

Writing in the Workplace Communication in the Workplace Series

Leader's Guide by:

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For Trainers:

Introduction

This 23 minute program provides the participant with an overview of the purposes and advantages of writing and the advantages and disadvantages of writing compared with speaking. It covers the following areas:

- Defining writing
- Advantages and disadvantages of writing
- Five steps to writing
- Five "whats" to writing
- Presentation

By focusing on a melodramatic case study of fictional restaurant manager Jason and his staff at Larder Restaurant, this program works through the steps to achieve success in workplace writing. It works to actively engage the viewer in solving the problems posed.

Program Timeline

00:00:00	Introduction
00:01:21	Chapter 1 – Defining Writing
00:04:21	Summary – Defining Writing
00:04:59	Chapter 2 – Advantages of Writing
00:08:57	Summary – Advantages of Writing
00:09:32	Chapter 3 – Planning
00:12:38	Summary – Planning
00:13:03	Chapter 4 – Writing and Editing
00:18:06	Summary – Writing and Editing
00:18:44	Chapter 5 – Presentation
00:21:21	Summary – Presentation
00:21:49	Conclusion
00:22:17	Credits
00:22:55	End of Program

Background Information

Workplace Writing Skills

Many people are intimidated by writing. Even so, there are times when writing is the best way to communicate, and often the only way to get your message across.

Write With Necessary Caution

When writing, remember that once something is in written form, it cannot be taken back. Communication through the written form is more permanent than verbal communications, with less room for error and even less room for mistakes. This presents writers with additional challenges, including spelling, grammar, punctuation, even writing style and actual wording.

Thankfully, today's technology makes memo, letter and proposal writing much easier by providing reliable tools that check and even correct misspelled words and incorrect grammar use. Unfortunately, these tools are not foolproof and will require support, making knowledge in this area important.

The Importance of "Style"

Some of the most basic tips to remember when writing include:

- Avoid slang words.
- Try not to use abbreviations (unless appropriately defined).
- Steer away from symbols (such as ampersands [&]).
- Clichés should be avoided, or at the very least, used with caution.
- Brackets are used to play down words or phrases.
- Dashes are generally used for emphasis.
- Great care should ALWAYS be taken to spell the names of people and companies correctly
- Numbers should be expressed as words when the number is less than 10 or is used to start a sentence (example: Ten years ago, my brother and I...). The number 10, or anything greater than 10, should be expressed as a figure (example: My brother has 13 Matchbox cars).
- Quotation marks should be placed around any directly quoted speech or text and around titles of publications.
- Keep sentences short.

While these tips cover the most common mistakes made when writing letters, memos and reports, they in no way cover everything you need to know to ensure your written communications are accurate and understood.

Letter Writing Hints

When writing letters, it is best to address the letter to an individual. When beginning the letter with a personal name, be sure it ends with an appropriate closing, such as 'Sincerely yours'. If you cannot obtain an individual's name, consider ending it with a more generic (less personal) closing, such as 'With kindest regards'.

For normal business letters, your letter should start with an overall summary, explaining in the first paragraph why the letter is relevant to the reader. It's not good practice to make the reader go past the first paragraph to find out why the letter was sent to them.

The body of the letter needs to explain the reason for the correspondence, including any relevant background and current information. Make sure the information flows logically, ensuring you are making your points effectively.

The closing of the letter is the final impression you leave with the reader. End with an action point, such as 'I will call you later this week to discuss this further'.

The Importance of Careful Proofing

Perhaps the most important thing to remember when writing a letter is to check it thoroughly when it is completed. Even when you think it is exactly what you want, read it one more time. This "unwritten" rule holds true for everything you write – memos, letters, proposals, etc.

Use both the grammar and spell check on your computer, paying very close attention to every word highlighted. Do not place total faith on your computer here. You should have both a dictionary and thesaurus (printed or online) on hand to double-check everything your computer editing tools highlight, as these tools are certainly not always reliable.

When checking your written communications, make sure the document is clear and concise. Is there anything in the written communication that could be misinterpreted? Does it raise unanswered questions or fail to make the point you need to get across?

Can you cut down on the number of words used? For instance, don't use 20 words when you can use 10. While you do not want to be curt or abrupt, you do not want to waste the reader's time with unnecessary words or phrases.

Is your written communication well organised? Does each idea proceed logically to the next? Would some additional headings help? Make sure your written communications are easy to read and contain the necessary information, using facts where needed and avoiding information that is not relevant. Again, outline the course of action you expect, such as a return call or visit.

Close appropriately, making sure to include your contact information. While this may seem obvious, it is easily overlooked and can result in your written communications looking amateurish. Oversights of this nature can diminish your chances of achieving the goals of your written communication.

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We have two ways in which you can use the program –

Writing in the Workplace

If you have limited time, use the first option – we have called it *Speed Writing* – this session will take one hour. If you have around three hours we suggest that you use the plan for the *Workplace Writing 101*.

1. Speed Writing

Phase One: Session Starter.

Phase Two: Discussion based on customer service.

Phase Three: Information to look for on the key concepts covered in the DVD whilst viewing the program.

Phase Four: Discussion based on the drama as it unfolded in the DVD.

Phase Five: Personal Action Plan.

2. Workplace Writing 101

Phase One: Session Starter.

Phase Two: Discussion on Workplace Writing.

Phase Three: Newspaper list.

Phase Four: Information to look for on the key concepts covered in the DVD whilst viewing the program.

Phase Five: Discussion based on the drama as it unfolded in the DVD.

Phase Six: Exercise.

Phase Seven: Personal Action Plan.

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Speed Writing

Phase One: Session Starter: Double Talk

Participants form pairs - each pair decides on an identity such as salt and pepper, black and white odd and even etc. Select a pair, have the rest of the group ask questions to determine the pair's identity – the group has a maximum of 20 questions. The pair can only answer yes or no. Questioning continues until someone deduces the identity of the pair. The pair drawn at random replaces the first couple.

Phase Two: Before Viewing the Program

Discussion could centre on the following:

1. How many participants enjoy writing? How many dislike it and avoid it and why?
2. If someone hates writing, how will that affect the sort of jobs available to them?
How many jobs exist where writing is not required?
3. What makes writing difficult? What makes writing effective?

Phase Three: Whilst Viewing the Program

Complete the key points made from the text screens:

1. How is writing defined?
2. What are five advantages of written communication?
3. What are three disadvantages of written communication?
4. Record the steps involved in writing in the workplace under the following headings.
 - a) Four stages in writing process.
5. Five elements to planning.
6. The five "whats" to writing.
7. The three steps to editing.
8. List any three steps to presentation.

Participants Comments While Viewing the Program

1. How is writing defined?

- Visual representation of spoken language.
- Plays large part in workplace communication.
- Tools and techniques developed over years.
- Task writing performs remains the same.
- Important coding system for communicating.
- Ideas, information across space and time.

2. What are the five advantages of written communication?

- Convey complex information.
- Detailed information can be lost in speech.
- Creates a permanent record.
- Carries more authority than speech.
- Easily copied, revised.

3. What are three disadvantages of written communication?

- Time consuming.
- Impersonal.
- More expensive than oral communication.

4. Record the steps involved in writing in the workplace, under the following headings.

a) Four stages of the writing process.

- Audience.
- Method.
- Timing.
- Research.
- Purpose.

b) The five "whats"?

- What you want to say.
- What tone you want to say it in.
- What specific points you need to make.
- What order to make points in.
- What words and punctuation to use.

c) The three steps to editing.

- Editing, checking for clarity and accuracy.
- Correcting mistakes.
- Changing words and content.

d) List any three steps to presentation.

- Good presentation integral.
- How to package, wrap and distribute.
- Consider speed, cost and impact.
- Printing quality.
- Font size.
- Graphic design.
- Quality of paper.

After Viewing the Program

1. Discuss your experiences of written communication at work.
2. Identify the various forms of written communication used in the workplace. Discuss the appropriateness and effectiveness of the different forms in relation to the audience for whom they are intended.
3. Study the letter below that Jason prepared for the Restaurant Guide. Identify the changes that should be made and draft another letter to the Restaurant Guide.

Alternatively, write a letter and have one of the participants act as the editor for your letter, while you act as the editor for their letter. Editing should be done using the guidelines provided in the program. Reasons for any editing changes made should be explained fully to the writer.

Dear Best Restaurant Guide,

This is the Larder restaurant's entry to this year's guide.

The Larder restaurant is located in Smith Street.

The chef is Jason Momesso.

The food is Mediterranean.

The restaurant seats 40 people, and there are often long queues, as the restaurant does not take bookings.

The restaurant's most popular dishes are a tomato and swimmer crab pasta and melted chocolate mousse.

The restaurant has a vegetarian menu.

For three years in a row, Chef Jason Momesso has won Top Chef awards for his cooking

4. Discuss the notion of a 'paper trail' and why it is important.

Phase Five: Personal Action Plan

Workplace Writing 101

Phase One: Session Starter: Double Talk

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Phase Two: Before Viewing the Program

Discussion could centre on the following:

1. How many participants enjoy writing? How many dislike it and avoid it and why?
2. If someone hates writing, how will that affect the sort of jobs available to them? How many jobs exist where writing is not required?
3. What makes writing difficult? What makes writing effective?

Phase Three: Newspaper List

Divide participants into teams of three or four – give each team a newspaper. Ask teams to find the first word starting with A – then they circle the word and note it on paper. Teams are asked to continue to then find a 'b' word then a 'c' word then a 'd' word etc – however exclude the letters x and z. The teams have five minutes to search for the words. In the end each team should have 24 words. Give each team five minutes to then make the longest reasonably sensible sentence using the words they have found. Teams then read their sentences.

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Phase Four: While Viewing the Program

Complete the key points made from the text screens

1. How is writing defined?
2. What are five advantages of written communication?
3. What are three disadvantages of written communication?
4. Record the steps involved in writing in the workplace under the following headings.

Four stages in writing process.

- a) Planning
- b)
- c)
- d)

Five elements to planning.

- a) Audience
- b)
- c)
- d)
- e)

6. The five "whats" to writing.

- a) What to say
- b)
- c)
- d)
- e)

7. The three steps to editing.

- a)
- b)
- c)

8. List any three steps to presentation.

- a)
- b)
- c)

Suggested Participant Responses

1. How is writing defined?

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Four stages in writing process.

- Audience.
- Method.
- Timing.
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- Purpose.

5. The five "whats".

- What you want to say.
- What tone you want to say it in.
- What specific points you need to make.
- What order to make points in.
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6. The three steps to editing.

- Editing, checking for clarity and accuracy.
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7. List any three steps to presentation.

- Good presentation integral.
- How to package, wrap and distribute.
- Consider speed, cost and impact.
- Printing quality.
- Font size.
- Graphic design.
- Quality of paper.

Phase Five:

Discussion based on the drama as it unfolded in the DVD

1. Discuss your experiences of written communication at work.
2. Identify the various forms of written communication used in the workplace. Discuss the appropriateness and effectiveness of the different forms in relation to the audience for whom they are intended.
3. Study the letter below that Jason prepared for the Restaurant Guide. Identify the changes that should be made and draft another letter to the Restaurant Guide.
4. Alternatively, write a letter and have one of your classmates act as the editor for your letter, while you act as the editor for their letter. Editing should be done using the guidelines provided in the program. Reasons for any editing changes made should be explained fully to the writer.
5. Discuss the notion of a 'paper trail' and why it is important.

Phase Six: Reading and Writing

Participants will bring along written instructions for making something in 10 minutes – a particular dish, a decoration etc. They must also bring along the required implements and materials to make the said item. Participants form pairs – each person hands over the instructions and the materials etc – then each person follows the instructions to make the particular item. Then each person evaluates each others instructions and gives feedback to the person who wrote the instructions.

Or...

Ask each person to imagine they have written a book which is about to be published. Tell them that they need to write a short piece about themselves (not more than 50 words) that will appear on the book jacket, "About the Author". Tell participants that they have 10 minutes to write this piece. The piece needs to include name and maybe something about where you live or your family or your achievements, whatever you think is significant.

Ask participants to write these descriptions on flip-charts. Stick to the walls - read each others – make suggestions at the side on another flip chart of how the writing could be improved – no names!

Phase Seven: Personal Action Plan

Other Relevant Programs Available From Training Point

Communication in the Workplace Series

Negotiating Workplace Agreements

Communicating in a Diverse World - Dialogue - Now You're Talking!

Communication Skills in Clinical Practice - The Basics

Communicating in the Office

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