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CHAPTER I

GENERAL

SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION TO SERVICE WRITING

Introduction

0101. This publication has been produced for the 3 Services. It contains agreed rules for the preparation and layout of Service writing and for standardized staff procedures. Such standardization helps to achieve economy in training, flexibility in staff appointments and more efficient joint staff work.

0102. It contains a number of mandatory rules and conventions that comply generally with the accepted standardization within the Services.

0103. The conventions of printing differ from the conventions of Service writing, which apply to manuscript or typewritten work only. The examples of staff paper work included in this publication have been reproduced to illustrate Service writing conventions.

Definition of Service Writing

0104. The term 'Service writing' covers all writing originated officially within the Services. It is divided into 'operational' and 'non-operational' writing. These forms of writing cover:

- a. Operational Writing.
 - (1) Operational directives, operation orders and instructions.
 - (2) Administrative orders and instructions.
 - (3) Confirmatory notes.
 - (4) Appreciations.

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- (5) All forms of operational reports.
- (6) Signal messages.
- (7) Annexes, appendices and tables which, as a result of the detail contained in them, would be clearer to the reader if operational writing techniques were used.
- (8) Exercise papers within the Services.

b. Non-operational Writing Non-operational writing covers all other forms of Service writing.

0105. Basic Differences. Apart from signal messages which are subject to their own specialized rules, both forms of Service writing follow similar rules for layout, security etc. However, the basic characteristics of the 2 forms of Service writing are:

a. Operational Writing.

- (1) Maximum use is to be made of abbreviations, except that the paragraph headings of written operational and administrative orders (See Paragraph 1106 and Section 12) should not be abbreviated.
- (2) Text is to be written in note form to save time and space, remembering always that the meaning must always remain clear. Paragraph headings can form part of the opening of a sentence, eg: 'Ammo. Issued 1300 hrs'.
- (3) Proper nouns are written in capital letters, eg: 'MIRPUR', 'TITUMIR'.
- (4) Reported speech is written as spoken without abbreviations and indented in double inverted commas. For example:

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We captured 3 offrs and 2 NCOs. They revealed en morale to be very poor. One of the NCOs said:

“We have been having no food supplied since 3 o'clock on Thursday of last week and we were promised large stocks to be captured on the objective.”

This was cfm by the 3 offrs. All were sent to the Div PW Cage.

(5) Times are to be expressed in 4 figures using the 24 hour clock and the time zone suffix eg 2359F unless an expedient such as:

‘Time Zone Used Throughout the Order: BRAVO.’

b. Non-operational Writing. Normal rules of English usage are to be followed. However, abbreviations will be used except in certain cases like formal (including commanded) and demi-official letter/correspondence and Service papers.

Characteristics of Service Writing

0106. Service writing obeys the rules of good English prose but, above all, demands:

- a. Accuracy. Facts and wording must be accurate. Opinions and deductions must be distinguishable from facts.
- b. Brevity. The reader must be informed in the shortest way consistent with accuracy and clarity. Brevity is achieved by planning and careful editing.
- c. Clarity. Service writing must be intelligible, reasoned and unambiguous.
- d. Relevance. Any irrelevant word, phrase or idea must be excluded. The test is ‘If this is omitted will the argument be affected?’.

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- e. Logic. Deductions must be fully justified and contained in sentences and paragraphs which flow in a logical sequence related directly to the argument.

0107. Style. To convey the value of an idea or to justify a course of action, arguments must be based on facts presented in logical order; the aim must be to tell the tale plainly. Some times this requirement may preclude the use of forceful, flowing prose in favour of a straight-forward arrangement using short words, short sentences and short paragraphs. There is no excuse, however, for Service writing to be dull and lifeless and the style should be sufficiently attractive to hold the reader's attention. Style depends on:

- a. Choice of Expression. The following points will help with expression:

- (1) Avoid abstract nouns where verbs or adjectives can be used, eg 'the present restrictions must continue' rather than 'the cessation of the period of restrictions cannot be made'.
- (2) Use the active rather than the passive construction of the verb, eg 'you killed him' rather than 'he was killed by you'.
- (3) Use English words rather than non-English when exactly the same idea can be expressed in English.
- (4) Use familiar simple words rather than obscure ones.
- (5) Avoid ancient and flowery expressions.
- (6) Avoid indirect or twisted wording.
- (7) Beware of stereotype or outdated expressions; most have lost their original force through overuse and can easily irritate the reader.

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(8) Avoid jargon and officialese which produce a style unlike natural everyday speech. Jargon is defined as 'Unintelligible words, gibberish; barbarous or debased language; mode of speech full of unfamiliar terms'. Its use, especially in that last sense, may lead to misunderstanding by those not familiar with a speciality. Similarly, officialese is neither concise nor clear. Some examples are:

<u>Jargon/officialese</u>	<u>English</u>
'The Committee gave further consideration to a memorandum containing proposals with regard to ...'	'The Committee reconsidered a proposal that'
'Proposals under which Service pay would be brought under review	'Proposals for reviewing Service pay
'Endeavour to commence	'Try to begin
'Having regard to the fact	'As
'This is a matter of very considerable urgency'	'This is urgent'
'At this point in time.'	'Now.'
'Prior to.'	'Before.'
'Subsequent to.'	'After.'

b. Choice of Words. The writer must know the exact meaning of every word in order to avoid ambiguity, vagueness and misunderstanding. Short words are normally preferable to long, but what matters most is the use of the right word in the right context.

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c. Construction. A forceful argument can best be developed by a logical sequence of paragraphs and sentences. Paragraphs may have to be subdivided for clarity, but the unity of ideas in each paragraph must be preserved. Crisp sentences are often best, but they should not be so brief that the whole paper loses its continuity.

d. Punctuation. Punctuation is designed to aid clarity, not to alter meaning. Commas should be used sparingly; they can never be used successfully to hide the poor construction of a sentence.

0108. Conclusion. Service writing cannot be turned into attractive prose just by avoiding errors in the use of language. The rules set out in this chapter will, however, help the writer in the preparation of his paper work. There are no short cuts to writing straight-forward English; the habit is acquired only by studying good prose and by constant practice.

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