

Business Style Worksheet Exercises

Business messages should be clear, concise coherent, concrete, courteous and convincing. Complete this worksheet with short tips and revision exercises to practice your business writing style and editing skills. Revisions should not change the message.

Instructions: Read the tip before you complete the revision. Type the revision in the text box. When done, proofread, save, and post.

Student Name, Course Code and Section

A. Use Correct Sentence Structure

Ensure clarity with correct and complete sentence structure. For these revisions, avoid fragments, run-ons, comma splices or misplaced modifiers. Note that a run-on is not a long sentence, but a group of words containing two or more independent clauses that are incorrectly joined.

1. *Because you will be entering a fast-paced, competitive, and highly connected digital environment. Communication and technology skills are critical to your career success.*

Revision creates a single sentence:

2. *Ethics is a hot topic and trend in the workplace, however making ethical decisions is not always easy.*

Revision eliminates the run-on sentence:

3. *Discounts up to 40 percent were offered yet sales targets were not met for the holiday long weekend.*

Revision connects the discount and the holiday occurrence:

B. Focus on the Main Subject

Keep subjects and verbs at the start of a sentence and focus on the main clause.

4. *The hiring committee planned to interview Jim Steinway today, but bad weather delayed his plane departure, and they had to reschedule the interview to tomorrow.*

Revision:

C. Avoid Nominalizations

Look for the real verb that appears as a noun and convert that noun to its verb form.

5. *The report makes a recommendation that we develop our social media presence.*

Revision:

D. Eliminate Noun Strings

Reduce the number of nouns chained together in a sentence to two or three.

6. *Our last task is to write the HR Employment Manual introduction.*

Revision:

E. Avoid False Expletives

Avoid using false expletives like “there are”, and “it is”. Avoid using “this” as the subject unless a noun follows it, for example, “This fire extinguisher has a C rating”.

7. *There are several tasks that should be completed this week.*

Revision:

8. *It is clear to the hiring committee that writing skills are important.*

Revision:

F. Use Gender-neutral Language

Eliminate male and female references and replace them with gender-neutral language.

9. *The payables clerk sends her cheques to the manager for his approval.*

Revision:

G. Use a Positive Tone

Adopt a positive approach for your audience. Avoid negative tones by eliminating “no”.

10. *If you do not submit the signed form by the deadline, a service call will not be scheduled.*

Revision:

H. Use Active and Passive Voice Guidelines

Use active voice to emphasize who acts, place the action first, and write shorter sentences. Use passive voice to emphasize the receiver of the action, emphasize the action, and avoid “I”, “we” and blame.

11. *Passive voice: The project plan was written to ensure the project’s success.*

Revision to active voice:

12. *Active voice: Maria did not send the files so we could not complete the report.*

Revision to passive voice:

I. Be Clear, Correct and Concise

Write clear, correct, and concise sentences that save words and avoid confusion. Avoid grammar and mechanical errors; use numbers, dates and units effectively; avoid wordiness, jargon, slang, and colloquialisms, and eliminate redundancy.

13. *Natural disasters occur in nature and those include hurricanes, tornados, and floods, which are likely events that lead to a surge in insurance claims.*

Revision:

14. Fill in the blanks: *Our company is on fire! We sold a small _____ (choose: amount or number) of flowerpots this year, even _____ (choose: less or fewer) than last year.*

Revision:

15. *In the financial quarter ending June 30th this year ABC Inc reported a five % increase in it’s profits*

Revision:

16. *Given the fact that more and more employees are using and sharing confidential information on mobile devices such as tablets and smartphones, there is a growing trend that proprietary information is increasingly compromised due to lost or stolen mobile devices than there is to any actual hacking.*

Revision:

J. Ensure Parallelism in Sentences and Lists

Ensure that sentences and lists have parallel structure (same grammatical form) for a series of words or phrases, including nouns, verbs, adjectives, or adverbs.

17. *Financial planners assess financial needs, help with investments, and insurance decisions.*

Revision:

18. *The helpline accepts calls for technical assistance, installing hardware, and software glitches.*

Revision:

19. *Vertical list -*

Tasks to start a project:

- *selection of the team and topic*
- *define the purpose, audience, and scope.*
- *then summarizing of the tasks*
- *library research*
- *questions asked*
- *project plan writing*

Revision includes a lead-in, imperative voice use, items in parallel form, and correct capitalization and punctuation:

K. Create Flow within Sentences and Paragraphs

With the subject placed at the start of a sentence, the verb follows and then the object appears (the completion of the thought) to deliver the important or new information at the end. Write sentences with varied length and effective organization and flow to help maintain reader interest.

- Combine sentences to create flow and connections and reduce unwanted repetition.
- Reinforce connections with the given-new rule/principle, where you express the known information (given) before previously unknown information (new) in the first sentence and repeat a keyword or idea for that new information near the start of the next sentence.
- Create a flow between sentences with transitional expressions like therefore, consequently, then, first, next, after, however, since, although, and as a result, that make connections and improve message decoding.

Hint: For paragraphs, keep the first sentence and revise the ones that follow.

20. *Corporate Social Responsibility may have economic benefits. It is a voluntary activity.*

Revised sentence that creates a connection:

21. *Social media have given customers and other stakeholders a voice they did not have in the past, and businesses are listening. Monitoring online discussions about their company and its brands is one of the most common uses among businesses.*

Revised sentence pair with the given-new rule applied:

22. *The Human Resources department is developing a plan to increase employee retention. Three employees resigned from the accounting department last month. We had to hire temporary staff to fill the positions until new accounting staff could be hired. Many important accounting tasks went unfinished. Employee retention has become a top priority for Human Resources.*

Revised cohesive paragraph:

Reflection

Congratulations, you completed the revisions for these skills for business style writing:

- | | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| A. Sentence Structure | E. False Expletives | I. Clarity/Conciseness |
| B. Main Subject | F. Gender | J. Parallelism |
| C. Nominalizations | G. Tone | K. Flow |
| D. Noun Strings | H. Active/Passive Voice | |

To complete the exercise, answer questions to reflect on which skills you had before you started, what you learned by completing the module, and why it is important to improve your business writing style.

1. What skills did you learn by completing the worksheet exercises? Which tasks were most difficult? Did anything surprise you?

2. Why is it important to use effective business writing style in the workplace? Include a sample scenario in your explanation.

Review your answers with the feedback file shared after the assignment deadline.