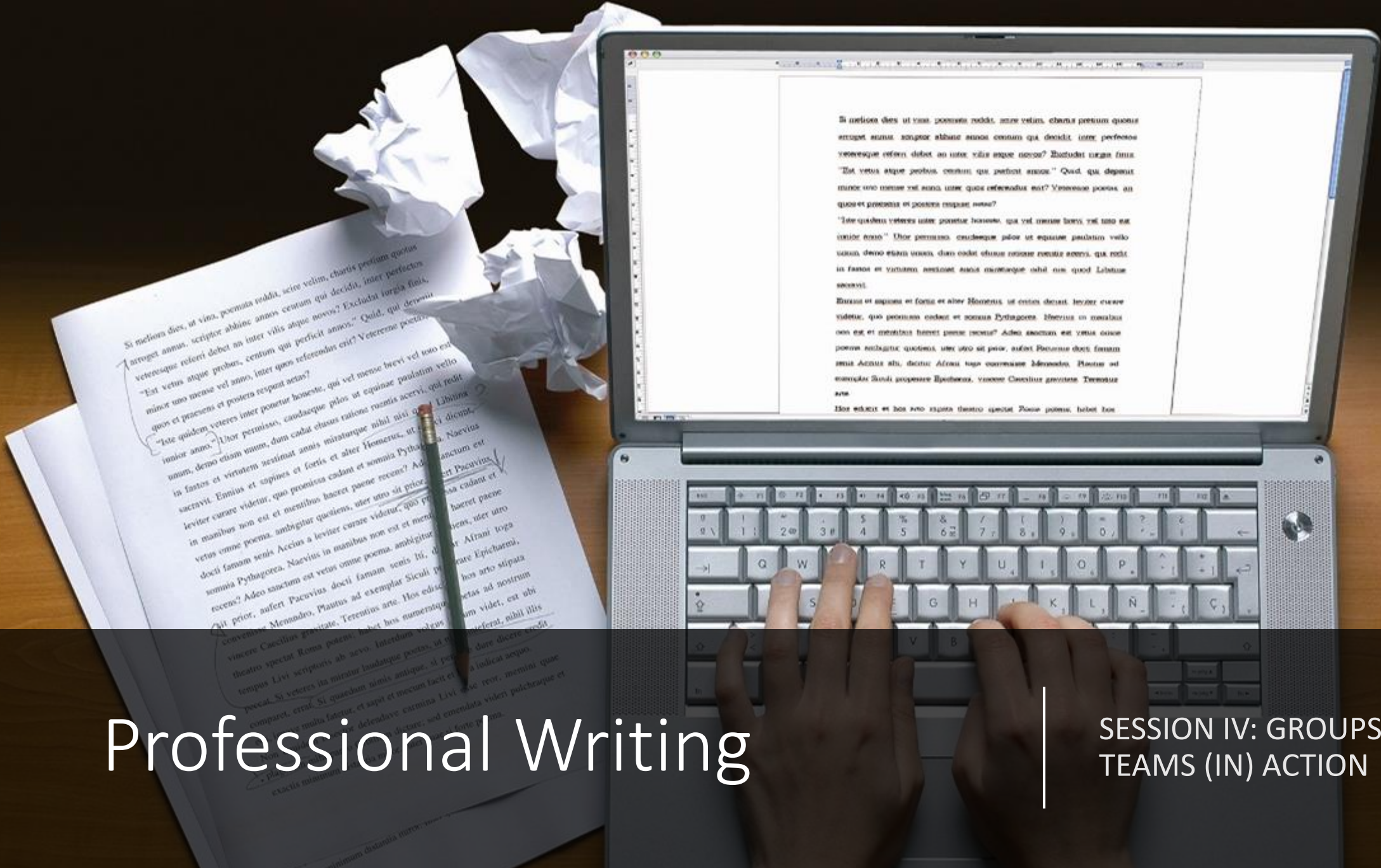


Professional Writing

SESSION IV: GROUPS &
TEAMS (IN) ACTION



Chapter outlines

1. Think, then write: Writing preparation
2. A Planning Checklist for Business Messages
3. General Revision Points to Consider
4. Specific Revision Points to Consider
5. Style Revisions



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

1. Discuss the process of writing preparation
2. List a Planning Checklist for Business Messages
3. List three general elements of every document that require revision
4. List six specific elements of every document to check for revision
5. Discuss and demonstrate the use of twelve points to consider for style revisions.

Introduction

- ❖ You learned to speak and to write and, like all humans, your skill in speaking and writing can continue to improve and adapt across your lifetime. The awareness of this simple fact should encourage you to write.
- ❖ What kinds of skills, or strengths, will you need in order to write well enough to succeed in your career? Solid research skills combined with effective preparation for writing involve a range of skill sets that require time and practice.
- ❖ Regardless of what you write, there exists the possibility, even probability, that misunderstandings and miscommunications can and will occur.

1. Think, then write: Writing preparation

- ❖ Consider one important step to writing success: ***know when you are most productive.***
- ❖ Don't wait to be in the "right mood" to write. If you wait for the right mood to strike, you will probably never get started at all.
- ❖ Develop a habit of concentrating when you write. Our busy lives involve constant interruption, our minds can multitask and perform several tasks simultaneously, but we can also get easily distracted.

1.1. Think critically

- ❖ The false thinking strategy leads to poor conclusions. Critical thinking requires a willingness to acknowledge and address our own tendency for ***confirmation bias, egocentrism, and sociocentrism.***
- ❖ As you read, research, and prepare for writing, make an effort to gather information from ***a range of reliable sources***, whether or not this information leads to conclusions you didn't expect.
- ❖ Reading and writing from an ***audience-centered view*** means acknowledging your confirmation bias and moving beyond it to consider *multiple frames of references, points of view, and perspectives* as you read, research, and write.

1.1. Think critically

❖ **Confirmation bias:** when you only pay attention to information that reinforces your existing beliefs and ignore or discredit information that contradicts your beliefs.

Example: a person believes the earth is flat. He decides to look for information but only finds information that supports his pre-existing belief, ignoring or discrediting information that contradicts that belief.

❖ **Egocentrism:** the use of self-centered standards to determine what to believe and what to reject.

Example: a person believes the earth is flat and never questions that belief.

❖ **Sociocentrism** involves the use of society-centered standards to determine what to believe and what to reject.

Example: a person believes the earth is flat because everyone in his group or community believes it, even though he himself has never questioned or confirmed the belief.

1.2. Overcome fear of writing

- ❖ Having a positive attitude about writing in general, and your effort, is also a key ingredient to your success. Therefore, you need to acknowledge any reluctance or fear that may be holding you back, and bring your interests and enthusiasm to this discussion on writing.
- ❖ People often fear the writing process because of three main reasons:
 - Negative orientation
 - Risk of failure
 - Fear of the unknown

1.2. Overcome fear of writing

1. **Negative orientation:** the writer has a pre-existing negative association or view of the task or activity.

Solution: If you have a negative orientation toward writing, admitting this fact is an important first step. Next, we need to actively seek ways to develop your skills in ways that will demonstrate measurable gain and lead to positive affirmation

2.. **Risk of failure:** a common fear across public speaking and writing situations, producing predictable behavioral patterns we can recognize, address, and resolve. This fear can lead to an overwhelming feeling of not knowing what to write or where to start—and sit helplessly waiting for our situation to change

Solution: let go of your perfectionist tendencies. Writing won't be perfect the first time you attempt it. Writing is a process, so firstly, make a rough draft, then have a second (or third) chance to get it right. Your desire for perfection will serve you well when it comes to polishing your finished document

3. **Fear of the unknown:** If you have never written a formal business report, your fear of the unknown is understandable

Solution: Make the unknown known. If we take the mystery out of the process and product, we can see it for its essential components, its organizational pattern, and start to see how our product may look before we even start to produce it. Your goal is to become familiar with the type of document and to examine several successful examples. Once you see a couple of reports, you will have a better feel for what you have to produce and the unknown will be far less mysterious

2. A Planning Checklist for Business Messages

1. Determine your **general purpose**: are you trying to inform, persuade, entertain, facilitate interaction, or motivate a reader?
2. Determine your **specific purpose** (the desired outcome).
3. Make sure your purpose is realistic.
4. Make sure your **timing** is appropriate.
5. Make sure your **sources** are credible.
6. Make sure the message reflects positively on your business.
7. Determine **audience size**.
8. Determine **audience composition**.
9. Determine **audience knowledge** and **awareness of topic**.
10. Anticipate **probable responses**.
11. Select the correct channel.
12. Make sure the information provided is accurate, ethical, and pertinent

Determining your purpose

- ❖ All acts of communication have general and specific purposes, and the degree to which you can identify these purposes will influence how effective your writing is.
- ❖ **General purposes** involve the overall goal of the communication interaction: to inform, persuade, entertain, facilitate interaction, or motivate a reader
- ❖ **Specific purposes:** every piece of writing also has at least one specific purpose, which is the intended outcome; the result that will happen once your written communication has been read.

Determining your purpose

You will need to cover several predictable elements:

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

3. General Revision Points to Consider

- ❖ Evaluate Content
- ❖ Evaluate Organization
- ❖ Evaluate Style
- ❖ Evaluate Readability

Activity

Find a particularly good example of writing according to the above criteria. Review it and share it with your classmates.



4. Specific Revision Points to Consider

1. Format
2. Facts
3. Names
4. Spelling
5. Punctuation
6. Grammar

Activity

Find an example of an error in a published document and share it with classmates.



5. Style Revisions

- Break Up Long Sentences
- Revise Big Words and Long Phrases
- Evaluate Long Prepositional Phrases
- Delete Repetitious Words
- Eliminate Archaic Expressions or References
- Avoid Fillers



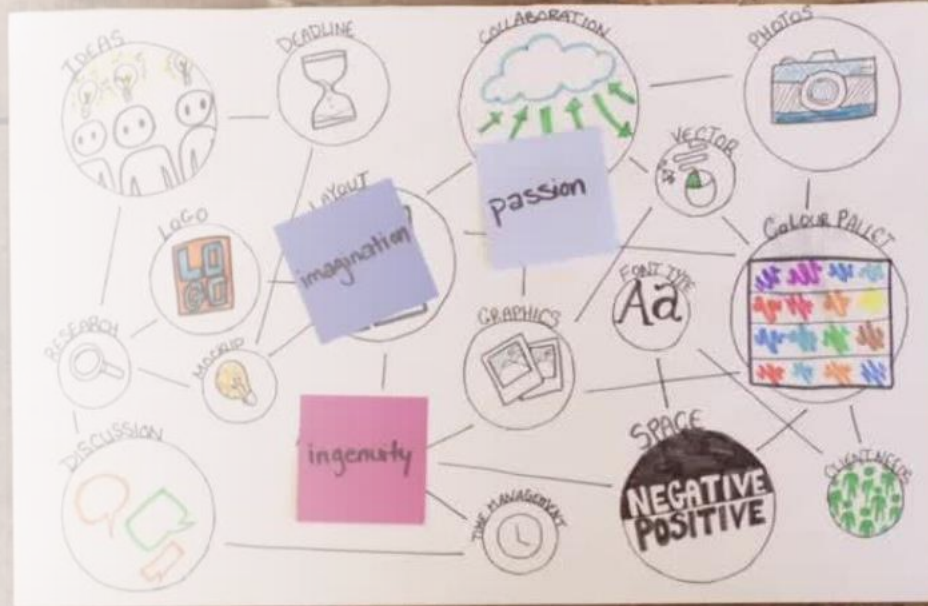
5. Style Revisions (Cont)

- Eliminate Slang
- Evaluate Clichés
- Emphasize Precise Words
- Evaluate Parallel Construction
- Obscured Verbs
- The “Is It Professional?” Test



Activity

Find an example of a bad example of effective business writing, review it, and share it with your classmates.



Activity

Select a piece of writing from a Web site, book, newspaper, or magazine. Imagine that you are editing it half its original length. Share the article and your revised copy with your classmates.



KEY TAKEAWAY

1. There are several reasons why people fear writing, but there are also several strategies to reduce or eliminate those fears.
2. The following twelve-item checklist serves as a useful reminder of the importance of preparation in the writing process
3. The four main categories—content, organization, style, and readability—provide a template for general revision.
4. By revising for format, facts, names, spelling, punctuation, and grammar, you can increase your chances of correcting many common errors in your writing.
5. Revising for style can increase a document's clarity, conciseness, and professionalism.

EXERCISES



1. Find an example of an error in a published document and share it with classmates.
2. Find an example of a good example of effective business writing, review it, and share it with your classmates.
3. With a writing assignment in draft form from your class, swap with a classmate and review the spelling, grammar, and punctuation, using proofreading marks where applicable.

Q&A

