. T-shirt (very informal)</p> <p>Explanation of best answer:</p> <p>Pompous writing went out of style with the sages of the Dark Ages. T-shirt writing is fine for the shopping mall. Aim between these two extremes, with either a formal or an informal style.</p> <p>You dress differently on different occasions. Likewise, you should write differently for different purposes. Adjust your writing style to match four things: your relationship to the reader, the subject of the document, the purpose the document (To be filed as standard operating procedures throughout the organization? To serve as evidence in legal proceedings? To announce a company picnic? To be deleted after read?)</p> <p>Observer Responses:</p> <p>A. 0 B. 0 C. 3 D. 1</p>
4	<p>Which is most typical of the kind of subject line you use?</p> <p>*A. Request for Feasibility Study on the Belford Project</p> <p>>>B. Status on Belford Project</p> <p>C. Approval Needed on Project</p> <p>D. Feasibility Study</p> <p>Explanation of best answer:</p> <p>b> “Status on Belford Project” doesn’t tell a reader he/she needs to respond.</p> <p>c> “Approval Needed on Project” doesn’t tell a reader which project or anything about the project.</p> <p>d> “Feasibility Study” doesn’t mention a project or state what action the writer wants.</p>

Make your subject line specific. Readers skim subject lines to make decisions such as these: read now, read later, delete, forward elsewhere, file without reading. Your subject line drives their decision.

Observer Responses:

Fewer than five peer responses on this question make feedback inconclusive.

5 In your writing, are any and all recommendations or action items clear?

- *A. Almost always people respond without difficulty.
- B. Sometimes people seem unclear about how to respond.
- >>C. Often people fail to respond or comply without asking for further clarification.
- D. Rarely do people respond, comply, or act without asking for further clarification.

Explanation of best answer:

Never make your readers wonder “So what?” after reading your documents. The best measure of effective writing is the response you get.

Take care that recommendations and action items are not stated as “by the way” comments in declarative statements. Recommendations and action items should always be stated clearly as actions—either in active voice, in question form, or imperative mood as a directive. For example:

Unclear: “Security policies should be reviewed regularly to ensure that they are updated in each field office.”

Clear: “You should review the security policies monthly to ensure that you have updated them in your field office.”

Clear: “Review the security policies monthly to ensure that you have updated them in your field office.”

Clear: “Would you please review the security policies monthly to ensure that you have updated them in your field office.”

Any of these revisions above clearly indicate that the reader should take the action.

Observer Responses:

Fewer than five peer responses on this question make feedback inconclusive.

6 In your documents, where are recommendations or other action items stated?

- A. Typically at the end
- B. Throughout the document
- >>*C. Typically up front

	<p>Observer Responses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. 1 B. 2 C. 1
7	<p>Do you give a clear, concise overview in your documents?</p> <p>>>*A. Almost always</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> B. Sometimes C. Occasionally D. Never <p>Observer Responses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. 0 B. 1 C. 3 D. 0
8	<p>How accurate is the information in your documents?</p> <p>*A. "Checked and double-checked, or it doesn't leave my desk."</p> <p>>>*B. "Generally accurate—but a few things may get past me."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> C. "Close enough to get the real work done." D. "They pay somebody else to handle the details." <p>Observer Responses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. 0 B. 0 C. 2 D. 2
9	<p>How complete and relevant are the details in your documents?</p> <p>*A. Provide all details necessary to understand a situation and take the required action</p> <p>B. Occasionally assume readers know more about a situation than they do and omit relevant details</p> <p>>>C. Often assume readers know more about a situation than they do and omit relevant details</p> <p>D. Almost always readers ask for more details</p>

Explanation of best answer:

Understanding your audience is the first step in good writing. When considering your audience, ask yourself these questions: Who is my primary reader(s)? Who are my secondary readers? (Those on my distribution list or other pass-on readers?) How will they use this information? What is their primary interest in this information? How much do they already know about the subject? What terms do I need to define? How technical or non-technical should I be?

Answers to these questions will guide your thinking about complete and relevant details.

Observer Responses:

- A. 0
- B. 2
- C. 2
- D. 0

10 Which is the best expression of the following idea?

- A. "At such time as this program becomes available and economically feasible, management will take steps to delineate the procedures to be followed by each department head in implementing the program in his or her particular division."
- *B. "When this program becomes available and affordable, management will delineate the procedures for department heads to implement the program in their respective divisions."
- >>C. "At such time and place as this program becomes available and makes economic sense, management will outline the steps and delineate the procedures to be followed to be set up and followed by each department head in implementing the program specific to his or her respective responsibilities."
- D. "As soon as possible, management will set up procedures to implement the program."

Explanation of best answer:

- a>Is better than c> because it has fewer redundancies and fewer padding phrases.
- c>Has too many padding phrases and passive-voice phrases
- d>Is a crisp, clear sentence, but omits part of the original idea

Writing is an art, not a science; there is more than one way to express any idea. But good writers strive for simplicity and precision.

11 Which is the best expression of the following idea?

- A. "Utilization of these forms by each divisional director in the compilation of the department's findings with regard to the Atlanta plant will result in a more efficient and easily assembled final proposal."
- B. "If each divisional director will compile his or her department's findings with regard to the Atlanta plant on these forms, it will result in a more efficiently and easily assembled final proposal."
- *C. "Having divisional directors use these forms to compile their department findings on the Atlanta plant will result in an efficient final proposal."

>>D. "Divisional directors should utilize these forms to compile their department's findings with regard to the Atlanta plant so as to result in a more efficient and easily assembled final proposal."

Explanation of best answer:

- a>Has too many verbs turned into noun phrases
- b>Has extra padding phrases
- d>Has extra padding phrases and 3-syllable words when smaller words will do

Writing is an art, not a science; there is more than one way to express any idea. But good writers strive for simplicity and precision.

12 Do you use acronyms, abbreviations, and technical language appropriately for your audience and purpose?

- *A. Always
- B. Often use when unnecessary and when confusing to those on my distribution list
- >>C. Sometimes use indiscriminately
- D. Often use when unnecessary and confusing to others, with the intention either to obscure or to impress

Explanation of best answer:

Understanding your audience is the first step in effective writing. Even if your primary reader understands the language, provide definitions or a glossary for secondary readers. If secondary readers can't understand what you've sent them, don't bother to copy them on your document. Instead, send them a brief summary of the full technical document.

Observer Responses:

- A. 0
- B. 0
- C. 0
- D. 4

13 Are your documents appealing and easy to skim?

- >>*A. Almost always
- B. Generally
- C. Sometimes
- D. Rarely

Observer Responses:

- A. 1
- B. 1

	C. 2 D. 0
14	<p>What's your philosophy of an appropriate distribution list?</p> <p>A. Copy everybody who might have a need to know; they can always delete what they don't want.</p> <p>>>B. Limit your distribution list to those who definitely have an interest in your document and then use appropriate details and language.</p> <p>Observer Responses:</p> <p>Fewer than five peer responses on this question make feedback inconclusive.</p>
15	You selected the best answer. This question was not presented to observers.
16	<p>Which statement best represents your attitude about grammar?</p> <p>*A. "I'm a stickler for grammar because grammar affects clarity and image. I try never to make errors."</p> <p>B. "I sometimes make mistakes."</p> <p>>>C. "If a document is really important, I ask someone else to proofread it and correct errors." On routine documents, checking grammar is not worth the time and effort. Errors are expected.</p> <p>D. "As long as people get the point, that's what matters."</p> <p>Explanation of best answer:</p> <p>Grammar errors in a document affect three things: clarity, speed, and image. Many grammar errors muddy the writer's meaning. For example, a misplaced comma can reverse the meaning of a sentence. A phrase inserted in the wrong place can create multiple meanings in a sentence.</p> <p>Grammar errors also affect speed. They slow readers down because they have to re-read unclear sentences, paragraphs, and documents several times to decipher the meaning. Often, readers have to write or phone the writer to ask for oral clarification.</p> <p>Finally, grammar errors mar the writer's image. The reader thinks, "If the writer is this sloppy with the grammar, do I trust that the facts, data, and other information is correct?"</p> <p>Clarity, speed, image—three by-products of grammar choices.</p> <p>Observer Responses:</p> <p>A. 0 B. 0 C. 1 D. 3</p>

17 Do you have difficulty organizing a document?

A. Almost always

B. Often

C. Occasionally

>>*D. Rarely

Explanation of best answer:

Here are some tips to help make drafting easier and faster:

—Do all your research and collect all your information before you begin writing. The “stop and start” syndrome is not conducive to speedy writing and a smooth flow.

—Start with any section first—usually the one that you’ll find the easiest to write.

—Draft your document in one sitting, if at all possible, to eliminate repetition, to save time in rereading, and to maintain a uniform tone.

—Stop when things are going well (if the task will take more than one sitting) so that you won’t procrastinate about finishing.

18 You selected the best answer. This question was not presented to observers.

19 How do you typically handle a writing task?

A. Start writing and then decide who should get a copy

B. Plan the structure first

>>*C. Consider reader(s) first

D. Do a little of everything at once

Explanation of best answer:

Here are some tips to make you more productive as you begin to write:

—Don’t worry that the opening sentence is not perfect. Just get something down. You can always go back and polish your opening sentences.

—Prime the pump with this sentence starter: “I’m just writing to say that...” and complete the sentence. Then go back and delete the sentence starter here. What you have left will typically stand alone.

—Write out a one-sentence summary of your entire document to serve as your “roadmap” for the rest of the document.

—Plan the structure of your document before you start to draft.

—Avoid the stop-and-start syndrome. Collect all your information before you begin writing.

—Fill in all your headings first; then go back and elaborate underneath with the details.

20 Do you have difficulty beginning a document?

*A. Never

	<p>>>B. Sometimes</p> <p>C. Often</p> <p>D. Almost always</p> <p>Explanation of best answer:</p> <p>a> One draft is usually insufficient in all but the most routine situations that you handle with a brief email.</p> <p>c> and d> If you're doing 4 or more drafts, chances are you have some unproductive writing habits. You may be trying to draft too soon—before you have fully considered your readers, decided how they will use your information, selected the appropriate structure for your document, or collected all your information.</p> <p>One draft and a good edit (making two drafts) should be a routine habit. Editing is almost always a good idea. Even professional writers such as novelists and screenwriters polish their prose. Allow a cool-off period and then edit for gaps in logic, missing details, unclear words or phrases, grammatical mistakes, and typos.</p> <p>Three drafts may be appropriate for important documents.</p>
21	You selected the best answer. This question was not presented to observers.
22	<p>How much of your overall writing time do you spend in preparation to write—before you actually begin to draft?</p> <p>A. 5-10%</p> <p>B. 15-20%</p> <p>>>*C. 25-50%</p> <p>D. 70-80%</p> <p>Explanation of best answer:</p> <p>“Pass-through” readers such as a boss or teammates who have input on a document before it reaches its final, intended audience are actually part of your own readership. The most important measure of effective writing is the response your writing receives. If supervisors or teammates ask for a rewrite, the writing process has become a productivity problem for all of you. Not only will you have to rewrite but they will also have to reread.</p> <p>Involve them earlier in your writing process by considering them as part of your reading audience: What do they want to see in the document? What are their interests? What are their biases? What will be their reactions? How detailed and technical should you be?</p> <p>Rewrites cost time and money.</p>
23	How often do you have to rewrite a document either because a boss, client, or colleague requests a rewrite or because the first document didn't achieve the desired goal?

A. Almost always

>>B. Often

C. Sometimes

*D. Rarely

Explanation of best answer:

a>This phrase is essential information describing *products* and, therefore, cannot be cut away from the rest of the sentence with commas.

b>This is a correct answer because *array* is the subject of the sentence and needs a singular verb: *has been*. Other nouns between the subject and the verb (*products, customers, region, years*) are objects of prepositions and cannot be the subject of the sentence.

c>*Available* does describe products, but the sentence would not read smoothly if the entire adjective phrase *available to our customers in this region* was split apart.

d>*Unsurpassed* is spelled correctly.

24 You selected the best answer. This question was not presented to observers.

25 "Either Fred Jones from your department or Serita Gonzales have authority to change these procedures, if necessary."

A. *These* should be *those*.

B. *From your department* should be enclosed with commas.

C. *If necessary* should not be set off with a comma.

>>*D. *Have* should be *has*.

Explanation of best answer:

Congratulations if you selected the correct answer on this one! It's difficult, and you can't trust your ear here.

a>*Displeases* is a singular verb that follows the indefinite pronoun *which* as its subject. Because the writer chose a singular verb, the reader knows the *which* must refer to a singular noun in the sentence—not *appliances*, the plural noun immediately preceding it. The only singular that makes logical sense is *installation*.

b>*Appliances* can't be what displeases the spouse, because *appliances* is plural and *displeases*, the verb after the subject of the following clause (*which*), is singular.

c>*Which* (or any pronoun, for that matter) has to stand for or refer to a specific noun—it can't refer to an entire idea such as the fact that *the building contractor failed to supervise the installation*. Although careless writers sometimes make it a habit to use a "which" clause and hang on an additional idea at the end

	of a sentence, that's not a grammatically correct construction. Often, such a construction creates multiple meanings for a sentence—as in this case.
26	You selected the best answer. This question was not presented to observers.
27	<p>Choose the correct sentence of the following four:</p> <p>A. One of our warehouses that is open 24/7 is unprofitable.</p> <p>B. One of our warehouses that is open 24/7 are unprofitable.</p> <p>>>*C. One of our warehouses that are open 24/7 is unprofitable.</p> <p>D. One of our warehouses that are open 24/7 are unprofitable.</p> <p>Explanation of best answer:</p> <p>a><i>Whoever</i> is the correct pronoun because it serves as the subject of the verb <i>calls</i> in the subordinate clause: “You tell whoever calls us....”</p> <p>b><i>It</i> is the correct pronoun because the word refers to the singular noun <i>order</i>.</p> <p>c>Both June 1 and June 1st are correct expressions. However, the use of ordinal numbers (the use of the letters st, rd, nd on the end of numbers) is an old-fashioned expression of dates. In current business writing, such endings on dates are no longer in common use.</p> <p>d>Two words used as an adjective unit before a noun should be hyphenated. They are not hyphenated if they follow a noun. Examples: <i>two-day course</i>, but <i>course that lasts two days</i> <i>life-long pursuit</i> <i>step-by-step plan</i> <i>time-tested procedure</i></p>
28	<p>“Tell whoever calls us to place more than a four-item order that we cannot ship them until June 1.”</p> <p>In the previous sentence,</p> <p>A. <i>whoever</i> should be <i>whomever</i>.</p> <p>*B. <i>them</i> should be <i>it</i>.</p> <p>C. <i>June 1</i> should be written <i>June 1st</i>.</p> <p>>>D. <i>four-item</i> should not be hyphenated.</p> <p>Explanation of best answer:</p> <p>a> <i>Me</i> is correct because it’s an objective case pronoun. Objective case pronouns (<i>him, her, me, it, them</i>,</p>

whom, us) serve as direct objects, indirect objects, objects of prepositions, subjects of infinitives, or appositives of any of these items. The missing word in this sentence needs to serve as an object of the preposition *to*. *Myself* is correct only when the word *me* or *I* is already elsewhere in the sentence.

b> The pronoun *I* can serve as a subject, a predicate noun, or an appositive in a sentence. The missing word in this sentence needs to serve as a direct object of the verb *call*: Please call whom? Please call I? Wrong choice.

c> *Myself* is a reflexive pronoun—pronouns with the *-self* suffix. (Other reflexive pronouns: *himself, herself, themselves, ourselves, yourself, yourselves, itself*) *Myself* is correct only when the word *me* or *I* is already elsewhere in the sentence. Reflexive pronouns add emphasis: “I *myself* told him the news.” “They *themselves* tore down the signs.”

HINT: A general guideline for selecting the correct pronoun when other people are named in the sentence is to omit the other names and then let your ear be your guide! Example: “Please give the samples to (*he* or *him*?) before you leave the building today.” Example: “Please give the samples to (*me* or *myself*?) before you leave the building today.”

- 29 “If you have problems, please call Harold Smith, Susan Jones, or _____ about the payment.”

Which word correctly completes the previous statement?

*A. me

>>B. I

C. myself

Explanation of best answer:

a> The clause *who works in Customer Service* is correct with or without being enclosed in commas. However, the sentence has two different meanings—depending on the punctuation marks. With the enclosing commas to set off that clause as nonessential information, the sentence means this: *John Foster and the other person kept complaining about the issue. By the way, he works in Customer Service.* Without the enclosing commas to set off that clause, the *who* clause becomes essential information to distinguish who John Foster is and distinguish him from another person who might have the same name in another part of the organization.

b> *She* is a nominative case pronoun. *John Foster and she*, not *her*, are the two compound subjects of this sentence. *Her* is an objective case pronoun and can't serve in the subject slot of a sentence.

HINT: Subject pronouns: *I, We, You, They, He, She, It, Who*
Object pronouns: *Me, Us, You, Them, Him, Her, It, Whom*

c> See the two notes above.

d> Both *kept* (past tense) and *keeps* (present tense) are grammatically correct.

- 30 “John Foster, who works in Customer Service, and her kept complaining about the issue.”

A. *Who works in Customer Service* should not be enclosed in commas.

*B. *Her* should be *she*.

C. The sentence is grammatically correct.

>>D. *Kept* should be *keeps*.

Explanation of best answer:

a> This parenthetical phrase should be set off in commas because it interrupts the smooth flow of the sentence.

b> Correctly punctuated as written and placed, this parenthetical phrase emphasizes the lengthy discussion. The sentence can also be correctly written this way: "After a lengthy discussion, I found out that..."

c> *Myself* is a reflexive pronoun. (Other reflexive pronouns: *himself, herself, themselves, ourselves, itself, yourself, yourselves*). Reflexive pronouns intensify and add emphasis back on the previous pronoun in the sentence. *Myself* can be correct only when *I or me* has been used elsewhere in the sentence: "I myself told him about the robbery." Never use a reflexive pronoun when you need a simple objective case pronoun.

d> Pronouns after *than* or *as* take the form they should have if the missing words were inserted in the elliptical clause. This sentence means, "I found out, after a lengthy discussion, that she attended the same college as ME DID." If you fill in the missing words, you quickly see why *me* is not the appropriate pronoun.

(Elliptical clauses, like ellipses dots, refer to something missing: Ellipses dots mean words have been omitted from quoted words. An elliptical clause means words are understood but not actually written. Example: "If possible, come by my office today." The meaning is this: "If IT IS possible, come by my office today." The *if possible* clause is an elliptical clause—words are understood but not actually written.)

31 You selected the best answer. This question was not presented to observers.

32 You selected the best answer. This question was not presented to observers.

33 Select the active-voice sentence:

- >>*A. The board members refused to discuss the policies with upset stockholders.
- B. The upset stockholders were not contacted by the board members about the policies.
- C. The policies were not discussed among the upset board members.
- D. Board members have been contacted by upset stockholders about their refusal to discuss the policies.

Explanation of best answer:

a> The viewpoint changes in this sentence: The first half of the sentence is written in third person—the writer is talking ABOUT something—error rates. The second half of this sentence is written in second

person: you. The writer is talking directly to the reader.

Correct: "You should report errors in the invoice totals to General Accounting, and you should report errors in the vendor codes directly either to Su Lin or me."

Also Correct: "Errors in the invoice totals should be reported to General Accounting, and errors in the vendor codes should be reported directly either to Su Lin or me."

b>This comma correctly separates two equal coordinate conjunctions. Both clauses have a subject and a verb.

c>*Me* is incorrect here because this sentence calls for an objective case pronoun in this slot—an object of the preposition *to*. HINT: Leave out the other names in the sentence and trust your ear to select the correct pronoun: Example: "Errors in the invoice totals should be reported to General Accounting, and errors in the vendor codes should be reported directly to (*me* or *I*)."

d> A semicolon takes the place of a missing conjunction (and, but, or, for, nor, so, yet) or a missing connective adverb (however, therefore, moreover, hence) linking the two clauses together. This sentence has a conjunction (and) to link the two clauses together; therefore, a comma is the appropriate punctuation.

Verbs are said to have "voice." That is, they are either "active voice" or "passive voice."

Active Voice: The subject of the sentence acts. Example: The manager approved the trip. (The manager acted—approved.)

Passive Voice: The subject is passive. Something happens to it.

Example: The trip was approved by the manager. (The trip did nothing—something happened to it.)

- 34 "Errors in the invoice totals should be reported to General Accounting, and you should report errors in the vendor codes directly either to Su Lin or me."

*A. Change *you should report errors in the vendor codes* to *errors in the vendor codes should be reported*.

B. There should be no comma before the *and*.

C. *Me* should be *I*.

>>D. There must be a semicolon before *and*.

Explanation of best answer:

a>This is called a "run-on" sentence. It's two ideas jammed together and punctuated as if it were one sentence. It cannot be correct as written.

b>A comma is not strong enough to separate two independent clauses. An independent clause has a subject and a verb and stands alone as a complete thought. Commas separate independent clauses when they are joined with one of these seven coordinate conjunctions: *and, or, but, for, nor, so, yet*.

c> Yes, this sentence needs either a semicolon or a period to separate the two independent clauses. But that punctuation mark alone wouldn't totally correct the problem. Without a comma in the second sentence or clause, the new, second sentence or clause would become an incomplete thought: "*however we evaluated them promptly*." The reader would be asking, "So what ABOUT how you evaluated them promptly?"

	d>Adding a comma after <i>however</i> prevents misreading. With the comma, the word <i>however</i> takes on the meaning of the transition word <i>although</i> . Correct: “The vendor sent us the proposals late last week. However, we evaluated them promptly.” Also correct: “The vendor sent us the proposals late last week; however, we evaluated them promptly.”
35	You selected the best answer. This question was not presented to observers.
36	<p>“The proposal containing the earlier bid, which management rejected, was reviewed by the entire senior executive team.”</p> <p>A. It is clear that management rejected the earlier proposal. B. It is clear that management rejected the earlier bid. C. <i>Which</i> should be <i>that</i>.</p> <p>>>*D. The main idea is that the proposal has been reviewed.</p> <p>Explanation of best answer:</p> <p>a><i>Hurriedly</i> is correctly set off with a comma because it is an introductory word.</p> <p>b>A comma before <i>speaking</i> would enclose the entire phrase <i>speaking with the tall red-headed customer</i>. That punctuation is unnecessary because the phrase describes the word <i>agent</i> immediately preceding it. What makes answer b incorrect is “MUST.” Adding a comma after <i>agent</i> would change the meaning of the sentence. It would be correct to place a comma before <i>speaking</i> if this set-off element (<i>speaking with the tall red-headed customer</i>) were a nonessential piece of information rather than a phrase that distinguish one agent from another agent.</p> <p>c>Placing a comma between the subject and verb is a common mistake. But there’s no reason to insert a comma here, and in fact, it is incorrect to do so. This is a one-clause sentence: <i>agent</i> is the subject, and <i>explained</i> is the verb. (The subject just happens to have several descriptors following it.) The sentence is correct like this: “Hurriedly, the rental car agent speaking with the tall red-headed customer explained the options about refueling and liability insurance.”</p> <p>d>This <i>and</i> separates two nouns that are the objects of the preposition <i>about</i>. It would be incorrect to separate them with a comma.</p>
37	<p>“Hurriedly, the rental car agent speaking with the tall red-headed customer, explained the options about refueling and liability insurance.”</p> <p>A. There should be no comma after <i>hurriedly</i>. >>B. There MUST be a comma before <i>speaking</i>. *C. There should be no comma between <i>customer</i> and <i>explained</i>. D. There should be a comma before <i>and</i>.</p>

Explanation of best answer:

a>Either of these phrases is a correct construction. But neither correct the error in this sentence.

b>*Whether* is correctly spelled.

c>*Tenants* is correctly spelled.

d>This sentence is “unparallel.” Parallelism means that equal ideas should be structured alike. They should, for example, all be verb phrases, or all single-word adjectives, or all nouns clauses. Parallelism applies to lists as well as sentences. Items need to “match.” They should all be either sentences or phrases. They should all start with verbs, or all start with adjectives, or all start with nouns, and so forth.

In the sentence example above, the writer says, “We cannot decide whether to” and then lists three things. But those three things don’t match: 1) to lease ... 2) to lease ... or 3) if selling....

To correct the sentence, make all items match, with infinitive phrases (*to*, plus a verb). “We cannot decide whether TO LEASE the land to the current tenants for an additional two years, TO LEASE the land to new tenants for six years, or TO SELL the land.”

- 38 “We cannot decide whether to lease the land to the current tenants for an additional two years, to lease the land to new tenants for six years, or if selling the land would be advantageous.”

A. *Advantageous* should be *to our advantage*.

>>B. *Whether* is misspelled.

C. *Tenants* is misspelled.

*D. *If selling the land would be advantageous* should be *to sell the land*.

Explanation of best answer:

a> This word is written solid. In current usage, very few prefixes are hyphenated (*self-* and *vice-* are still hyphenated prefixes).

b> *To comprise* means “to embody” or “to include.” With this definition, you can understand why it would be incorrect to say: “My responsibility for the upcoming year IS INCLUDED OF accounting, shipping, and technical support during peak work periods.”

HINT: The whole comprises parts.

Examples:

Fishing gear comprises rod, reel, lures, bait, and tackle.

Our training center comprises furniture, audiovisual equipment, lobby, and two snack bars.

My work experience comprises selling, engineering, consulting.

c> See the other notes.

d> The comma before *and* in a series is optional.

39	You selected the best answer. This question was not presented to observers.
40	<p>"That federal agency doesn't have anymore authority in granting approval for the repairs than ours."</p> <p>>>*A. <i>Anymore</i> should be two words.</p> <p>B. <i>Ours</i> should have an apostrophe before the <i>s</i>.</p> <p>C. <i>Does</i> must follow <i>ours</i>.</p> <p>D. <i>Federal</i> should be capitalized.</p> <p>Explanation of best answer:</p> <p>a> Either verb is correct. <i>Has prepared</i> is present perfect tense—Steve is still in the process of preparing. <i>Prepared</i> is past tense—Steve prepared—the action is finished.</p> <p>b> <i>Whose</i> is a possessive pronoun showing ownership: “<i>Whose hat is this?</i>” <i>Who’s</i> is a contraction meaning <i>who is</i>: “<i>Who’s going to lunch with us?</i>”</p> <p>c> <i>Consulting division</i> is a generic reference to the group who does consulting, not the official, specific name of the department.</p> <p>HINT: To help with capitalization, about the items in question, ask yourself, "Is this a 'brand name' or a generic reference?" Capitalize the “brand names” and lowercase the generic references.</p> <p>d> The comma after <i>division</i> is necessary to enclose the clause <i>who’s the most creative accountant in our Chicago consulting division</i>. This clause needs to be enclosed in commas because it's nonessential, additional information rather than information that identifies or distinguishes Steve Shaw from other individuals.</p>
41	<p>“Steve Shaw, whose the most creative accountant in our Chicago consulting division, has prepared the proposal.”</p> <p>A. <i>Has prepared</i> should be <i>prepared</i>.</p> <p>*B. <i>Whose</i> should be <i>who’s</i>.</p> <p>>>C. <i>Chicago consulting division</i> should be <i>Chicago Consulting Division</i>.</p> <p>D. There should be no comma after <i>division</i>.</p> <p>Explanation of best answer:</p> <p>HINT: Capitalization becomes a clarity issue when dealing with forms, documents, and locations.</p> <p>HINT: To help with capitalization, about the items in questions, ask yourself, Is this a “brand name” or a generic reference? Capitalize “brand names” and lowercase generic references.</p> <p>a> In a sentence, titles or positions should be capitalized when they precede the name, but not when they follow the noun.</p>

Examples:

Please tell Vice President Bala Agarwal to attend the meeting.
 Please tell Bala Agarwal, vice president of sales, to attend the meeting.
 Exceptions: High officials of government

- b> See the previous note. *Staff meeting* should not be capitalized because it's a generic reference to a meeting. If the meeting were a theme or "brand name" title, it would be capitalized. Example: "Please tell him about the Visionaries Leaders World Conference beginning tomorrow."
- c> St. Martin's Hospital is capitalized because it is the specific, "brand name" of the hospital. However, if you are talking about St. Martin's Hospital without calling the hospital's name, you would correctly capitalize or lowercase this way: "Our patients love St. Martin's Hospital and routinely give high customer satisfaction ratings. Our hospital reviews these ratings weekly."
- d> There's no reason to capitalize the common noun *blood drive*. If you mean to emphasize a phrase, boldface it, underline it, make the font larger or put the entire word in uppercase. But don't capitalize only the first letter because that creates a grammatical error.

- 42 "Please ask the Director of Marketing to attend the Staff Meeting about the Blood Drive at St. Martin's Hospital."

Other than *Please*, which words are correctly capitalized?

- A. Director, Marketing, St. Martin's Hospital
- B. Director, Marketing, Staff Meeting, St. Martin's Hospital
- *C. St. Martin's Hospital
- >>D. Director, Marketing, Staff Meeting, Blood Drive, St. Martin's Hospital

Explanation of best answer:

Attorneys is plural, so we know there are at least two attorneys, maybe more. The noun *attorneys'* has an apostrophe on it to show possession (the *-s* after the apostrophe has been dropped because when *attorneys* is in the plural form it already ends in *-s*). We know the entourage refers to other people—the three specialists. Altogether, that's at least five people—at least two attorneys with an entourage that included at least three specialists.

- 43 "The attorneys' entourage going into the courthouse included three intellectual-property specialists."

How many people are mentioned?

- A. 3
- B. 4
- >>C. 5, no more
- *D. 5 or more

Explanation of best answer:

a> *Affects* as a verb means “to influence” or “to involve.” *Effect* as a verb means “to cause.” *Effect* as a noun means “a cause.” Substitute the meaning for *affect* in this sentence to understand why the word is used correctly: “The policy that INFLUENCES/INVOLVES most of our employees has been changed since our last management meeting.”

b> Neither of these words is correct. With apostrophes, they both show ownership, and nobody in this sentence owns anything or anyone.

c> *Employees* is the simple plural noun—more than one *employee*. There’s no reason to show ownership. Nobody in this sentence owns anything or anyone.

d> *Since* correctly refers to time. *Sense* refers to mental capacity.

44 “The policy that affects most of our employee’s has been changed since our last management meeting.”

A. *Affects* should be *effects*.

B. *Employee’s* should be *employees’*.

*C. *Employee’s* should be *employees*.

>>D. *Since* should be *sense*.

Explanation of best answer:

a> This comma sets off an introductory clause from the main idea of the sentence.

b> *Should be ordered* is passive voice. Passive voice is not an error in and of itself. But a common error with writing passive voice is danglers. See the explanation in item C.

c> This clause refers to nothing specific in the sentence. *Assuming the sales figures are indicative of a trend* is a participial phrase (a verb with an *-ing* ending that acts like an adjective). The *assuming* phrase must modify or “attach” logically to a noun in the sentence. Who or what in this sentence is assuming? In this case, the closest noun is *supplies*. This sentence actually says that *the supplies assumed*—quite illogical.

HINT: Write in active voice on most occasions to avoid the trap of danglers. Active-voice sentences are those in which the subject does the action of the verb. (*The manager attended the meeting.*) Passive-voice sentences are those in which the subject is passive. (*The meeting was attended by the manager.*)

Example: “Assuming the sales figures are indicative of a trend, WE SHOULD ORDER larger quantities next year.”

d> Either of these placements is correct: “*Assuming the sales figures are indicative of a trend, NEXT YEAR we should order larger quantities.*” OR: “*Assuming the sales figures are indicative of a trend, we should order larger quantities NEXT YEAR.*”

45 “Assuming the sales figures are indicative of a trend, supplies should be ordered in larger quantities next year.”

A. The comma is misplaced.

>>B. *Should be ordered* is active voice.

*C. Assuming the sales figures are indicative of a trend refers to nothing.

D. Next year is misplaced.

Explanation of best answer:

a> A complete sentence requires a subject and a verb and stands alone. This clause has a subject (*John Toner*) and a verb (*has*), but it does not make sense alone. The reader wonders, “So what about that fact? If you deleted the words *the fact that*, the remaining words would be a complete sentence: “*John Toner has no reason to complain about his job in the Detroit facility.*”

b> This is one clause. A simple *that* clause restricts the meaning of *fact* (tells which fact) and should not be set off with a comma.

c> A directive is a command, written in imperative mood. Examples: “Sign the contract.” “Close the door.” “Leave the room.” “Form a new committee.” This sentence, on the other hand, merely states a strong belief that John Toner has no reason to complain; it doesn’t command him NOT to complain.

d> This is not a sentence. See note a>. In a passive-voice sentence, the subject receives action from the verb: Passive: *Joan was promoted by the management team.* In this clause, John Toner (the subject) acts—*he has*.

46 “From our viewpoint, the fact that John Toner has no reason to complain about his job in the Detroit facility.”

*A. This information is not a complete sentence.

B. Add a comma after *that*.

>>C. This is a directive.

D. This is a passive-voice sentence.

Explanation of best answer:

a> This sentence is clear, but it ends awkwardly. See note C>.

b> The *if* clause does not need a comma. Adding a comma alters the meaning to make the part of the comma an afterthought—nonessential to the rest of the sentence. With a comma, the sentence would mean this: “*I'll pick you up at Bush Intercontinental Airport.*” (Whether the other person supplies the gate is irrelevant.)

c> The sentence ends with a preposition rather than ending crisply. The sentence can be improved by rephrasing: “*I'll pick you up at Bush Intercontinental Airport if you'll let me know at which gate you will be arriving.*”

d> *I'll pick you up* is informal, but entirely correct and appropriate for all but the most formal documents.

47 You selected the best answer. This question was not presented to observers.

