# EMAIL WRITING

We all know what good writing is. It’s the novel we can’t put down, the poem we never forgot, and the speech that changes the way we look at the world. Good writing is the memo that gets action, the letter that says what a phone call can’t. In business writing, the language is concrete, the point of view is clear, and the points are well expressed. Good writing is hard work, and even the best writers get discouraged.

However, with practice you can feel more confident about your own writing.

## 

## EMAILS – FORMAT & LAYOUT

**Preparation**

Even if you don’t have time to use any of the tools or techniques that have been discussed in this participant guide, always ensure that you do the following. Before you type *anything* into a new message, have explicit answers for two questions:

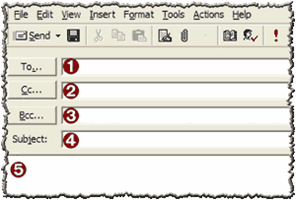
1. Why am I writing this?
2. What exactly do I want the result of this message to be?

If you can’t succinctly state these answers, you might want to hold off on sending your message until you can. People get dozens, hundreds, even *thousands* of emails each day, so it’s only natural for them to gravitate toward the messages that are well thought-out and that clearly respect their time and attention. Careless emails do not invite careful responses.

Think through your email from the recipient’s point of view, and make sure you’ve done everything you can to try and help yourself before contacting someone else. If it’s a valuable message, treat it that way, and put in the time to making your words count.

## 

## EMAIL STRUCTURE

**To: Cc: and Bcc: Fields:** (1, 2 & 3) This is the field where the e-mail address of the receiver is written. When you are sending a mail to a person, you write his e-mail ID in the To: field. If you need to send a copy of the same e-mail to sensitize the supervisor or another person in addition to the recipient, you mark a copy in the Cc: field. Finally, you write an e-mail ID in the Bcc: field to send a copy of the same e-mail to a person without informing the recipient, however, using the Bcc field is discouraged. Avoid it as much as possible.

**Subject field:** (4) This is the field where the label of e-mail is written. This helps in realizing the subject of the mail. It should be 1 line and should be crisp and clear.

**Salutation area:** (5) This is the field where you address the person whom you are sending the mail.

**Body area:** This is the field where the entire mail is written. This field conveys the entire message.

**Signature area:** This field is the place where the sender writes his own name and contact address.

**Email Formats**

**Subject Lines**

* Always include a subject line in your message. Almost all mailers present you with the subject line when you browse your mailbox, and it’s the only clue the recipient has about the contents when filing and searching for messages.
* If you are replying to a message but are changing the subject of the conversation, change the subject too – or better still, start a new message altogether.
* The subject is usually the easiest way to follow the thread of a conversation, so changing the conversation without changing the subject can be confusing and can make filing difficult.
* A good subject line meets three criteria: it is specific, concise and appropriate to the kind of message.

**Making Subject Lines Specific**

The subject line needs to be specific enough to differentiate that message from others on the same subject, but broad enough to cover everything in the message.

**Too general:** Training Sessions

To make this general subject line more specific, identify the particular topic of *this* message.

**Better:** Date for 2005 Training Sessions

**Or:** Evaluation of Training Sessions on Conducting Interviews

**Making Subject Lines Concise**

Most subject lines are relatively short, often between 3 and 7 words.

**Wordy:** Survey of Student Preferences in Regards to Various Pizza Factors

Again, the best revision depends on the specific factors you’ll discuss.

**Better:** Students’ Pizza Preferences**.**

**Or:** The Feasibility of a Cassano’s Branch on Campus

**Or:** What Students Like and Dislike about Cassano’s Pizza

If you can’t make the subject both specific and short, be specific.

**Message length, Content and Format**

* Try to match your message length to the tenor of the conversation. If you are only making a quick query, then keep it short and to the point.
* In general, keep to the subject as much as possible. If you need to branch off on to a totally new and different topic, then it’s often better to send a new message, which allows the recipient the option of filing it separately.
* Don’t type your message in all upper case, it’s extremely difficult to read (although a short stretch of upper case, may serve to emphasize a point heavily.)
* Try to break your message into logical paragraphs and restrict your sentences to sensible lengths.
* Use correct grammar and spelling. Electronic mail is all about communication – poorly worded and misspelled messages are hard to read and potentially confusing. Just because electronic mail is fast does not mean that it should be slipshod. If your words are important enough to write, then they’re also important enough to write properly.
* If your mail program supports fancy formatting (bold, italic etc.) in the mail messages it generates, make sure that the recipient has a mail program that can display such messages.
* Always remember that there is no such thing as a secure mail system. It is unwise to send very personal or sensitive information by e-mail unless you encrypt it using a reliable encryptor. Remember the recipient – you are not the only person who could be embarrassed if a delicate message falls into the wrong hands.
* Include enough information: If you are sending in a question to which you expect a response, make sure you include enough information to make the response possible.
* For example, sending the message “My spreadsheet program doesn’t work” to Lotus Technical Support really doesn’t give them very much to work with; similarly, sending the message “What has happened to my order?” to a vendor is also unhelpful.
* When requesting technical support, include a description of the problem and the version of the program you’re using; when following up on an order, include the order number, your name and organization, and any other details that might assist in tracing your order – and so on.

##### **Replies**

* Include enough of the original message to provide a context. Remember that Electronic Mail is not as immediate as a telephone conversation and the recipient may not recall the contents of the original message, especially if he or she receives many messages each day. Including the relevant section from the original message helps the recipient to place your reply in context.
* Include only the minimum you need the original message. One of the most annoying things you can encounter in e-mail is to have your original 5-page message quoted back at you in its entirety, with the words “Me too” added at the bottom. Quote back only the smallest amount you need to make your context clear.
* Use some kind of visual indication to distinguish between the text quoted from the original message and your new text – this makes the reply much easier to follow
* “>” Is a traditional marker for quoted text, but you can use anything provided its purpose is clear and you use it consistently.
* Pay careful attention to where your reply is going to end up: it can be embarrassing for you if a personal message ends up on a mailing list, and it’s generally annoying for the other list members.

##### **Signatures**

* A “Signature” is a small block of text appended to the end of your messages, which usually contains your contact information. Many mailers can add a signature to your messages automatically. Signatures are a great idea.
* Always use a signature if you can: make sure it identifies who you are and includes alternatives means of contacting you (phone and fax are usual). In many systems, particularly where mail passes through gateways, your signature may be the only means by which the recipient can tell who you are.
* Keep your signature short-four to seven lines is a handy guideline for a maximum signature length. Unnecessarily long signatures waste bandwidth (especially when distributed to lists) and can be annoying.
* Some mailers allow you to add random strings to your signature: this is well and good and can add character if done carefully. You should consider the following basic rules though:
* Keep it short. The length of your quote adds to the length of your signature.
* Try to avoid topical or local quotes, since they may be meaningless to recipients in other towns, countries or cultures.
* Variable signatures are usually best if they’re amusing; polemical outbursts on politics or other such topics will turn most people off, but a one- liner that brings a smile can make someone’s day.

Avoid them in professional emails.

**BUT WHY WRITE?**

Whether we want to or not, most of us must write. We write to explain things, to smooth relationships, to convince others of the value of some course of action. Such writing must be clear, concise, complete, and correct. It must also convey our message in a courteous tone. Many writers are defeated by the attitude that writing is an awesome task. These people do not trust themselves with the language. They go to the files to see what has been done in the past. To overcome their insecurity, they try to write to impress. They hunt for big words to sound like an authority on the subject. They pad their reports to indicate thoroughness. Our aim is to teach the habits of good writing. With the proper attitude, a respect for how words work together and knowledge of the conventions of usage, your writing can be clear, concise, and easy to read. Trust yourself. Find out what you think, and say what you mean in the simple language you would use with a friend. Make adjustments in your wording until you are sure you are saying what you want to say.

**If you want to be a better writer, there are four things you can do to help yourself.**

1) You must READ. If the only writing you ever read is your own, you will have no standards to judge your writing against. We learned to talk by hearing others speak. If you spent a year in England, you would come back with a British accent.

Read like a spectator, if you must, but try to read like an apprentice.

2) You must WRITE. No matter how many rules you know, it takes practice to write well. Your tenth letter to a disgruntled client will be easier to write than the first one, and believe it or not, the tenth report will be easier to write too.

3) You should WANT to WRITE. Find personal reasons for wanting to write well, for wanting to communicate with others, and then turn off the language cop and get writing.

4) You need a FEEDBACK system to tell you how you're doing. You need to know if the writing works. People don't learn to write well from being corrected. They learn not to write. Look at feedback as an opportunity to find better solutions, not as an opportunity to correct errors.

You are already very familiar with the English language. You already talk easily and well. People generally understand you. So the leap from talking to writing need not be difficult if we forget the rules for a moment and write the way we talk.

However, before putting pen to paper, or turning on the computer, there are several things to think about; things we think about whether we are talking or writing. They are the six C's of communication.

## 

## THE 6 C’s OF WRITING

## 

## THE FIRST C: WRITING CLEARLY

Writing is like other forms of communication. You want people, who receive your letters, reports, memos, or proposals to understand what you are saying.

**Why do we still want our writing to be better than it is right now, if people can understand us anyway?**

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Whenever we communicate we say three things:**

* Something about your message
* Something about your reader
* Something about you

When we write well, we are saying that we have thought about our message, we have taken the time to understand the reader, and we send a positive image of ourselves.

Finally, when we write well, we improve the bottom line. Why? We save time, frustration, and inconvenience; all of which represent costs.

# EXERCISES

**What are some words you use in your workplace that would be considered jargon elsewhere?**

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**How would you rewrite the following sentences so they are clearer to a reader?**

1. Rose Walters is only an assistant to Frank Crandlemire.

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

1. Report any other defects or mechanical damage to the supervisor in the finished product

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

1. Arriving early for my interview the human resources office was not open.

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

1. Kaye’s job does not, because it causes great stress, seem worth keeping.

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

1. Driving cautiously, the dangerous intersection was approached.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**REWRITE THESE SENTENCES TO MAKE THEM MORE READABLE.**

**Sentence One:**

Regardless of their seniority or union affiliation, all employees who hope to be promoted are expected to continue their education either by enrolling in the special courses to be offered by the department, which are scheduled to be given after working hours beginning next Wednesday, or by taking approved correspondence courses selected from a list which may be seen in the Human Resources office.

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Sentence Two:**

This policy does not appear to be well understood by departmental management in the region even though this group has a prime responsibility for implementing the policy.

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

## THE SECOND C: WRITING CONCISELY

**What are some ways we can make our writing concise?**

1. Eliminate unnecessary words. Don't use long, wordy phrases when a single word will. Use “now” rather than "at this point in time.”
2. Stay away from vague words like "better," or "faster,” whenever possible. How much better? How much faster?
3. Don't create long, complex sentences by stringing phrases and clauses together carelessly.
4. Include only relevant facts. Don’t burden a sentence or a paragraph with useless information.
5. Write courteously and show respect for your readers.
6. Organize your thoughts so they flow effectively.
7. Use concrete words whenever you can. Don't write "in the near future." Specify instead, "by noon on Thursday, December 15."

# EXERCISES

Eliminate unnecessary words in the following phrases:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **WORDY PHRASE** | BETTER PHRASE |
| At this point in time |  |
| In the near future |  |
| In the event that |  |
| For the purpose of |  |
| With regard to |  |
| I am of the opinion that |  |
| Please do not hesitate to let me know |  |
| I wish to take this occasion to express my thanks |  |
| The early part of next week |  |
| Your check in the amount of |  |
| It is quite probable that |  |
| A large number of |  |
| At the present time |  |
| There is no doubt that |  |
| Most of the time |  |
| In the same way |  |
| During the time that |  |
| Remember the fact that |  |
| Not in a position |  |
| In view of the fact that |  |
| Until such time |  |

**TOO ARCHAIC?**

Use up-to-date phrases, rather than those that are dated. (write, "omit" if you believe there is no appropriate substitute.)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **WORDY PHRASE** | BETTER PHRASE |
| As per your instruction |  |
| At an early date |  |
| Attached herewith |  |
| In lieu of |  |
| In reply I wish to state |  |
| In response to same |  |
| Kindly note same |  |
| Pleased be advised that/I would advise |  |
| Pursuant to our agreement |  |
| Refer back to |  |
| Take the liberty of |  |
| Thanking you in advance |  |
| This will acknowledge |  |
| We wish to advise that/ We deem it advisable |  |
| Allow me to express |  |
| According to our records |  |
| Hoping to hear from you soon, we remain |  |
| In response to yours of the 12th |  |
| Awaiting your reply, we are in due course |  |

**WRITE THE FOLLOWING SENTENCES MORE CONCISELY.**

1. In the event that payment is not made by January, your license will be suspended.

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

1. The invoice was in the amount of $50,000.

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

1. He ordered desks which are of the executive type.

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

1. There are four rules which should be observed.

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

1. The department budget can be observed to be decreasing each New Year.

# REPETITIVE SENTENCES

1. *Wordy:* The room is red in color.

*Concise:* The room is red.

1. *Wordy:* It is essential that everyone arrive promptly and on time.

*Concise:* It is essential that everyone arrive on time.

1. *Wordy:* It’s time to terminate the project and put an end to it.

*Concise:* It’s time to terminate the project.

1. *Wordy:* The car that is gray in color must have been in an accident or collision.

*Concise:* The gray car must have been in an accident.

1. *Wordy:* Please let me know your plans as soon as possible and at your earliest convenience.

*Concise:* Please let me know your plans as soon as possible.

1. *Wordy:* Let’s meet to discuss and talk through the client’s wish list and desires.

*Concise:* Let’s meet to discuss the client’s wish list.

Exercise : **Cross out 20 words which are not necessary in this email.**

Many thanks for your email which I received yesterday. Tuesday at 10.30 is fine for me as my 9am meeting will be finished by then. Can you send me the latest sales figures before the meeting? I look forward to seeing you there.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

* EXERCISE: **Underline the key words then rewrite the email. The maximum length is 60 words, including the subject line.**

**Subject:** Your info re market developments in the Baltic States

Many thanks for getting in touch last week and sending me all the information about market changes in the Baltic States. It was really useful, particularly the graphs about expected demand for consumer products over the next five years. I’ve forwarded your email to our representative in Estonia, Krista Kilvet. She has just taken over from Doris Kareva, who I think you met in Stuttgart. Would you be interested in giving a presentation at our Head Office on the whole political and economic background in the region? I’m sure the Board would be interested as we may be making some large investments there in the near future.

**Subject: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

## 

## THE THIRD C: MAKING YOUR WRITING COMPLETE

The third C is Complete. Here are some tips on making your writing complete.

1. Use the 5 W's and an H. Answer the questions: Who? What? Where? When?

Why? How?

1. Make a checklist of all the important points you want to cover, and then check them off when the letter/memo/report is done.
2. Empathize with the reader. Have I told him/her everything he/she needs to know?
3. Give something extra when appropriate.

# Exercise

Write a notice for your colleagues to inform them about an event that is coming up. If you have no activities approaching that you are aware of, use your imagination. If you don’t know the details of the event, create them.

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

## THE FOURTH C: CONCRETE

Include all relevant information so that the reader doesn’t have to make his own assumptions. Instead of “when we last spoke about the situation” say “when we spoke on June 8th about hiring a new assistant”.

1. Be specific

1.  Specific numbers rather than many, few, low, high   
2.  Specific dates rather than later, next month, ASAP\*   
3.  Avoid words like good, well, poor, bad when the subject is measurable

B.  Active voice rather than passive:

## LANGUAGE FOCUS: ACTIVE & PASSIVE VOICE

Look at the following sentences and note the difference between them:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| (i) You | **make** | cheese and curd | from milk | **= active** |
| *subject* | *verb* | *object* | *phrase* |  |
| (ii) Cheese and curd **are made** | | | from milk | **= passive** |
| *Subject* | *verb* | past participle | *phrase* |  |

**What is the passive & why do we use it?**

The second structure is called “passive” because the subject is not actively doing anything or being in any state. We are usually describing something that has been done to the subject, sometimes to avoid saying who did it, sometimes to put more emphasis on that subject than on the person who did it/ made it/ acted on it, etc or sometimes to be more concise.

**VAGUE AND SPECIFIC SENTENCES**

Here are some sentences that leave the reader guessing, followed by examples of how to be specific:

*1. Vague:* I hope to meet with you again soon!

*Clear/Specific: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

*2. Vague:* We greatly appreciated your help with the Randolph matter. You are a great new asset to our team.

*Clear/Specific: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

*3. Vague:* Your investment should increase significantly by next year.

*Clear/Specific: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

*4. Vague:* The new system has been very profitable.

*Clear/Specific: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

*5. Vague:* Our progress on this project is somewhat behind schedule.

*Clear/Specific: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

**Exercise**

Turn the following active sentences into the passive. *The new subject has been in each case.*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Somebody ate all the cake. |
|  | **The cake\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.** |
|  | Somebody has stolen the crown jewels. |
|  | **The crown jewels \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.** |
|  | The dog bit the child. |
|  | **The child \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.** |
|  | You make butter from milk. |
|  | **Butter \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.** |
|  | Someone has notified the police that the convicts have escaped. |
|  | **The police \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.** |
|  | It is necessary to put this sentence into the passive. |
|  | **This sentence \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.** |
|  | The people are seeking a better leader. |
|  | **A better leader \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.** |
|  | Scientists have found life on Mars. |
|  | **Life \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.** |
|  | Scientists believe that they have found life on Mars. *(two active verbs; both need to be put into the passive)* |
|  | **It \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ that life \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ on Mars** |
|  | Authorities make rules so that people can break them. *(two active verbs; both need to be put into the passive)* |
|  | **Rules \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.** |

## THE FIFTH C: CONSTRUCTIVE

Use words that set a positive tone. Constructive words are like smiling when you greet someone. They leave a good impression.

**ESTABLISH A POSITIVE IMPRESSION WITH YOUR AUDIENCE: TONE**

### Your audience will form an opinion about you based on a number of factors. The tone you use is important—make it positive to show you are confident and capable.

*Tone* refers to the attitude you show both to your reader and about your subject. It can be friendly or cold, optimistic or pessimistic, confident or insecure. In any type of business writing, aim to convey a positive tone by:

* Giving attention to what exists, rather than what is lacking
* Focusing on the positive, rather than the negative
* Conveying a confident and in-charge attitude

## POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE TONE

**The following e-mails were written to gain admission to a workplace seminar. Note the difference in tone between the two.**

Dear HR Rep:

I am interested in signing up for the seminar on morale in the workplace.

I know there are not many available spots, but I hope you will consider me, since I’ve been with the company for five years.

If you wish to contact me, you may call me at extension 111.

Kelly Guzman

Dear Hannah:

I just received your e-mail about the morale seminar. What a terrific idea!

I’m certain that my group can benefit from this information. Please mark me down for a spot, and I’ll mark my calendar.

Contact me at extension 222 to confirm.

See you next Thursday,

Kimberly Janey

In the first example, Kelly’s tone is flat. She uses passive words such as *hope* and *wish*, which give the reader the impression that the writer isn’t a person of action. She also points out the negatives, such as the space issue, and in her lack of enthusiasm, she all but asks to be excluded if there isn’t enough space in the seminar. Kimberly instead greets the sender by name, Hannah, and states that the seminar is a terrific idea—assuming that she will be a part of it. Her upbeat writing exudes confidence. She demonstrates action by asking for her place as well as by marking her calendar.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |

* Exercise: Here are more ways to make your language polite/diplomatic. Complete the words in each sentence with the missing letters**.**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| There will be a delay. | **⇨** | **1** | I’m afr\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ there will be a sm\_\_\_\_\_ delay. |
| There is a problem. | **⇨** | **2** | It se\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ we have a sl\_\_\_\_\_\_ problem. |
| I disagree. | **⇨** | **3** | I th\_\_\_\_\_\_ there m\_\_\_\_ be an issue here. |
| We can’t do that. | **⇨** | **4** | To be ho\_\_\_\_\_\_, I’m not s\_\_\_\_\_\_ we can do that. |
| That gives us very little time. | **⇨** | **5** | Act\_\_\_\_\_\_, that does \_\_’\_\_\_ give us m\_\_\_\_ time. |
| It will be better to ask Heidi. | **⇨** | **6** | Wou\_\_\_\_\_’\_\_\_ it be better to ask Heidi? |
| That will be very expensive. | **⇨** | **7** | That mi\_\_\_\_\_ be qu\_\_\_\_\_ expensive. |
| That will be very expensive. | **⇨** | **8** | That won’\_\_\_ be ch\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. |

Exercise: **There are many words and phrases that you can use at the beginning of a sentence to sound friendly. Complete the table with the words or phrases from the box below.**

|  |
| --- |
| Anyway Apparently Basically By the way Frankly In fact Luckily Of course |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| You heard something, bare are not sure: | *It seems that* | **1** |  |
| Something is true, but surprising: | *Actually* | **2** |  |
| Something is obvious or already known: | *Obviously* | **3** |  |
| Bad/good fortune: | *Unfortunately* | **4** |  |
| Saying what you really think: | *To be honest* | **5** |  |
| Going back to a topic: | *Well/So* | **6** |  |
| Changing the topic: | *Anyway/So* | **7** |  |
| Summarizing with the most important point: | *Anyway* | **8** |  |

## SIXTH C: CORRECT

Proofread your writing for spelling, grammatical and typographical errors, which detract from your message and leave a negative impression of your qualifications

## PROOF-READING STRATEGIES

Use the 3-level approach to proof reading in order to ensure the elimination of errors:

**LEVEL 1: CHECK CLARITY & GRAMMAR**

Danielle, a graphic designer, says, “I send E-mails back and forth to other designers and to the writers within the company all day long. I want my communications to convey a professional image, but they’re usually

short and simple, so what’s most important for me to proof is that my meaning is clear and my grammar is correct. Beyond that, proofing would be a waste of time.” Note that the first level of proofing is appropriate for Danielle because her communications have these attributes:

* **internal**
* **short**
* **simple**
* **informal**
* **low risk, with only minor consequences associated with inaccuracies**

**LEVEL 2: EVALUATE CLARITY, GRAMMAR, ORGANIZATION AND COMPLETENESS**

Nancy a self-employed makeup artist, writes sales letters, proposals, business correspondence, E-mails, and Web copy. “I hate to write!” she explains. “But in business, I have to. So I do. What I’ve learned over the years, though, is that people hire me for my expertise and upbeat personality, not my writing ability, or as I like to joke, my writing inability! Still, I know how important it is that I convey a highly professional image. Proofing matters a lot.” In evaluating Nancy’s circumstances, it’s clear that the second level of proofing is appropriate. Her projects have the following characteristics:

* *external, but not part of the public record*
* *short to medium in length*
* *simple to somewhat complex*
* *informal*
* *medium risk, with relatively minor consequences associated with errors or inaccuracies*

**LEVEL 3: PROOFREAD EVERYTHING, BE METHODICAL**

There are two kinds of third-level projects: communications for which you are responsible for writing to someone else’s specifications with little or no direction, and communications for which the consequences of errors are severe. “My boss sends me E-mails with—at best—a rough draft of a message,” explains Heidi, executive assistant to a consumer products company’s senior vice president. “The projects range from an E-mail to all vice presidents about some policy change to a five-page proposal to another corporation’s president presenting a global co-branding initiative. “Sometimes he’ll jot down a sentence or two, sometimes he’ll write theoretically about what he wants to accomplish, and sometimes he’ll do both at the same time. It’s my job to take whatever he gives me and produce a finished document ready for his signature. We joke that my responsibility is to ‘proof’ his work. But we both know that this is way beyond traditional proofreading. It’s really writing, editing, and proofing.” Heidi’s approach to creating finished documents is an example of the third level of proofing. Her projects have the following attributes:

* *external, and potentially part of the public record*
* *short to long*
* *usually complex*
* *usually formal*
* *medium to high risk, with significant consequences associated with errors or inaccuracies*

Ray, a physical therapist, says that he has to write a monthly article of about five hundred words for his organization’s newsletter. “Five hundred words is a lot. That’s a long article compared to the rest of the newsletter. Having that amount of space allows me to go into a fair amount of detail. It’s imperative that my articles be clear and accurate. Our newsletter targets people who are recovering from sports injuries. The readers are usually anxious and may not know a lot about the subject matter. Clarity is my most important goal. However, because the newsletters are distributed to the community through doctors’ offices, the public library, schools, and the recreation department, they are public documents. My boss once told me that I should always write about medical subjects as though the article would end up as evidence in a courtroom someday. So I’m very cautious. It’s important to me personally and professionally that they be correct, grammatical, complete, and clear.” Ray’s articles are another example of proofing at the third level. They have these qualities:

* *external, and potentially part of the public record*
* *long*
* *complex*
* *formal*
* *high risk, with severe consequences associated with inaccuracies*

Your first task is to identify which level of editing is appropriate for you. If you proof everything in every project, you’ll spend needless time and effort for no or little reward. On the other hand, if you don’t proof everything on certain projects, you risk costly mistakes.

**ASSESS YOUR COMMUNICATION**

In order to make smart decisions about which level of editing is appropriate for your projects, you need to know what factors to evaluate. The assessment that follows will help you determine the proper level of editing for any written communication. Bring to mind a specific writing project, then assess how true or not true each of the following statements is. If the statement is absolutely true, score it a five. If the statement is absolutely false, score it a one. If it’s sometimes true, sort of true, or maybe true, score it a three. A two implies that the statement is rarely true, and a four implies that the statement is usually true. At the end, tally your scores and read what your total score implies about the appropriate level of editing for your project.

*1. Your communication will be distributed only within your organization. \_\_\_\_\_*

*2. You’ve determined that your communication is very informal. \_\_\_\_\_*

*3. Your message is upbeat and fun. \_\_\_\_\_*

*4. If your readers misunderstand your message, no negative consequences will result. \_\_\_\_\_*

*5. Your communication is short. \_\_\_\_\_*

*6. Your communication is simple. \_\_\_\_\_*

*7. Your communication includes only one section. For example, it’s a 100-word newsletter article, a business letter, a memo, or an E-mail with no attachments. \_\_\_\_\_*

*8. Only one subject is included in your communication. \_\_\_\_\_*

*9. You’ve determined that your readers are on your side and that they have the resources to do as you ask; in other words, you’ve assessed your writing task as Easy. \_\_\_\_\_*

Tally your scores. Your total will be between nine and forty-five. (If you scored each of the nine statements as a one, your total score will be nine. If you scored each a five, your total score will be forty-five.) The higher your score, the lower the level of proofreading you need to undertake.

* 33 to 45 implies that it would be appropriate to proof for clarity and grammar (Level One)
* 20 to 32 implies that it would be appropriate to proof for clarity, grammar, organization, and completeness (Level Two)

9 to 19 implies that it would be appropriate to proof for everything (Level Three)