WRITE TO WIN: THE ART OF POLISHED BUSINESS WRITING

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WRITING IS A SKILL.
TYPICAL UWP WRITING COURSES

University Writing Program 104A Business Writing:
• 15-20 sections filled per quarter
  • 1,500 students per year (+ summer)
  • 10-week course
  • Never enough time to cover everything

What’s the most important thing in life?
Relationships.

TODAY’S WORKSHOP

• “Good writing” versus “bad writing”
• Writing for an audience
• Organization strategies
• Tone in writing
• Clarity in writing
  • Avoiding vague language
  • Being concise
  • Using active voice effectively
  • Avoiding unintentional passive construction
• Fundamentals of proofreading
• Suggested resources
“GOOD” PROFESSIONAL WRITING

Effective writing accomplishes writer’s goal:
• Serves the reader’s needs
• Often persuades the reader to act
• Conveys the necessary information
  • Understandable, pertinent content
  • Appropriate for the communication context
  • Likely to achieve desired results

WRITING FOR AN AUDIENCE

The audience is central to your professional writing.

(Don’t forget them.)
COMMUNICATION CONTEXT

“Communication context” involves the circumstances surrounding a communication situation:

• Reason for writing
• Audience
• Channels
• Goals...

(Don’t forget the context. And remember to think beyond yourself.)

INEFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Subject: urgent

Professor,
I really need to take your class in order to graduate this spring quarter. Please is there any possibilities that i can get into your class.
Let me know asap.
Thank you

Respectfully,
[Student]
ORGANIZATION STRATEGY

Introduction
• Why are you writing?
• Why should I read this?

Body
• Orient reader
• Provide necessary details

Conclusion
• Provide closure
• Give a directive
• Offer to connect further

TONE IN WRITING

Tone refers to the emotional impact the message has on our reader.

Why do we use emoticons?
😊

Or textspeak?
LOL!

Or ALL CAPS?!
TYPES OF TONE IN WRITING

Depending on the communication context, we need to decide on an appropriate tone:

- Formal or conversational
- Pompous or warm
- Positive or negative
- Tactful or tactless

EFFECTIVE VS. INEFFECTIVE TONE

“We must receive a copy of your W-4 form to complete our files.”

OR

“So you can receive your paycheck, we need to receive a copy of your W-4 form so your file is complete. Please send us a copy.”

(Remember: Nice goes a long way.)
You returned from the XYZ conference over 2 months ago and submitted your travel expense report to the accounting department, who should have cut you a reimbursement check within a week. You haven’t heard anything from that department, so you must email them about the situation.

Here’s your original email to Accounting (revise it):

“When will I finally get my travel reimbursement for the XYZ conference? I submitted my paperwork more than two months ago, and yet you still haven’t paid. Do you think that I am made of money and can wait forever? Please respond to me IMMEDIATELY.”
CLARITY IN WRITING

Avoid vague language

Be concise

Use active voice effectively

Avoid unintentional passive construction in sentences

ACTIVE VERSUS PASSIVE VOICE

Passive Voice: Makes the subject unclear:
“The report was prepared by our team.”

Active Voice: Subject – Verb – Object:
“Our team prepared the report.”

Active sentence construction is usually more clear & concise.
FUNDAMENTALS OF PROOFREADING

Write first, then proofread.

Proofread & revise several times on important documents.

You don’t need to be a grammarian, but you need to be comfortable with the basics:

• Its vs. It’s
• They’re, there, their
• Your vs. you’re...

(And leave out “literally.”)
AND OF COURSE, PUNCTUATE.

Let’s eat, Betty!

AND OF COURSE, PUNCTUATE.

Let’s eat Betty!
SUGGESTED RESOURCES

*Take a UWP writing course
*Take advantage of available resources:
  • Student Academic Success Center
  • Fellow students/faculty &/or colleagues...
  • Fellow members of professional organizations

Thank you!

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