

# Eight Tools for Better Business Writing

**Technology has altered our ability to communicate effectively in writing. Gone are the methodical and disciplined days of the inkblot and feathered quill.**

Faxes, cell phones, computers, e-mails, and text messaging have overshadowed written correspondence. But, don't let all the technology delude you. Just look around, we are still very dependent on print media. How many newspapers, magazines, books, newsletters, catalogs, and other printed publications are circulated daily? Walk into your local bookstore and see all of the printed material, which is screaming out for you to grab it and go. Think of the written pieces of communications you generate in a month's time for your own business.

Effective communication is crucial to the success of any business. You don't even have to be a great writer to write well. All you need is a few techniques to help you improve. In this article, you'll receive eight tools for better business writing:

## **Improve Your Spelling.**

There's nothing worse than reading through interesting information and finding spelling errors throughout. Don't just rely on spell check. Pull out the dusty Merriam-Webster's and double check those words.

## **Organize Your Thoughts.**

Take a trip back to your high school days when you learned the basics of report writing. Outline your ideas using the tried and true "Introduction-Body-Conclusion" format. By organizing your thoughts and ideas, the writing will come easier.

## **List the Key Points.**

This helps to eliminate extraneous and irrelevant content. Simply expand on each key point. When you're done, voila! you have your story with each important issue addressed.

## **Write Complete Sentences.**

Complete means having a subject, verb, and predicate. When writing, make sure your writing doesn't follow the spoken language — which is often colloquial and abbreviated.



## **Use Short Words.**

Short words convey power and are less pretentious. Remember, you don't want the reader to constantly reference a dictionary to read your material — they will stop reading.

## **Use Active Voice.**

Active voice commands a presence and gets your reader's attention. Passive voice is rarely effective unless used in a specific situation. Since we're talking about business writing, active voice (in most cases) is the most appropriate.

## **Provide Facts.**

If your content can be supported by factual data and statistics then by all means include it. Supporting evidence increases your credibility and shows the reader that you've done your homework.

## **Edit Yourself.**

Read your content out loud and listen for disjointed phrases and breaks in the text. Look for gaps and pay close attention to transitions — or lack thereof. When you edit yourself, be sure to follow these few words of advice from Bruce Ross-Larson's book, *Edit Yourself*:

- **Cut the fat** — don't be too wordy
- **Use better words** — long words aren't always better
- **Be clear** — ambiguity forces your reader to stop reading

Your mission, should you choose to accept it is to... Take a few of your business print media (letters, newsletters, reports, etc.) and glance through them. Keep in mind the concepts discussed above while reading through your material. Ask yourself the following questions: What do I like about this? What don't I like about this? How can I improve on this?

Remember, there's always room for improvement!



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### **About the author**

Donna M. Murphy is an editorial specialist, a veteran writer and a published author who has written, edited, and designed extensive collateral and key solutions products for print and the web. Training manuals, operating procedures, business documents and content quality assurance encompass a large portion of her assignments. Donna is the creative force behind Summit Publication Design, LLC, and has specialized in content organization, quality assurance and publication design since 1997. Visit Donna's website at <http://www.summitpubdesign.com> for information on her comprehensive services, helpful resources, more articles like this one, and strategies to help you improve the quality and effectiveness of your publications.

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