

#### Unit 4: Writing for a Professional Audience

Length: 1,000 words min. (700 min. draft)

Audience: Professional/workplace

Draft Due: April 1st

Peer Reviews Due: April 4th

Final Due: April 8th

For Unit 4, you'll compose or revise a document that might circulate in your workplace, professional, or organizational environment. (A volunteer organization or club can also be the site of this kind of writing.) The term *professional* is pretty broad, of course: almost any kind of writing, given the right context, might fit this description. It might help if you imagine that for this unit, you're writing a document that helps people do their work better in an organizational context. Such documents might include instructions, guidelines, and procedures; fact sheets; Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs); [manifestos](#); memos; forms and charts; and other kinds of writing that I have not imagined, but which are important for your own organizational life.

To start this project, you need think about your life in organizations and the kinds of roles you play. For example, in my work at Northeastern, I am a teacher, but I also wear other “hats”—for example, as a leader of as a freelance editor and leader of a Brownie Trop. This means that I produce many types of documents, including the one you're holding in your hand right now. Obviously, my audience, purpose, and persona will differ greatly depending on whether I'm composing a syllabus for AWD, drafting an email to the Director of the Writing Program in my role as a member of the Writing Program Committee, preparing an invoice for a client in my role as freelance editor, or composing an agenda for an upcoming Brownie meeting.

The kinds of documents that define professional writing are held together by a sense of *organizational obligation*. This doesn't mean that readers are actually obliged to read professional documents; rather, readers encounter professional documents in a context where most of what they read is processed through the needs of the workplace. Hence, workplace documents are designed to meet typical workplace values like efficiency and effectiveness.

Whatever their particular form, most instances of workplace writing have certain things in common:

- They focus on a single subject.
- They are committed to accurate and ethical representation.
- They place a high priority on clarity.
- They waste no words.

All in all, these documents are designed to be *useful*. In addition, many, though not all, reference documents share additional features:

- They may batch or “chunk” information into discrete units.
- They may separate these units using headings and subheadings
- They may employ figures, tables, or other visual aids.

You can choose to *create a new document* or *revise an existing document*. The approach differs in each case. If you revise an existing document, put the document into electronic format (scan it or retype it) and use the “track changes” and “comment” functions to make changes. Then write a *memo* to the person responsible for the document making a case for the changes you would like to make.

In addition, both new and revised documents should include a *memo to the class* in which you put the workplace document into context: explain anything that needs explaining and help us read it effectively.

After peer review and revision, this unit paper will be somewhat multi-layered: it will include

- A response letter
- A context memo to the class
- A piece of new writing to a workplace audience (a memo in the case of a revision, or another document in the case of a new piece); and **possibly**
- A revised document with change markings

This is rhetorically complex, but potentially very interesting.

**Note on Citation:** Some professional documents do not quote sources or cite them in ways typical of academic writing. For this unit paper, I'd like you write in imitation of a form appropriate to your field. If the kind of writing you are imitating does not include quotations, notes, or parenthetical references, do not use them yourself. Instead, include a list of references on a separate page.

Outcomes Assessment Sheet  
Unit 4: Writing for a Professional Audience

Name:  
Grade:

	Poor	Low	At stan dar d	Exc eed s	Out stan din g
Shows clear focus on a single subject					
Demonstrates commitment to accurate and ethical representation					
Places a high priority on clarity					
Wastes no words					
Shows appropriate “chunking” of information					
Utilizes any design elements to effective ends					
Demonstrates successful use of appropriate citation conventions					
Shows critical understanding and facility with the factual context of a discipline or field					
Choice of subject reflects an understanding of organizational context					
Context memo to class explains the document effectively					
Fulfills length and genre requirements					