

# THE WRITE ADVICE

SPECIAL EDITION

UWF WRITING LAB



## UWF Grammar Hotline, May I Help You? BUSINESS FAQ'S TAKEN FROM THE UWF GRAMMAR HOTLINE LOG

850/474-2129

- Q:** What salutation is appropriate when a letter is being sent to two people with Ph.D.'s?  
**A:** *Drs. Ronald and Mary Lowe-Evans* -- Dear Drs. Evans and Lowe-Evans:  
*Drs. Gary and Marcia Howard* -- Dear Drs. Howard:
- Q:** What is the plural of these words: *statute of limitations* and *attorney general*?  
**A:** *statutes of limitations*; *attorney generals* OR *attorneys general* (*American Heritage Dictionary*, 4th ed.)
- Q:** What's correct - *Boss's Day* or *Bosses' Day*, *Secretary's Day* or *Secretaries' Day*, *President's Day* or *Presidents' Day*?  
**A:** All are plural possessive: *Bosses' Day*, *Secretaries' Day*, *Presidents' Day* (and *Veterans' Day*)
- Q:** Is it correct to use an ampersand (&) with a comma in the name of a company - Bui, Davis, & Britnell for instance?  
**A:** Omit the comma preceding the ampersand. (*Chicago Manual of Style*)
- Q:** Is a colon correct preceding a vertical or horizontal list?  
 Ex. *Your portfolio should include: a cover letter, resume, and sample of your work*
- A:** Do not use a colon after a verb or a preposition, even if a list follows. (*Chicago Manual of Style* and *Real Good Grammar, Too*)
- Q:** In a business letter, what salutation is appropriate when you don't know the addressee's name?  
**A:** Do one of the following: Use a descriptive title (Dear Human Resources Director); use an attention line (ATTENTION: Human Resources Director); use a subject line (SUBJECT: Manager Position) (*Write on Target*)
- Q:** Is it all right to make up a word or to verb a noun?  
 Ex. The applicant was *credentialized*. The DOT has *four-laned* the highway.  
 This report will not *annualize* well.  
 I'll *calendar* the date.
- A:** Nonce words/neologisms are acceptable only if no other word exists to convey the meaning. There is no need to create the word *publicization* when *publicity* already exists. Check a dictionary of new words. (*Millward's Handbook for Writers*, 3rd Ed.)
- Q:** Which is correct? *We reached a consensus*. *We reached consensus*.  
**A:** *We reached a consensus*. (*Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*)
- Q:** Are collective nouns such as *committee* and *jury* singular or plural?  
**A:** Collective nouns may be singular or plural depending on whether they refer to the groups as a unit or to the individual members of the group acting separately. *The committee has made its decision*. Or *The committee disagree concerning the newest nomination*. (*Real Good Grammar, Too*)
- Q:** What's the abbreviation for the plural of the following? Mr. Mrs.  
 And what is the abbreviation of *Association*?  
**A:** Mr. - Messrs. (*Scott Foresman Handbook of Usage*)  
 Mrs. - Mmes. or Mmes (*Webster's Secretarial Handbook*)  
 Assoc. or Assn. (*Webster's Dictionary*)
- Q:** How do you make abbreviations and numbers plural?  
**A:** Form the plural by adding -s alone or -'s.  
 ATMs or ATM's There are five 3's in my phone number.  
 MRIs LPOs (*Chicago Manual of Style*)
- Q:** Is a comma needed in this date? January 2003  
**A:** No comma is necessary with only two components of a date.
- Q:** Is it appropriate to write, type, or sign a business document in red ink?  
**A:** Though we could not find a source for this answer, we know that common practice is to use blue or black ink for business documents.

## BUSINESS VOCABULARY

- IT IS IN PROGRESS** - So wrapped in red tape that the situation is almost hopeless.
- WE WILL LOOK INTO IT** - By the time the wheel makes a full turn, we assume you will have forgotten about it.
- A PROGRAM** - Any assignment that can't be completed by one telephone call.
- CONSULTANT** (or expert) - Any ordinary person more than 50 miles from home (must have briefcase).
- TO ACTIVATE** - To make copies and add more names to the memo.
- TO IMPLEMENT A PROGRAM** - Hire more people and expand the office.
- UNDER CONSIDERATION** - Never heard of it.
- UNDER ACTIVE CONSIDERATION** - We are looking in the files for it.
- A MEETING** - A mass mulling by master minds.
- TO NEGOTIATE** - To seek a meeting of minds without a knocking together of heads.
- RE-ORIENTATION** - Getting used to working again.
- RELIABLE SOURCE** - The person you just met.
- INFORMED SOURCE** - The person who told the guy you just met.
- UNIMPEACHABLE SOURCE** - The person who started the rumor originally.
- A CLARIFICATION** - To fill in the background with so many details that the foreground goes underground.
- WE ARE MAKING A SURVEY** - We need more time to think of an answer.
- NOTE AND INITIAL** - Let's spread the responsibility for this.
- SEE ME OR LET'S DISCUSS** - You're in trouble.
- LET'S GET TOGETHER ON THIS** - I'm assuming you're as confused as I am.
- GIVE US THE BENEFIT OF YOUR PRESENT THINKING** - We'll listen to what you have to say as long as it doesn't interfere with what we have already decided to do.
- WILL ADVISE YOU IN DUE COURSE** - If we figure it out, we'll let you know.
- TAKE SOME DICTATION** - Correctly type this document for me.

## BUSINESS BLOOPERS

These errors were taken from actual business correspondence and advertising materials.

**Guessed Speaker**  
**Extinguished** guests  
 References available **a pone** request  
 Thank you for your **corporation**.  
 Up and **atom**  
**Selling** and satisfying our customers is our first priority.  
 One of the best **sailing** cars in the world  
 Patriotic **launch** menus  
 A **hand full** of employees  
 Money must be paid **before hands**.  
 Supervisors need **patients**.  
 A **combonation** of skill and intelligence  
 Car being **toad**  
 Next **store** neighbor  
 A **doggy** dog world  
 Conflict in the **dessert**  
 Flags will be **flied** over post offices.  
 Free, private **consolation**  
 No **dying** in washing machines  
 We will offer you a **prescription** to our magazine.

**Proofreading Tip:** Make sure that the placement of titles, headlines, tables, headers and footers, text, etc. is consistent.

## Finding Your Passive Voice

By Mamie Webb Hixon  
Writing Lab Director

Today I found my voice—my passive voice, and now I'm going to use it. NOT A GOOD IDEA! When you find your voice—your passive voice, learn how to use it moderately and in specific situations only.

For instance, *A good time was had by all of us!* is a passive voice sentence that would be better expressed as *All of us had a good time!* The sentence, as well as the verb, sounds very stiff, stilted, and unnatural: *was had!* On the other hand, *Rome wasn't built in a day* is a passive voice sentence that works: since the performer of the action is unknown anyway, using passive voice places the emphasis on the object—*Rome*, making the sentence forceful and direct. More importantly, writing the sentence in passive voice avoids the use of the vague pronoun “they” in the active voice construction *They did not build Rome in a day.*

**Voice**, in grammatical terms, refers to the relationship of the subject to the verb—whether the relationship is **active** (with the subject performing the action) or **passive** (with the subject receiving the action).

ACTIVE: The committee reached a decision.

PASSIVE: A decision was reached by the committee.

In a passive voice construction, the “real” subject of a sentence (*committee* in the example above) is shifted to a secondary, passive slot in the sentence (the object of the preposition *by*), or it is omitted; a *be* verb form is added to the active verb (*was reached*); and the object of the sentence (*decision*) becomes the subject.

As a professional/business writer, you are expected to be direct, so using active voice allows you to show that your subject acts (*The committee reached a decision*). Using active voice also allows you to state your subject rather than omit it or make it secondary in a passive voice construction:

PASSIVE: A decision was reached.

PASSIVE: A decision was reached by the committee.

Despite these facts, there are instances in which passive voice is universally used and accepted. The unwanted telephone solicitor usually opens with this message: *You have been selected to receive. . . .* If you send email, you've seen *Your mail has been sent.* If you're a wedding planner, or if you have received a wedding invitation lately, you probably recognize this formal expression: *The favor of a reply is requested.* If you're a moviegoer, you should recognize these passive voice sentences: *The following previews have been approved by the Motion Picture Association of America. Silence is appreciated. Switching audiences is not permitted.* And, if you're a video/movie watcher, you should recognize these passive voice sentences: *Viewer discretion is advised. The following film has been modified from its original version. It has been formatted to fit this screen and edited to run in the time allotted and for content.*

Other than the formal style used in wedding invitations, the examples above fall under one of these categories in which “your passive voice” can be very effective:

When the action itself is more important than the performer of the action.

*Pre-registration is required.*

*On its second vote, the referendum was passed by the City Council.*

*The novel was written by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.*

*A signature is required.*

*This program was well publicized.*

When it isn't necessary to name a specific person

*The patient was treated and released.*

*Next year's conference will be held in Orlando.*

*All three violations were reported.*

Dr. Judith Steele in Chapter 4 of her book *Write on Target* cites several other instances in which the business writer should consider using passive voice (I have added examples):

When the performer of the action is unknown, nonexistent, or unimportant

*The package has already been mailed.*

*Officers were elected at the last meeting.*

*The copier will be repaired.*

*Income tax refund checks will be mailed in September.*

*This person was abducted from the convenience store.*

When it is more tactful to avoid blaming a specific person for an error

*The White House videotapes show that a mistake was made.*

When the writer wants to reject something or someone diplomatically

*Your insurance coverage has been dropped.*

*Your credit card privileges have been suspended.*

*The students were expelled from school.*

When objectivity is being stressed

*Your application has been approved.*

*I am being promoted.*

When the writer is making a general statement

*The meeting has been cancelled.*

*The library was closed.*

*The company was destroyed by fire.*

As a professional/business writer, remember to be forceful, be active; and when you find your appropriate passive voice, use it!

## PASSIVE VOICE RESISTANCE

*Passive voice should be avoided!* All this professional hype about passive voice! Is the hype necessary? The objection to passive voice is that *professional writing should be written in active voice*. Is the objection reasonable? You decide. Each of the sentences below is written in passive voice. Which ones would be better left in the passive voice? That is, in which ones should the attention be drawn away from the subject?

- Uniforms must be worn by all students.
- An attempt to collect the money will be made.
- We were told to sit in the back of the room.
- Your call will be answered in the order in which it was received.
- Funding is provided by the university.
- His daily column is read by millions of subscribers.
- The computers will be upgraded.
- Administrators will be evaluated this year.
- A check or money order must be enclosed with your application.
- A proposal has been submitted to the County Commissioners for consideration.
- This e-mail system has been used by other companies.
- A pilot program was conducted by UWF.
- Participants will be asked to go through training.
- The format was praised.

## PVA - PASSIVE VOICE ADDICTION

Now, here's a one-paragraph letter written in passive voice. Revise it. Call the Writing Lab/Grammar Hotline at (850) 474-2129 for assistance.

Your letter requesting information about our vanpooling program has been received in the director's office. Please be advised, however, that in order for this office to respond to your inquiry, appropriate forms must be completed. Accordingly, your letter is being returned to you, and if you want the information being sought, another letter with the enclosed forms must be sent to us.

## THE WHO, WHICH, OR THAT QUESTION

Use *who* (or *whom*) to refer to people or animals with given names:

*The request was sent to the company president, who immediately approved it.*

Use *which* to refer to places, things, or events:

*The annual statistical report, which was distributed yesterday, shows an increase in enrollment.*

Use *whose* to refer to both animate and inanimate objects:

*The supervisor whose promotion was denied filed a grievance.*

*The book whose ISBN number is 141 2006 is out of print.*

Use *that* to introduce restrictive information and to refer to groups of people, places, things, and events:

*The two companies that adopted the plan showed profit increases.*

**Proofreading Tip:** If you tend to write short, choppy sentences, you should read your documents aloud to yourself. You should listen for lots of short sentences in a row. You should listen for repetitive phrases. You should listen for repetitive sentences. You should combine short sentences into longer sentences. You should combine repetitive phrases. Your sentences will be more fluid. Your passages won't sound so choppy. Your writing will be more coherent. You should vary your sentence structure while you are combining sentences. You don't want all of your sentences to begin with "you," do you?

## Writing for Social Services - Feeling Your Client's Pain

By Dr. Diane Scott  
Department of Social Work

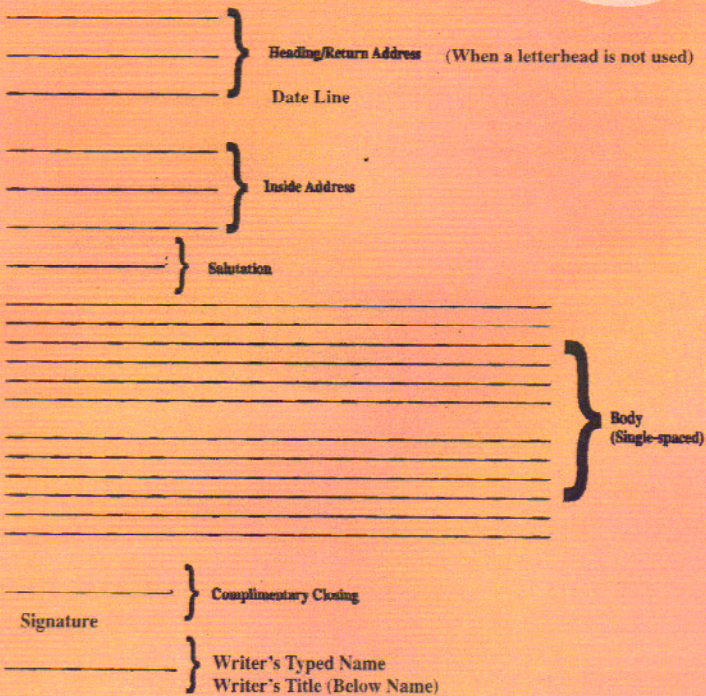
As writers who try to capture what clients say in the most accurate way possible, social workers and other social services professionals need to document what clients say, think, and feel following the contact with the worker. Workers often use the word "feel" interchangeably with "think" and "believe" when writing what transpires with the client. Using "feel" universally in this way, however, is incorrect.

Typically, a social worker writes about what a client feels by using a word that describes a feeling such as "sad," "angry," "depressed," "discouraged," or "overwhelmed." When the worker uses "feel" to describe what a client thinks or believes, the sentence construction usually gives away the lack of a feeling word. Take this sentence, for example: "Sally feels that her mother doesn't listen to her." The giveaway clue that the writer is not writing about feelings is the word combination of "feels that." Whenever "that" is used with "feel," the next phrase refers to what someone thinks or believes, or it refers to some other cognitive process.

So, if you write in the social services and want to convey that you "feel your client's pain," please make sure you don't "feel THAT your clients have pain." THAT makes it wrong!

**Proofreading Tip:** Watch for typos (especially double letters) and word-processing/typesetting problems, such as uneven margins, inconsistent indentions, spacing errors, and defective characters.

### BUSINESS LETTER FORMAT BLOCK LAYOUT FORM



## BUSINESS LETTER COMPONENTS

### Letterhead or Return Address/Heading

- Company name or writer's name\*
- Street address or post office box number
- City, state, ZIP code
- Area code and phone number\*
- Cable address or fax\*
- \* Letterhead only

### Date Line

Type on third line below letterhead. If you're using a Return Address/Heading, the date should be the third line of the heading, following the address (line 1) and the city, state, and ZIP (line 2). Avoid th, st, rd, and nd with the date.

### Inside Address

Type on fifth line below date line  
Addressee's name and job title, name of organization, street address or post office box number, city, state, and ZIP.

### Salutation/Greeting

Type on second line below inside address (or attention line if used). Use "Dear" before the addressee's last name. Follow with a colon. Don't use "To whom it may concern."

### Body

Begin on second line below salutation or reference line.  
Don't close with "Thanking you in advance."

### Complimentary Closing

Type on second line below last line of body. Capitalize only the first word. Punctuate with a comma. Avoid trendy closings such as "Yours for a better community."

- |                |                  |              |                       |
|----------------|------------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| More Personal: | Sincerely,       | More formal: | Very truly yours,     |
|                | Cordially,       |              | Very sincerely yours, |
|                | Sincerely yours, |              | Very cordially yours, |
|                | Cordially yours, |              | Respectfully yours,   |

### Signature

The signature should be in the form by which the writer wishes to be addressed.  
A secretary who signs a letter at the supervisor's request customarily signs the supervisor's name, followed by his/her own initials.

### Writer's Name and Title

Type on the fourth line below the Complimentary Closing—the name on one line, the title on a separate line.  
Writers who prefer a particular title or whose name does not reveal their gender may include a courtesy title (Ms., Mr., Mrs., etc.) preceding their name – with or without parentheses.

### Copy Notation

On the line below the reference initials or enclosure notation, type the initials cc (courtesy copy) or c (copy) with or without a colon thereafter and follow on same line with name of person to receive copy.

If several people are to receive copies, type their names below the first name, arranged by rank or alphabetically. Don't repeat cc or c.

### Postscript

Use a postscript for emphasis to express effectively an idea that you have deliberately withheld from the body of the letter.

### Second Pages

Use plain paper (never a letterhead), using same margins as on first page.

Type a second page heading on the seventh line down from top of page, giving

- 1) addressee's name
- 2) page number
- 3) date

**Proofreading Tip:** Be especially careful with "firsts":

- the first title, headline, or heading
- the first sentence
- the first paragraph
- the first page

The errors in these places are especially noticeable to readers and especially embarrassing for writers and publishers.

## GREETINGS AND SALUTATIONS FORMS OF ADDRESS

ADDRESSEE	FORM OF ADDRESS	SALUTATION
<b>Clerical and Religious Officials</b>		
Clergy	The Reverend Dr. Michael Johnson	Dear Sir: <u>or</u> Dear Rev. Johnson: <u>or</u> Dear Dr. Johnson:
Priest	The Reverend Father Tom Bonanti <u>or</u> The Reverend Tom Bonanti	Dear Father Bonanti: <u>or</u> Dear Father:
Rabbi	Rabbi David Ostrich	Dear Rabbi Ostrich:
<b>College and University Officials</b>		
Dean	Dean Martha Saunders <u>or</u> Dr. Martha Saunders Dean	Dear Dean Saunders: <u>or</u> Dear Dr. Saunders:
President	President Morris Marx Dr. Morris Marx	Dear President Marx: Dear Dr. Marx:
Professor	Dr. Carlos Dews Professor Carlos Dews	Dear Dr. Dews: Dear Professor Dews:
<b>Federal, State, and Local Government Officials</b>		
City Councilman	The Honorable Ronald Townsend	Dear Mr. Townsend:
Commissioner	The Honorable Marie Young Board of County Commissioners	Dear Mrs. Young:
Judge	The Honorable Nancy Gilliam	Dear Judge Gilliam:
Governor	The Honorable Jeb Bush Governor of Florida	Dear Governor Bush:
School Board Member	Dr. Elmer Jenkins Escambia County School Board	Dear Dr. Jenkins:
School Super.	Mr. Jim Paul	Dear Mr. Paul:
Representative	The Honorable Jeff Miller	Dear Mr. Miller:
Mayor	The Honorable John Fogg	Dear Mayor Fogg:
President	The President	Dr. Mr. President:
<b>Military</b>		
Admiral	RADM David L. Brewer	Dear Admiral Brewer:
Commander	Commander Nathaniel Wu	Dear Commander Wu:
Private	Private Ken Freeman U.S. Army	Dear Private Freeman:
<b>Other Professional Titles</b>		
Attorney	Cynthia Williams Attorney-at-Law <u>or</u> Cynthia Williams, Esq.	Dear Ms. Williams: Dear Attorney Williams:
Dentist	Marcus Paul, D.D.S. <u>or</u> Dr. Marcus Paul	Dear Dr. Paul:
Physician	Percy Goodman, M.D. <u>or</u> Dr. Percy Goodman	Dear Dr. Goodman:
Veterinarian	Marclyn Sims, D.V.M. <u>or</u> Dr. Marclyn Sims	Dear Dr. Sims:

## STATE ABBREVIATIONS

Standard Two-Letter Abbreviations for Addressing Envelopes

AL	Alabama	LA	Louisiana	OK	Oklahoma
AK	Alaska	ME	Maine	OR	Oregon
AZ	Arizona	MD	Maryland	PA	Pennsylvania
AR	Arkansas	MA	Massachusetts	PR	Puerto Rico
CA	California	MI	Michigan	RI	Rhode Island
CO	Colorado	MN	Minnesota	SC	South Carolina
CT	Connecticut	MS	Mississippi	SD	South Dakota
DE	Delaware	MO	Missouri	TN	Tennessee
DC	District of Columbia	MT	Montana	TX	Texas
FL	Florida	NE	Nebraska	UT	Utah
GA	Georgia	NV	Nevada	VT	Vermont
HI	Hawaii	NH	New Hampshire	VA	Virginia
ID	Idaho	NJ	New Jersey	WA	Washington
IL	Illinois	NM	New Mexico	WV	West Virginia
IN	Indiana	NY	New York	WI	Wisconsin
IA	Iowa	NC	North Carolina	WY	Wyoming
KS	Kansas	ND	North Dakota		
KY	Kentucky	OH	Ohio		

### AVOID "WEASEL" WORDS OR PHRASES

generally speaking	as has been suggested
to be sure	customarily
it appears (or it seems)	in keeping with company policy
normally	as you can see
apparently	as might be expected
supposedly	is considered (or thought) to
possibly	for the most part

### USING CAPITAL LETTERS

The following aren't just generic nouns. They are trademarks and thus should be capitalized. Check any standard dictionary if you're unsure about whether a word is a trademark.

Apple computers  
Band-Aid adhesives  
Bic ink pens  
Kleenex facial tissues  
Magic Marker felt tip pens  
Jeep vehicle

Liquid Paper correction fluid  
Styrofoam disposable cups & plates  
Realtor real estate broker  
Rolodex card file  
Velcro fasteners  
Tupperware plastic containers

### COMMONLY MISPRONOUNCED WORDS

in-cen-tive	NOT	in-cen-i-tive
real-tor	NOT	real-a-tor
often (of-ən)	NOT	oft-tin
fiscal year	NOT	physical year
clique (click)	NOT	cliché
ten-ta-tive	NOT	ten-a-tive
sim-i-lar	NOT	sim-u-lar
mis-chee-vous	NOT	mis-chee-vee-ous
li-brary	NOT	li-berry

### HOW'S YOUR BUSINESS ENGLISH?

- What's wrong with this sentence? *You must register and attend the conference.*
- Which of the following words is misspelled?
  1. alot
  2. all right
  3. two dollars apiece
- Which of the following expressions is grammatically correct?
  1. I feel badly about . . .
  2. I feel bad about . . .

**Proofreading Tip:** Check any sequence of numbers of letters, especially on successive pages.

- page numbers
- lettered lists
- tables and figures
- number sections and subsections
- numbered footnotes or endnotes
- alphabetized lists, such as bibliographies

## How to Write a Cover Letter

By Amy Woodland

Cover letters are used to relate information not appearing on your resume to prospective employers.

- Use standard business format.
- Type the cover letter on letterhead or on plain paper.
- Use the same paper for both your cover letter and the resume.
- Address the cover letter to an individual or use an attention line. (ATTENTION: Human Resources Department).
- Include a "SUBJECT" line. (SUBJECT: Internship Position).
- Remember that the salutations "Dear Sir or Madam" and "To Whom It May Concern" are out of date and impersonal.

First Paragraph:

1. Where you learned of this job opening.
2. What position you are seeking and your basic qualifications.
3. Any other specific information. Most announcements will make clear the information the company is seeking in your cover letter.

Second Paragraph:

1. Brief summary of your work history.
2. Any information not listed in your resume.

Third paragraph: Information about how to contact you.

### Proofreading Tips:

Make sure that type styles and relative type sizes are consistent.

Turning pages upside down or sideways will help alert you to spacing and other formatting errors.

Watch out for commonly misspelled words and mechanical errors, such as inappropriate abbrev.

## How to Write a Memo

By Amy Woodland

A memorandum, or memo, is a document used to convey a simple and relatively small bit of information.

A memo should be

- simple and short
- used within organizations
- typed on the organization's letterhead or on plain 8 1/2" x 11-inch paper

Your organization may have a preset format that it would like to use; however, all memos will include the following information in this order:

1. The heading "MEMORANDUM" typed in upper case; may be bold or regular type.
2. The "TO" line--the appropriate recipient of the memo.
3. The "FROM" line indicating the individual sending the memo.
4. The "DATE" line--the date the memo is sent.
5. The "SUBJECT" line--a brief title or header indicating the subject matter of the memo.
6. The body should be single-spaced.
7. Your memo may also include a "cc" (courtesy copy) or "c" (copy).

### Proofreading Tip:

Typographical errors are not the same as grammatical errors.

This is a typo (transposed letters):

He is director of Children's Services at Scared Heart Academy.

These are not typos:

Career Opportunity's

Merritte, Inc. cordially requests your presents.....

The company is celebrating it's 25th anniversary.

## How to Write a Resume

By Amy Woodland

Resume paper should be

1. white, gray, or ivory in color
2. thicker than the paper you would use in a copier or in your computer printer
3. standard 8 1/2 x 11-inch paper

Information to include in your resume:

1. Objectives may be used, but they are not necessary. (Seeking a position in sales)
2. Work experience in reverse chronological order – listing present job(s) to past jobs. (Current work experience is more helpful than work experience over ten years ago.)
3. Volunteer work
4. Military experience
5. Internships
6. Education – colleges, universities and technical schools you have attended in chronological order
7. Professional certifications (under the heading "Education and Certification" or "Education and Training")
8. Academic Awards
9. Recognition – community service, media, or other recognition
10. References – Use your professional judgment when deciding whether or not to include references. If you include references, do the following: List at least three. This list should include employers or other persons familiar with your skills or work. Include their names, addresses, telephone numbers, and email addresses. Request permission from your references before including them on your resume. Create an additional sheet or include a statement such as "References available upon request."

## DO'S AND DON'TS OF RESUME WRITING

DO's

Proofread.

Be consistent with fonts and format.

Use action verbs ("Managed team of eight employees").

Try to keep your resume ONE PAGE.

Include your name, address, phone number and email address in your header.

DON'T's

Do not use graphics and drawings (A portfolio will be requested if necessary).

Do not include information such as sex, sexual orientation, marital status, religion, ethnicity or political affiliation.

Do not use preformatted resume builders.

Do not tell an employer everything on your resume.

Do not list your reasons for leaving former employment.

Do not use your nickname or a catchy email address.

## "Hey, I'm a Writer, the Audience Is Looking For Your Purpose": How to Cast the Proper Purpose

By Heather J. Allman  
Department of English and Foreign Languages

When writing business messages, think of your message as a movie script. A successful writer knows that planning, or casting and rehearsing, a written business message is just as important as actually creating, or performing, the message. During the planning stage, you should carefully consider the fundamentals of your message: your **purpose** for communicating and your **audience** who is receiving the communication. Then the auditions begin to cast a classic character actor for your **general purpose (to inform, to collaborate, to persuade)** and a rising unknown star for your specific purpose. The casting ends when you've analyzed your potential screening **audience** for this message performance in order to clarify your purpose.

### Casting Call:

First, you start casting for a **general purpose** in order to determine how much your audience needs to participate in the message. For example, if your general purpose for this script is simply **to inform** your audience of a new product line your company has developed, "Organically Fresh," it does not need finely tuned crowd interaction skills, as the audience will either accept or reject the information given.

Secondly, you start auditioning for the blossoming young star of your message: a **specific purpose**. Here the casting becomes more difficult because the star of the message must be able to clearly articulate the answer to its most important line: "How should my message performance change the audience's ideas and behaviors after they screen this message?" The star must act in accordance with the reasons the message needs to be communicated to the waiting audience.

After casting, you will have to rehearse with your **specific purpose** in order to make sure it is clear. To accomplish this goal, you need to utilize the journalistic approach, carefully checking your script to see whether your chosen purpose answers all the important questions: **who, what, when, where, why, and how**.

### Rehearsal:

First, you must decide what your **general purpose** needs to convey to the screening audience. To choose what your general purpose will be in the script, you need to take the journalistic approach:

- **Who** needs to hear this message? Anyone in the audience who does not have this **information**.
  - **What** does the audience need to do after hearing this message? They need to **accept or reject** the **information**.
- \*Notice how both the questions and answers are **GENERAL** and nonspecific in nature.

Secondly, you must be more selective and decide what precise information your **specific purpose** needs to convey to the screening audience. To choose what your specific purpose will be in the script, you need to narrowly focus on your reasons the message needs to be communicated to the waiting audience:

- **What** is the specific reason the audience needs to hear about this product line? They like our previous products and need to be informed of this new hypoallergenic "Organically Fresh" shampoo and conditioner.
- **When** exactly will this product line be available to them? They can purchase any of the new products after March 15, 2002.
- **Where** exactly will this product line be available to them? They can visit our website to find a listing of stores and outlets that carry this new product line.
- **Why**, specifically, might they need this new product line? If they have allergies to harsh hair products, they can eliminate these problems by purchasing this totally organic product line.

\*Notice how both the questions and answers are very product-**SPECIFIC**, narrowing the focus of the message's purpose.

### Performance:

Is your **purpose** showing? If not, direct it to the forefront; remember, the **audience** is waiting to give your message performance rave reviews.

## This & That

By Mamie Webb Hixon  
Writing Lab Director

If you're reading **this**, you're probably a person who wants to learn how to use the pronoun **this** correctly.

Style is as important to good writing skill as correctness of expression is. A professional writer should keep his or her language concise and free of jargon such as unfamiliar initials and abbreviations, "education-ese," "government-ese," "legalese, and "office-ese." **This will ensure that the writer is communicating clearly and effectively. This will also ensure that the writing will be able to stand on its own without the writer being with the reader to translate.**

This what? Whenever I read a sentence like the three above in which the writer has attempted to use **this** to refer to either something implied or to an entire preceding statement rather than to some substantive in that statement, I either cringe or say to myself, "This what?" Therein lies the rub. Because **this** is a demonstrative pronoun and should accompany a specific noun, it can never be used to refer to an entire sentence, paragraph or idea.

To avoid this kind of implied use of the pronoun **this**, do one of the following:

1. Answer the "This what?" question by placing a specific noun after **this**.  
*If you're reading **this sentence**, you're probably a person who wants to learn how to use the pronoun **this** correctly.*
2. Sum up the idea in the preceding statement(s) in a noun which acts as an antecedent (a word to which **this** refers).

**Avoiding jargon** will ensure that the writer is communicating clearly and effectively. It will also ensure that the writing will be able to stand on its own without the writer being with the reader to translate.

3. Make the statements coordinate.  
**Avoiding jargon** will ensure that the writer is communicating clearly and effectively and that the writing will be able to stand on its own without the writer being with the reader to translate.

4. Rephrase the sentence.  
*To communicate clearly and effectively, a writer should use concrete words to paint specific pictures so that he or she does not need to be present to translate.*

The above passage on style also uses the relative pronoun **that** before a noun clause instead of omitting it. While some English sentences are equally grammatical with or without the word **that** to introduce a noun clause serving as the object of a sentence, it is important to know when **that** can be omitted. The use of **that** in the sentence below is optional.

Select the office **that** you prefer. OR Select the office you prefer.

Do not omit the word **that** when its omission could cause the reader to misread a sentence.

**UNCLEAR:** When editing, verify the document's information is accurate.

**CLEAR:** When editing, verify **that** the document's information is accurate.

**UNCLEAR:** Avoiding jargon will ensure the writer is communicating clearly and effectively.

*Nick reported the planning committee will meet.*

**CLEAR:** Avoiding jargon will ensure **that** the writer is communicating clearly and effectively.

*Nick reported **that** the planning committee will meet.*

Be sure to distinguish between **so** and **so that**.

**So that** refers to condition:

*Please write legibly **so that** (NOT **so**) the examiners can read your handwriting.*

*So that the examiners can read your handwriting, please write legibly.*

**So** means "therefore":

*Correctness of expression is important, **so** (NOT **so that**) it is important to use good grammar.*

**Proofreading Tip:** When you find an error, look for others nearby. Errors often come in groups.



# YOU'VE GOT MAIL!

## EMAIL ETIQUETTE - "NETIQUETTE"

From [emailreplies.com](http://emailreplies.com)

1. **Be concise and to the point:** Remember that reading an email is harder than reading printed communications.
2. **Answer all questions, and pre-empt further questions.**
3. **Use proper spelling, grammar and punctuation:** Improper spelling, grammar and punctuation give a bad impression of your company.
4. **Make it personal.**
5. **Use templates for frequently used responses.**
6. **Answer swiftly:** Each email should be replied to within at least 24 hours, and preferably within the same working day.
7. **Do not attach unnecessary files.**
8. **Use proper structure and layout:** Use short paragraphs and blank lines between each paragraph.
9. **Do not overuse the High Priority option.**
10. **Do not write in CAPITALS:** IF YOU WRITE IN CAPITALS, IT SEEMS AS IF YOU ARE SHOUTING.
11. **Don't leave out the message thread:** In other words, click "Reply" instead of "New Mail."
12. **Add disclaimers to your emails.**
13. **Read the email before you send it:** Reading your email through the eyes of the recipient will help you send a more effective message and avoid misunderstandings and inappropriate comments.
14. **Do not overuse "Reply to All."**
15. **Take care with abbreviations and emoticons:** The recipient might not be aware of the meanings of the abbreviations, and in business emails these are generally not appropriate. If you are not sure whether your recipient knows what an emoticon means, don't use it.
16. **Be careful with formatting.**
17. **Take care with rich text and HTML messages:** Be aware that when you send an email in Rich Text or HTML format, the sender might be able to receive only plain text emails.
18. **Do not forward chain letters.**
19. **Do not request delivery and read receipts.**
20. **Do not ask to recall a message.**
21. **Do not copy a message or attachment without permission:** If you do not ask permission first, you might be infringing on copyright laws.
22. **Do not use email to discuss confidential information.**
23. **Use a meaningful subject.**
24. **Use active instead of passive voice:** "We will process your order today" sounds better than "Your order will be processed today."
25. **Avoid using URGENT and IMPORTANT.**
26. **Avoid long sentences:** Try to keep your sentences to a maximum of 15-20 words. Email is meant to be a quick medium and requires a different kind of writing than letters.
27. **Don't send or forward emails containing libelous, defamatory, offensive, racist or obscene remarks.**
28. **Don't forward virus hoaxes.**
29. **Keep your language gender neutral:** Avoid using sexist language such as "The user should add a signature by configuring his email program."
30. **Don't reply to spam.**

### Some Writing Tips

Use the precise word or phrase.

**precede** means "to be, go, or come ahead of" (the preceding page)

**proceed** means "to continue," "to go on," "to advance"

**insure** means "to guarantee against financial loss" (~insure the car)

**ensure** means "to make sure or certain" (ensure that you're here)

**effect** as a noun means "result"; as a verb to "bring about," "to accomplish"

**affect** means "to influence"; "to act upon"; "to alter"; "to assume"; "to adopt"

## Email... the Last Chance for Developing Writing Skills?

By Dr. Judith W. Steele

Department of English and Foreign Languages

Electronic mail (email) may be a "last chance" medium for developing the writing skills of students and employees. Students, and just about everyone else, are now addicted to the electronic medium, and there is no turning back. A search of the Internet will yield numerous books, articles, threaded discussions, and so forth on the so-called "netiquette" or the acceptable do's and don'ts of writing electronic mail. My purpose here is not to repeat easily found information with a few keywords on the Internet about email netiquette, but to ask the reader to reflect more comprehensively on the nature of the changing communication medium and the positive effects these changes may have on improving students' and workers' writing skills.

Email requires writing – lots of writing – sorting, categorizing, deleting, typing, and evaluating. If nothing else, email reveals the problems the writer has with grammar, thought construction, paragraph development, style, and other matters related to cognition. Workers find it difficult to rely on traditional form letters when writing email, making email a creative writing activity. Additionally, email has its own "language" made up of icons, abbreviations, acronyms, emoticons, and other examples of metaphorical writing. Although emailers may not realize they are employing metaphors while writing email or surfing the Internet, they are learning new ways of thinking about things and comparing one thing to another – and discovering ways to develop metacognitive skills. If working professionals and students were encouraged to write email messages in the same ways they ordinarily write memos or letters, the sheer number of communiqués would improve each writer's ability.

In the professional writing environment, email writing should include the same scrutiny as written communication does. A review of business writing basics should produce the same results in email communication as do the traditional hard copies or occasional phone call. However, one problem surfaces quickly – some messages are casual, not business. In these cases, the writer has much more freedom of expression, perhaps even using a stream of consciousness technique, but then, stream of consciousness is a genre worthy of consideration. Email seems to lie somewhere between written communication and oral communication. With careful wording, the lack of non-verbal communication cues may force the writer to learn a larger vocabulary and express himself or herself more carefully, especially after a few misunderstood messages and the consequences thereof. Could it be that because today's workers usually write their own correspondence (email or otherwise), actually "doing" writing electronically can improve skills, depending on one's approach and support system (e.g., tutors, mentors, resources)? In conclusion, if students, teachers, and other professionals begin to consider email a learning environment rather than a platform for discussing the degradation of the English language, then we can begin to use email as a tool for improved writing skills.

### AVOIDING PADDED PHRASES

Revise	The committee will meet at an early date.
To	The committee will meet soon.
Revise	The contractor will oftentimes issue regular progress reports during the time that the contract is in effect.
To	The contractor will often issue regular progress reports while the contract is in effect.
Revise	I recently met with the city attorney with reference to your case.
To	I recently met with the city attorney about your case.
Revise	We missed our deadline due to the fact that a strike occurred.
To	We missed our deadline because a strike occurred.
Revise	We cannot accept new clients at the present time.
To	We cannot accept new clients now.
Revise	We have received four complaints in connection with the project.
To	We have received four complaints about the project.
Revise	In order to meet the deadline, we must work overtime.
To	To meet the deadline, we must work overtime.
Revise	She was thinking in terms of subcontracting much of the work.
To	She was thinking about subcontracting much of the work.

## DON'T REPEAT OVER AGAIN ANY REDUNDANCIES

The following is a list of redundancies compiled from business and technical writing. The prefix, word, or words in parentheses should be deleted.

(absolute) guarantee	combine (together)	mix (together)
(absolutely) essential	commute (back and forth)	my (personal) opinion
(absolutely) sure	(completely) destroyed	myriad (of) solutions
(actual) experience	consensus (of opinion)	(native) habitat
add (an additional)	continue (on)	new (beginning)
(advance) planning	costs (the sum of)	off (of)
(advance) reservations	(current) trend	(official) business
(advance) warning	(definite) decision	(old) adage
all meet (together)	descend (down)	over (and done with)
alongside (of)	do (over) (again)	(pair of) twins
(already) existing	each (and every)	(past) history
(and) moreover	first (of all)	plan (ahead)
(as) for example	for (a period of) 10 days	postponed (until later)
ask (a question)	for (the period of) a year	proceed (ahead)
(as to) whether	(foreign) imports	protest (against)
(as) yet	(future) plans	recur (again)
(at a) later (date)	(general) public	refer (back)
at (the) present (time)	golden (wedding) anniversary	reflect (back)
at some time (to come)	(grand) total	repeat (again)
(basic) fundamentals	I (myself personally)	reply (back)
blend (together)	in (the year of) 2002	revert (back)
(but) (however)	in (the city of) Seattle	(same) (identical)
(but) nevertheless	in (the state of) Maine	sufficient (enough)
came (at a time) when	(ir) regardless	(sum) (total)
cancel (out)	join (together)	together (at the same time)
(close) proximity	(local) residents	undergraduate (student)
(close) scrutiny	look back (in retrospect)	
collaborate (together)	merged (together)	

**Change**  
 due to the fact that  
 effect an improvement  
 give assistance to  
 give consideration to  
 have a preference for  
 have (hold) a discussion  
 I would appreciate it if  
 in the event that  
 in order to  
 in view of the fact that  
 is applicable  
 make an inspection  
 make a study of  
 prior to  
 with reference to

**To**  
 because  
 improve  
 aid, help, or assist  
 consider  
 prefer  
 discuss  
 please  
 if  
 to  
 because, since  
 applies  
 inspect  
 study  
 before  
 about, concerning, relating

## PLURALS YOU MAY NOT KNOW

SINGULAR	PLURAL
curriculum	curricula/curriculums
memorandum	memorandums/memoranda
datum	data
medium	media
criterion	criteria
thesis	theses
diagnosis	diagnoses
crisis	crises
parenthesis )	parentheses ( ) (pair)
index	indexes/indices
appendix	appendixes/ appendices
analysis	analyses
stimulus	stimuli
phenomenon	phenomena
syllabus	syllabuses/ syllabi
opus	opera
alumnus - male graduate	alumni
alumna - female graduate	alumnae

## Avoiding Affectation - Sounding "Natural"

**Revise** It is the policy of the company to provide the proper telephonic apparatus to enable each employee to conduct the interoffice and intra-business communication necessary to discharge his or her responsibilities; however, it is contrary to company practice to permit telephones to be utilized for personal employee communication.  
**To** Your telephone is provided for company business; do not use it for personal calls.

## Been There, Done That - Avoiding Clichés

**Change** Arguably, our new computer system will have a positive impact on the company as a whole. It will keep us abreast of the times and make our competition green with envy. The committee deserves a pat on the back for its Herculean efforts in convincing management that it was the thing to do. I'm sure that their uniting efforts will not go unrewarded.  
**To** Our new computer system will have a positive impact throughout the company. It will keep our operations up to date and make our competition envious. The committee deserves credit for its efforts in convincing management of the need for the computer. I'm sure that the value of its efforts will be recognized.

## AIDS TO CONCISENESS

Never use a long word when a **diminutive** one will do

Use words for phrases.

<b>Change</b>	<b>To</b>
a large number	many, some, or a specific number
as a whole	entire
along the lines	like, similar to
am (are, is) in a position	can
are of the opinion that	believe
at an early date	soon (or give a specific date)
at all times	always
at the present time	now
at a time when	when
conduct an investigation	investigate

## Using Punctuation to Create Clarity

Can you punctuate these sentences correctly? Call the UWF Grammar Hotline (850/474-2129) for the answers.

Whenever you can come to my office to discuss this proposal.

This company has never printed comic books, fantasy novels were always our principal publicatoin.

I have always admired Mr. Workhorse for a number of years he was my supervisor.

THE WRITING LABORATORY (51 / 157)  
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